THE BRITISH SCHOOL OF AMSTERDAM

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policy

Policy Title	**Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policy**
Policy Owner	Principal
Approval Body	25 June 2025 by Works Council / Management Board / **Supervisory Board**
Date Reviewed & Approved	April 2025
Policy Review Date	June 2028

Statutory policy	**Yes**	No	On website	**Yes** No On parent portal	**Yes**	No On staff portal	**Yes**	No

Contents

1. Aims

The aims of relationships and sex education (RSE) at The British School of Amsterdam are to:

- Provide a framework in which sensitive discussions can take place;
- Prepare pupils for puberty, and give them an understanding of sexual development and the importance of health and hygiene;
- Help pupils develop feelings of self-respect, confidence and empathy;
- Create a positive culture around issues of sexuality and relationships;
- Teach pupils the correct vocabulary to describe themselves and their bodies.

2. Legislation and guidance

As an accredited British School Overseas, this document meets the requirements set out in part 1 (2A) of the Standards for British Schools Overseas and pertains to guidance provided by the Department for Education (DfE) for schools seeking accreditation as a British School Overseas. While these standards are broadly aligned with those used in England, they are non-statutory for international schools like ours.

In case of discrepancies, local law or regulations will take precedence and reflect our alignment with host country regulations.

The DfE's statutory guidance on Relationships Education, RSE, and Health Education has been used as a reference point in developing this policy to ensure best practices are followed where appropriate.

The policy also incorporates relevant aspects of the British Schools Overseas (BSO) standards and UK Department for Education (DfE) guidance to ensure it reflects international best practices while remaining contextually appropriate.

At The BSA, we teach RSE as set out in this policy.

3. Definitions and scope

RSE is about the emotional, social and cultural development of pupils, and involves learning about relationships, sexual health, sexuality, healthy lifestyles, diversity and personal identity.

RSE involves a combination of sharing information, exploring issues and values, and raising awareness and the need for tolerance and respect

RSE is not about the promotion of sexual activity.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The Supervisory Board

The Supervisory Board will approve this RSE policy, and hold the Principal to account for its implementation.

4.2 The Principal and Heads of Schools

The Principal has delegated the responsibility for ensuring that RSE is taught consistently across the school, for sharing resources and materials with parents, and for managing requests to withdraw pupils from non-science components of RSE to the Heads of School (Early Years, Junior and Senior).

4.3 Staff

Staff are responsible for:

- Delivering RSE in a sensitive way
- Modelling positive attitudes to RSE
- Monitoring progress
- Responding to the needs of individual pupils

Staff do not have the right to opt out of teaching RSE. Staff who have concerns about teaching RSE are encouraged to discuss this with their Head of School.

4.4 Pupils

Pupils are expected to engage fully in RSE and, when discussing issues related to RSE, treat others with respect and sensitivity.

5. Policy development

This policy has been developed in consultation with staff, pupils and parents. The consultation and policy development process involved the following steps:

A. Review

A member of staff or working group pulled together all relevant information including relevant guidance. Including, but not limited to Department for Education guidance from the UK, Standards for British School Overseas, Dutch educational guidance and policy on related educational matters.

B. Staff consultation

All school staff were given the opportunity to look at the policy and make recommendations.

C. Parent consultation

Parents were invited to review the policy, provide feedback electronically and attend a meeting about the policy.

D. Pupil consultation

We shared the policy with students to gather student voice

E. Approval

Once amendments were made, the policy was shared with the Supervisory Board and approved.

6. Curriculum

Our RSE curriculum is set out as per Appendices A and B, but we may need to adapt it as and when necessary.

We have developed the curriculum in consultation with parents, pupils and staff, and taking into account the age, developmental stage, needs and feelings of our pupils. If pupils ask questions outside the scope of this policy, teachers will respond in an appropriate manner so that pupils are fully informed and don't seek answers online.

We will share all curriculum materials with parents. For more information about our curriculum, see our curriculum outline in Appendices A and B.

7. Delivery of RSE

RSE is taught within the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. Biological aspects of RSE are taught within the science curriculum.

7.1 Delivery of RSE in the Early Years School

RSE in the Early Years School is integrated into our holistic approach to education. We believe that learning should be engaging, relevant, and meaningful for young learners. Therefore, RSE is taught through a thematic approach that allows children to make connections, build on prior knowledge, and deepen their understanding.

Our RSE curriculum is closely aligned with the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, as well as elements of the science curriculum, PSHE, literacy activities, assemblies, and circle time. Teachers carefully plan RSE opportunities within their medium-term planning, ensuring that learning experiences are both intentional and spontaneous.

RSE is delivered by trained classroom teachers, teaching assistants, and, when appropriate, outside visitors such as the school nurse or other health professionals. All materials and resources used are age-appropriate and sensitive to the developmental needs of young children.

For more information about our RSE curriculum, see Appendices A and B.

7.2 Delivery of RSE in the Junior School

Relationships education focuses on teaching the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships including:

- Families and people who care for me
- Caring friendships
- Respectful relationships
- Online relationships
- Being safe

Primary sex education will focus on:

- Preparing boys and girls for the changes that adolescence brings including menstruation
- How a baby is conceived and born

For more information about our RSE curriculum, see Appendices A and B.

7.3 Delivery of RSE in the Senior School

RSE focuses on giving young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds including:

- Families
- Respectful relationships, including friendships and the impact of abusive relationships
- Online and media and the negative effects of pornography
- Being safe
- Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health
- Gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation

For more information about our RSE curriculum, see Appendices A and B.

These areas of learning are taught within the context of family life, taking care to make sure that there is no stigmatisation of children based on their home circumstances (families can include single parent families, LGBTQ parents, families headed by grandparents, adoptive parents and foster parents, amongst other structures), along with reflecting sensitively that some children may have a different structure of support around them (for example, young carers).

We will also be mindful of the law and legal requirements, taking care not to condone or encourage illegal political activity, such as violent action against people, criminal damage to property, hate crime, terrorism or the illegal use of drugs.

7.4 Inclusivity

We will teach about these topics in a manner that:

- Considers how a diverse range of pupils will relate to them
- Is sensitive to all pupils' experiences
- During lessons, makes pupils feel:
  - Safe and supported
  - Able to engage with the key messages

We will also:

- Make sure that pupils learn about these topics in an environment that's appropriate for them, for example in:
  - A whole-class setting
  - Small groups or targeted sessions
  - 1-to-1 discussions
  - Digital formats
- Give careful consideration to the level of differentiation needed

7.5 Use of resources

We will consider whether any resources we plan to use:

  - Are aligned with the teaching requirements set out in the statutory RSE guidance o Would support pupils in applying their knowledge in different contexts and settings o Are age-appropriate, given the age, developmental stage and background of our pupils o Are evidence-based and contain robust facts and statistics
  - Fit into our curriculum plan
  - Are from credible sources
  - Are compatible with effective teaching approaches
  - Are sensitive to pupils' experiences and won't provoke distress

8. Use of external organisations and materials

We will make sure that any outside agency use, and their materials, are appropriate and in line with our legal duties around political impartiality.

The school remains responsible for what is said to pupils. This includes making sure that any speakers, tools and resources used don't undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

We will:

- Inform parents, in advance, if we plan to engage with services of external agencies in relation to RSE topics
- Make appropriate checks and engage with external agencies to make sure that their approach to teaching about RSE is balanced, and the resources they intend to use:
  - o Are age-appropriate
  - o Are in line with pupils' developmental stage
  - o Comply with:
    - o This policy
    - o The UK Equality Act 2010
    - o The UK Human Rights Act 1998
    - o The UK Education Act 1996
- Only work with external agencies where we have full confidence in the agency, its approach and the resources it uses
- Make sure that any speakers and resources meet the intended outcome of the relevant part of the curriculum
- Review any case study materials and look for feedback from other people the agency has worked with
- Be clear on:
  - o What they're going to say
  - o Their position on the issues to be discussed
- Ask to see in advance any materials that the agency may use
- Know the named individuals who will be there, and follow our usual safeguarding procedures for these people
- Conduct a basic online search and address anything that may be of concern to us, or to parents and carers
- Check the agency's protocol for taking pictures or using any personal data they might get from a session
- Remind teachers that they can say "no" or, in extreme cases, stop a session
- Make sure that a teacher is in the room during any sessions with external speakers
- Share all external materials with parents and carers

We **won't**, under any circumstances:

- Work with external agencies that take or promote extreme political positions
- Use materials produced by such agencies, even if the material itself is not extreme

9. Withdrawal

We take an inclusive, measured, and sensitive approach to the delivery of the RSE curriculum. This aligns with the ethos of the BSA as well as Dutch educational principles on this topic.

Advice from local authorities (Samenwerkingsverband) indicates that relationship and sex education is a mandatory component of the secondary school curriculum in Amsterdam, with attendance required for all students. As such, the BSA will not have a withdrawal process for RSE lessons. We have adopted this approach to reflect the cultural and legal context of our host country.

There are several key rationale for an inclusive approach to relationship and sex education (RSE):

- Safeguarding: Comprehensive RSE is crucial for helping children grow up healthy, happy, and safe. Withdrawing students from these lessons may leave them vulnerable to risks and lacking essential knowledge about relationships, consent, and sexual health.

- Educational equality: Ensuring all students have access to the knowledge and understanding related to SRE is vital for shared knowledge and understanding. Taking an inclusive approach diminishes the opportunities for disparity in educational provision and ensures students do not miss out on vital information that others receive.

- Societal preparation: RSE helps prepare students for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in society. Access to RSE lessons supports the effective ability to navigate complex social and personal situations.

- Evidence-based benefits: Research shows that curriculum-based RSE programmes do not increase sexual activity or risk-taking. Instead, they lead to delayed initiation of sexual intercourse, decreased number of sexual partners, reduced risk-taking, and increased use of responsible approaches to contraception.

- Countering misinformation: With the prevalence of unreliable sources like pornography, it's crucial that young people learn about such RSE topics from trustworthy sources such as teachers following a vetted and endorsed effective RSE programme, reducing the potential for misinformation.

- These arguments suggest that universal access to comprehensive RSE is essential for students' well-being, safety, and preparation for adult life are provided through an inclusive approach and as such withdrawal from these lessons will not be offered.

10. Training

Staff are trained on the delivery of RSE and it is included in our continuing professional development planning.

The Head/s of School will also invite visitors from inside or outside the school, such as school nurses or sexual health professionals, to provide support and training to staff teaching RSE as and when required.

11. Monitoring arrangements

The Principal holds overall accountability for the effectiveness of the RSE policy and delegates daily monitoring to Heads of School, who in turn oversee their middle leadership teams and teachers.

This policy will be reviewed by the Supervisory Board at least once every 3 years.

At each review, the policy will be approved by the Supervisory Board.

Appendix A

RSE expectations: primary

Here's what all pupils should know by the end of primary school. These are the expectations set by the Department for Education.

Families and people who care for me

- That families are important for children growing up because they can give love, security and stability
- The characteristics of healthy family life, commitment to each other, including in times of difficulty, protection and care for children and other family members, the importance of spending time together and sharing each other's lives
- That other people's families, either in school or in the wider world, sometimes look different from their family, but that they should respect those differences and know that other children's families are also characterised by love and care
- That stable, caring relationships, which may be of different types, are at the heart of happy families, and are important for children's security as they grow up

- That marriage represents a formal and legally recognised commitment of 2 people to each other which is intended to be lifelong
- How to recognise if family relationships are making them feel unhappy or unsafe, and how to seek help or advice from others if needed

Caring friendships

- How important friendships are in making us feel happy and secure, and how people choose and make friends
- The characteristics of friendships, including mutual respect, honesty, trust and trustworthiness, loyalty, kindness, generosity, sharing interests and experiences, and support with problems and difficulties
- That healthy friendships are positive and welcoming towards others, and do not make others feel lonely or excluded
- That most friendships have ups and downs, and that these can often be worked through so that the friendship is repaired or even strengthened, and that resorting to violence is never right
- How to recognise who to trust and who not to trust, how to judge when a friendship is making them feel unhappy or uncomfortable, managing conflict, how to manage these situations and how to seek help or advice from others if needed

Respectful relationships

- The importance of respecting others, even when they're very different from them (for example, physically, in character, personality or backgrounds), or make different choices or have different preferences or beliefs
- Practical steps they can take in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful relationships
- The conventions of courtesy and manners
- The importance of self-respect and how this links to their own happiness
- That in school and in wider society they can expect to be treated with respect by others, and that in turn they should show due respect to others, including those in positions of authority
- About different types of bullying (including cyber-bullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders (primarily reporting bullying to an adult) and how to get help
- What a stereotype is, and how stereotypes can be unfair, negative or destructive ● The importance of permission-seeking and giving in relationships with friends, peers and adults

Online relationships

- That people sometimes behave differently online, including by pretending to be someone they're not
- That the same principles apply to online relationships as to face-to-face relationships, including the importance of respect for others online (even when we're anonymous)
- The rules and principles for keeping safe online, how to recognise risks, harmful content and contact, and how to report them
- How to critically consider their online friendships and sources of information, including awareness of the risks associated with people they've never met
- How information and data is shared and used online

Being safe

- What sorts of boundaries are appropriate in friendships with peers and others (including in a digital context)
- About the concept of privacy and the implications of it for both children and adults (including that it's not always right to keep secrets if they relate to being safe)
- That each person's body belongs to them, and the differences between appropriate and inappropriate/unsafe physical and other contact

- How to respond safely and appropriately to adults they may encounter (in all contexts, including online) who they don't know
- How to recognise and report feelings of being unsafe or feeling bad about any adult ● How to ask for advice or help for themselves or others, and to keep trying until they're heard ● How to report concerns or abuse, and the vocabulary and confidence they need to do so ● Where to get advice (e.g. family, school, other sources)

Source:

These expectations are set out in the Department for Education's guidance for schools on relationships education, RSE and health education.

Appendix B

RSE expectations: Senior

Here's what pupils should cover during secondary school, as well as continuing to develop knowledge on the topics they're expected to study at primary school. These are the expectations set by the Department for Education.

Families

- That there are different types of committed, stable relationships
- How these relationships might contribute to human happiness and their importance for bringing up children
- What marriage is, including its legal status (e.g., that marriage carries legal rights and protections not available to couples who are cohabiting or who have married, for example, in an unregistered religious ceremony)
- Why marriage is an important relationship choice for many couples and why it must be freely entered into
- The characteristics and legal status of other types of long-term relationships
- The roles and responsibilities of parents with respect to raising children, including the characteristics of successful parenting
- That divorce/separation can occur within relationships

How to:

- Determine whether other children, adults or sources of information are trustworthy
- Judge when a family, friend, intimate or other relationship is unsafe (and to recognise this in others' relationships)
- Seek help or advice, including reporting concerns about others if needed

Respectful relationships, including friendships

- The characteristics of positive and healthy friendships (in all contexts, including online), including trust, respect, honesty, kindness, generosity, boundaries, privacy, consent, the management of conflict and reconciliation and ending relationships. This includes different (non-sexual) types of relationship
- Practical steps they can take in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful relationships
- How stereotypes, in particular stereotypes based on sex, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability, can cause damage (e.g., how they might normalise non-consensual behaviour or encourage prejudice)
- That in school and in wider society they can expect to be treated with respect by others and that, in turn, they should show due respect to others, including people in positions of authority, and due tolerance of other people's beliefs
- About different types of bullying (including cyber-bullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders to report bullying and where to get help
- That some types of behaviour within relationships are criminal, including violent behaviour and coercive control
- What constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why these are always unacceptable
- The legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality (particularly with reference to the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010) and that everyone is unique and equal

Online and media

- Their rights, responsibilities and opportunities online, including that the same expectations of behaviour apply in all contexts, including online
- About online risks, including that any material someone provides to another has the potential to be shared online and the difficulty of removing potentially compromising material placed online
- Not to provide material to others that they wouldn't want shared further, and not to share personal material which is sent to them What to do and where to get support to report material or manage issues online
- The impact of viewing harmful content
- That specifically sexually explicit material (e.g. pornography) presents a distorted picture of sexual behaviours, can damage the way people see themselves in relation to others and negatively affect how they behave towards sexual partners
- That sharing and viewing indecent images of children (including those created by children) is a criminal offence which carries severe penalties including jail
- How information and data is generated, collected, shared and used online

Being safe

- The concepts of, and laws relating to, sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, forced marriage, honour-based violence and female genital mutilation, and how these can affect current and future relationships
- How people can actively communicate and recognise consent from others, including sexual consent, and how and when consent can be withdrawn (in all contexts, including online)

Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health

- How to recognise the characteristics and positive aspects of healthy one-to-one intimate relationships, which include mutual respect, consent, loyalty, trust, shared interests and outlook, sex and friendship
- That all aspects of health can be affected by choices they make in sex and relationships, positively or negatively (e.g. physical, emotional, mental, sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing)
- The facts about reproductive health, including fertility and the potential impact of lifestyle on fertility for men and women, and menopause
- That there are a range of strategies for identifying and managing sexual pressure, including understanding peer pressure, resisting pressure and not pressuring others
- That they have a choice to delay sex or enjoy intimacy without sex
- The facts about the full range of contraceptive choices, efficacy and options available
- The facts around pregnancy, including miscarriage The facts about puberty and menstruation
- That there are choices in relation to pregnancy (with medically and legally accurate, impartial information on all options, including keeping the baby, adoption, abortion and where to get further help)
- How the different sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDs are transmitted, how risk can be reduced through safer sex (including condom use) and the importance of and facts about testing
- About the prevalence of some STIs, the impact they can have on those who contract them and key facts about treatment
- How the use of alcohol and drugs can lead to risky sexual behaviour
- How to get further advice, including how and where to access confidential sexual and reproductive health and advice and treatment

Source:

These expectations are set out in the Department for Education's guidance for schools on relationships education, RSE and health education.