66 – Relationship and Sex Education Policy (RSE)

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Committee responsible for policy: The Board

Signed by M Atkin Director on behalf of Geraldine Kelly — Chair of The Board

Review No.	Date	Summary of Changes	Reviewer
New Policy	7/10/26		S Brookes

Relationship and Sex Education Policy

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1. Aims

At The Ridge Employability College, we believe that accessible and inclusive Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is an essential part of our responsibility to safeguard, support and prepare young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) for adulthood and life after college.

The aims of RSE at The Ridge Employability College are to:

- Provide all learners with information about relationships, sex, health and wellbeing that is accessible, meaningful and tailored to their individual needs and level of understanding.
- Support learners to understand and develop positive, respectful, and healthy relationships in all contexts. This includes friendships, family relationships, intimate relationships, employment, and in their wider community.
- Support learners to understand how to look after their physical, emotional, social and mental wellbeing, and how this can support their independence and quality of life.
- Ensure that learning is tailored to individual needs, recognising that learners with SEND may require additional teaching, repetition, visual supports and personalised approaches to develop understanding and apply learning in real-life situations.
- Promote respect, equality, diversity and inclusion, challenging stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination and harmful behaviours appropriately.
- Develop learners' understanding of online safety, digital relationships and the potential risks associated with social media, online communication, gaming and emerging technologies.
- Acknowledge the increased vulnerability of learners with SEND to harmful sexualised behaviour, sexual abuse, exploitation and violence, bullying and other issues.
- Ensure learners know how and when to access appropriate support, advice and health services.

2. Statutory requirements

Whilst statutory Relationships and Sex Education guidance applies to schools, there is currently no standalone statutory RSE guidance specifically for post-16 specialist colleges. This policy has therefore been developed with reference to the Department for Education's *Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Statutory Guidance (July 2025)* and adapted to meet the needs of young adults aged 16-25 attending The Ridge Employability College. The college recognises that students with SEND may require a personalised, developmentally appropriate and graduated approach to RSE that supports preparation for adulthood, independence, healthy relationships, participation in the community and personal safety. All learners are required to act in a manner that supports a safe, respectful, inclusive, and productive learning environment. By enrolling at the college, learners agree to comply with all college policies, procedures, and regulations, including but not limited to:

- Equalities Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- GDPR Policy
- Curriculum Policy
- Mobile Phone (Smart Technology) Policy

Guiding Principles

The delivery of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) at The Ridge Employabilty College is underpinned by the following principles, adapted from the Department for Education's *Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Statutory Guidance (July 2025)*.

Learner Engagement

Our RSE curriculum is informed by the views, experiences and needs of our learners. We actively seek learner voice to ensure that learning is relevant, engaging and meaningful, and supports learners to develop the knowledge and skills needed for adult life. Learners are encouraged to contribute to the development and evaluation of the curriculum wherever possible.

Partnership and Transparency with Parents, Carers and Advocates

We recognise the important role that parents, carers, families and advocates play in supporting learners' development. The college is committed to being open and transparent about the content and resources used within RSE and will work collaboratively with families to promote consistent messages around relationships, health, wellbeing and personal safety.

A Positive and Empowering Approach

RSE learning promotes self-esteem, confidence, healthy relationships, respect for others, and positive wellbeing. Teaching helps learners develop the skills needed to build safe and fulfilling relationships and make informed choices throughout adulthood and life after college.

Carefully Sequenced Learning

RSE is planned and delivered in a logical sequence, building on learners' existing knowledge, understanding, and experiences. Learning is designed to prepare learners for adulthood by equipping them with the knowledge and skills they need before they encounter new situations, helping to reduce risk and promote positive outcomes.

Relevant and Responsive

Our curriculum is personalised to meet the diverse needs of learners with SEND. Teaching is adapted to learners' ages, developmental stages, emotional needs, communication needs, and individual circumstances. Learning reflects current safeguarding concerns, local issues, and the real-life experiences that learners may encounter in their communities and online.

Skilled and Safe Delivery

RSE is delivered by appropriately trained staff and, where appropriate, specialist professionals. Teaching takes place in a safe, respectful and supportive environment that encourages participation and discussion. Staff are trained in safeguarding and understand the increased likelihood of disclosures during RSE lessons, particularly from learners who may be vulnerable to abuse, exploitation or unhealthy relationships.

A Whole-College Approach

RSE is most effective when embedded across the wider college culture. It forms part of our whole-college approach to safeguarding, wellbeing, and behaviour. Consistent messages are reinforced across the curriculum and wider college life to support learners' personal development and safety. Additionally, the college is collaborating with Pol-Ed which is an educational programme made up of various phases of intervention, working collaboratively with the educational sector, Police Forces, Local Authorities and wider partners with the main aim to keep young people safe. A positive force in education | Pol-Ed - A positive force in education

3. Policy development

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

1. Review – Members of SLT and the pastoral team will work together and pull all relevant information including relevant national and local guidance.
2. Staff consultation – all college staff were given the opportunity to look at the policy and make recommendations.
3. Consultation – we investigated what exactly learners want from their RSE curriculum through discussions in PSHE lessons. We also use suggestion boxes for learners who do not want to verbally contribute to staff.
4. Ratification – once amendments were made, the policy was shared with governors and ratified

4. Definition

RSE helps learners develop the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to build healthy relationships, make informed choices, look after their well-being, and stay safe. It also supports learners in preparing for adulthood and becoming as independent as possible in life after college.

RSE involves a combination of sharing information and exploring issues and values.

RSE is not about the promotion of sexual activity.

5. Curriculum

Our PSHE and RSE curriculum is delivered in line with our three-year PSHE plan. Each learner is assigned to a stage from 1 to 5 and receives PSHE education that is tailored to their ability and level of understanding.

At The Ridge Employability College, all RSE lessons are adapted to meet individual learners' levels of understanding, communication needs and emotional maturity. We recognise that learners with SEND develop at different rates and may require personalised approaches to learning.

If learners, ask questions outside the scope of this policy; Teachers/HLTAS/Learning Mentors will respond in an appropriate manner so that learners are fully informed and don't seek answers online.

We will share all curriculum materials with parents and carers on request.

6. Delivery of RSE

RSE is taught within the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum.

Learners will only access learning that is appropriate to their stage of development, emotional readiness and level of understanding. Not all learners will be taught the same content at the same time, and some topics may be adapted, revisited or delivered in a different way to ensure they are meaningful and appropriate for the individual. The required content is communicated to learners clearly, in a carefully sequenced way and within a planned scheme of work

The RSE curriculum has been carefully adapted to ensure that learners receive the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to develop healthy relationships, make informed choices, understand personal boundaries and keep themselves safe. Our priority is to provide learning that supports learners' wellbeing, independence and safety both now and in adult life.

RSE at The Ridge Employability college includes learning about:

- Understanding male and female body parts and using the correct names for them.
- Understanding the physical and emotional changes that happen during puberty.
- Learning about menstruation and masturbation as part of normal human development.
- Understanding sexuality, gender identity and individual differences.
- Learning about reproduction, pregnancy and birth.
- Understanding what makes a healthy and safe sexual relationship.
- Learning about different methods of contraception and pregnancy prevention.
- Understanding sexually transmitted infections (STIs), how they are spread and how they can be prevented.
- Understanding sexual consent, personal boundaries and the importance of choice and respect in relationships.
- Developing the skills to recognise healthy and unhealthy relationships.
- Understanding online relationships, online safety and the risks of exploitation.
- Knowing how and where to access support, advice and healthcare services when needed

Throughout each RSE lesson we will use appropriate material to assist learning, such as:

- Diagrams
- Videos

- Discussions and practical activities

Delivery staff will make sure that all learners' views are listened to and will encourage them to ask questions and engage in discussion. Delivering staff will answer questions sensitively, honestly, and appropriately for the level of understanding of learners.

We may amend our curriculum content to respond to the needs and context of our learners, to discuss issues affecting them in an appropriate level of understanding manner. We will inform parents and carers of any deviation from our published policy in advance and share any relevant materials on request.

1.1 Inclusivity

We will teach about these topics in a manner that:

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

We will also:

Make sure that learners 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

2.1 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
- Would support learners in applying their knowledge in different contexts and settings
- Are age-appropriate, given the age and maturity of the pupils
- 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 learner's experiences and won't provoke distress

We will make sure that when we consult parents/carers we provide examples of the resources that the college plans to use.

7. Use of external organisations and materials

We will make sure that an agency and any materials used are accurate, age and stage appropriate and unbiased and in line with our legal duties around political impartiality.

We **will**:

- Make appropriate checks and engage with external agencies to make sure that their approach to teaching about RSE is balanced, and it and the resources they intend to use:
    - Are age-appropriate
    - Are in line with learners' developmental stage
    - Comply with:
        - This policy
        - The Teachers' Standards
        - The Equality Act 2010
        - The Human Rights Act 1998
        - The 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:
    - What they're going to say
    - 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 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 the teacher is in the room during any sessions with external speakers
- Inform all external organisations that the college is legally obliged to share all content with parents and carers
- 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
- Work with agencies who don't allow their material to be shared with parents and carers

8. Roles and responsibilities

8.1 The governing board

The governing board will approve the RSE policy and hold the head of college to account for its implementation.

8.2 The head of college

The head of college is responsible for making sure that RSE is taught consistently across the college, for sharing all resources and materials with parents and carers, and for managing requests to withdraw learners from non-science components of RSE (see section 9).

8.3 Staff

Staff are responsible for:

- Delivering RSE in a way that is sensitive, high-quality and appropriate for learners' level of understanding.
- Modelling positive attitudes to RSE
- Monitoring progress
- Responding to the needs of individual learners
- Responding appropriately to learners whose parents/carers wish them to be withdrawn from the non-science components of RSE
- Modelling positive behaviour and avoiding language that might perpetuate harmful stereotypes, and being conscious of everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and stereotypes
- Reporting any safeguarding concerns or disclosures that learners may make as a result of the subject content to the colleges designated safeguarding lead (DSL) Debra Whittington.

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 the headteacher. Holly Picton is lead for RSE at the Ridge Employability College. Teachers and HLTAs are responsible for teaching RSE at the Ridge Employability College.

8.4 Learners

Learners are expected to engage fully in RSE and, when discussing issues related to RSE, treat others with respect and sensitivity. College staff to support any learner anxieties and learners can be referred to the pastoral team for additional support if needed.

9. Parents' right to withdraw

As a Post-16 specialist college, we recognise the important role that parents, carers, families and advocates play in supporting learners' understanding of relationships, health, wellbeing and personal safety. We are committed to working in partnership with families and being open and transparent about the content of our RSE curriculum.

Many of our learners are young adults and are supported to develop increasing independence, choice and decision-making skills. Where appropriate, learners will be involved in decisions about their RSE provision, taking account of their age, understanding, communication needs, capacity and individual circumstances.

Parents, carers and advocates are encouraged to discuss any concerns about RSE with the college. The college will work collaboratively with families to ensure that learning is appropriate, accessible and tailored to individual needs.

As there is no specific statutory right to withdraw learners from RSE in a Post-16 specialist college setting, any requests regarding participation in particular aspects of the curriculum will be considered on an individual basis by head of college/curriculum manager. Decisions will take into account:

- The learner's age, understanding and views.
- The learner's communication and support needs.
- Preparation for adulthood outcomes.
- The learner's safety, wellbeing and safeguarding needs.
- The importance of providing learners with knowledge and skills to help them develop healthy relationships, make informed choices and protect themselves from harm.

The college has a duty to safeguard learners and to equip them with the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to stay safe. For this reason, learning relating to personal safety, healthy relationships, consent, boundaries, abuse, online safety and safeguarding is considered an essential part of the curriculum and will not normally be withdrawn.

Where concerns arise, the college will work with parents, carers, advocates and the learner to agree the most appropriate way to meet the learner's needs while ensuring that they receive the information necessary to support their safety, wellbeing and preparation for adult life.

10. Training

The college is committed to ensuring that all staff involved in the delivery of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) receive appropriate training and support to fulfil their roles effectively. Staff delivering RSE must have the knowledge, skills and confidence to create a safe, inclusive and supportive learning environment and to respond appropriately to learners' needs.

Training may include:

- The aims and content of the college's RSE curriculum.
- Teaching RSE to learners with SEND.

11. Monitoring arrangements

The delivery of RSE is monitored by Sharon Brookes through planning scrutinies and learning walks.

Learners' development in RSE is monitored by class teachers as part of our internal assessment systems.

12. A copy of the TREC plan is available on request to Sharon Brookes@theridgecollege.co.uk .