

ESHS RSHE Recognition Award Policy Checklist

Please note: 'While schools are not required to publish a policy for **health** education, it would be good practice for schools to set out some of the details about how health education will be taught.' (DfE, 2025)¹

RSE policy must cover:	Does this area of your policy:
Clear definition of RSE (Relationships and Sex Education).	• Define what RSE is. • Explain the difference between Relationships and Sex Education. • Demonstrate how these aims are consistent with the school's ethos and values. <input data-bbox="2011 515 2042 537" type="checkbox"/>
Content and delivery of RSE.	• Sets out the content to be taught. • Specifies how and when the content is delivered. • Identifies who delivers the content (staff and/or external providers). <input data-bbox="2011 738 2042 761" type="checkbox"/>
Roles and responsibilities.	• Describes who is responsible for co – ordinating RSE. • Who teaches RSE. • How staff are supported to deliver effective, high quality RSE (training opportunities, CPD) <input data-bbox="2011 919 2042 941" type="checkbox"/>
Parental request to withdraw from all or some of Sex Education.	• Give clear guidance that parents can withdraw their child from all or some Sex Education delivered as part of statutory RSE. • State that the headteacher should discuss request with parents/carers as best practice (discussion of benefits of RSE, detrimental impacts of withdrawal from RSE). • State that 'from three terms before the pupil turns 16, a pupil can choose to opt back into sex education even if their parent has requested withdrawal' (DfE, 2025)² <input data-bbox="2011 1094 2042 1117" type="checkbox"/>

	• States clearly that parents / carers cannot withdraw their child from Relationships or Health Education as well as topics taught as part of the Science curriculum. • States how a child will be supported and offered appropriate, alternative education through periods of withdrawal.	
How content will be made accessible to all pupils.	• State clearly how RSE content will be made accessible to all pupils, including those with SEND.	☐
Monitoring and Evaluation.	• States who is responsible for monitoring and evaluating RSE within the educational establishment. • States how RSE will be monitored and evaluated (through lesson observations, staff and pupil surveys, drop – ins or learning walks) • States how the effectiveness of RSE is evaluated by parents / carers, staff and pupils (parent / carer open evenings, pupil surveys, focus groups, workshops)	☐
Accessibility of materials.	• States how and where parents / carers can access all RSE related materials. • States that the RSE policy can be made available upon request (for free) or that the RSE policy can be accessed via the school's or educational establishment's website.	☐
Answering questions.	• States clearly how questions will be answered, including guidance on answering questions on topics which the educational establishment does not cover.	☐
Involvement of parents / carers, pupils and staff in the development or RSE materials.	• States that parents / carers have been consulted on the development/review of the RSE policy.	☐

	States how parents / carers, pupils and staff have been involved in the development and review of RSE provision (curriculum plans and materials).	
Policy renewal.	States how it has been produced, who approves the policy and when and how the policy will be reviewed.	☐

Further guidance

The RSHE statutory guidance introduces ‘guiding principles.’ To develop the educational establishment’s policy further, explicitly reference these principles and explain how the school will implement each one.

Guiding principles

a. Engagement with pupils

- Explain how your curriculum is sequenced.
- Take into consideration the context of the establishment and how the curriculum is relevant and engaging.
- Use pupil voice to shape curriculum content (surveys, feedback, focus groups and co – production).
- Adapt resources to meet the needs of pupils to ensure inclusivity.

b. Engagement and transparency with parents

- All RSE materials available for parents / carers to review.
- Parents retain the right to withdraw their child from sex education (up to 3 terms before the child turns 16).
- Full transparency with parents / carers over curriculum content, materials and resources.
- Use parent / carer voice to shape content and resources (surveys, focus groups, open door policy).

c. Positivity

- Focus on building positive attitudes and life skills.
- Encourage healthy behaviours in relationships, emotions and mental health.
- Avoiding language that might normalise harmful behaviour (gendered language that might encourage stereotypes around sexual behaviour).

d. Careful sequencing

- Content is age and stage appropriate.
- Teaching logically sequenced (teaching consent before moving onto sexual relationships).
- Early teaching on friendships, respect, and safety lays the foundation for later topics.

e. Relevant and Responsive

- Curriculum reflects local culture, issues and services.
- Engage and partner with local services, and community groups.
- Reference and recognise how social issues impact people in real life environments.

f. Skilled delivery of participative education

- Delivered by trained staff.
- External providers who follow safeguarding, inclusivity and DfE aligned practice.
- Teaching staff confident at responding to disclosures and safeguarding concerns.
- Sessions to be trauma – informed and engaging.

g. Whole school approach

- RSE part of the school's wider wellbeing, behaviour, inclusion and safeguarding strategy.
- RSE is reflected in the culture, ethos and environment of the school (not just one of RSE lessons).
- Entire school community is committed to reinforcing the key messages of RSE provision (Senior leadership team, pastoral team, safeguarding team, teaching and non – teaching staff).
- Link RSE policy to other policies (behaviour, safeguarding, mental health and wellbeing).

ESHS recommendations

RSE policy must cover:	Does this area of your policy:
Approach to teaching RSE.	• Explain how to create a safe environment (group agreement, ground rules, using anonymous question boxes, states that sexism, racism, homophobia, and bullying are never acceptable). • Provide trigger warnings for sensitive content. • Informs learners they can leave the session if affected by any content. • Direct learners to seek support from the school nurse or another member of staff. • Have clear safeguarding procedures in place for disclosures and safeguarding concerns. • Make use of a range of interactive activities, resources and teaching strategies to engage learners. • Use accurate terminology and refer to UK laws where appropriate. • Avoiding scare tactics (such as showing explicit images of sexually transmitted infections). <input data-bbox="2011 518 2042 550" type="checkbox"/>
How content will be made accessible to learners with SEND.	• State how lessons, resources or teaching materials will be adapted to meet the needs of learners with SEND (social stories, physical resources tailored to suit sensory needs, or the use of picture exchange communication systems). <input data-bbox="2011 1260 2042 1292" type="checkbox"/>

Involvement of parents / carers.	• Clear signposting to where the educational establishments RSHE Policy can be found. • Share ESHS parents and carers online platform. • Laise with parents and carers regarding RSHE delivery. • Demonstrate how parents / carers have opportunities to be involved with RSHE and provide feedback. • How parents and carers can access resources, materials, posters and leaflets containing information related to RSHE (parent's evenings, health promotion stands).	☐
Involvement of pupils.	• Explain how pupil's views and feedback is collected. • Explain how pupil voice helps shape and develop RSHE provision. • State how RSHE provision will be LGBTQ+ inclusive, in line with government guidance. • Create LGBTQ+ safe spaces across the educational establishment.	☐

Links to further resources

1. Department for Education, Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education, 2025

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6970e7e67e827090d02d42e0/Relationships_education_relationships_and_sex_education_RSE_and_health_education_for_intro_1_September_2026_.pdf

2. Provide Community, Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Policy 2026

<https://essexsexualhealthservice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/RSHE-Policy-January-2026.pdf>

3. Essex Sexual Health Service, Commitment to Relationships and Sexual Health Education Recognition Awards Essex Criteria

<https://essexsexualhealthservice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/ESHS-RSHE-Recognition-Awards-Essex-Criteria.pdf>

Appendix

1. Department for Education, Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education, 2025
2. Department for Education, Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education, 2025

