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Relationships and Sex Education Policy

Relationship & Sex Education Policy			
Approved / Accepted by	The Lowry Academy (UL Academy School) Policy in line with United Learning policy The Local Governing Board (LGB)		
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1. Aims

At The Lowry Academy, we believe that high-quality Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) is essential to students' personal development, safeguarding, and preparation for life in modern Britain. Our RSHE provision forms part of a planned, sequenced and developmental PSHE curriculum, enabling students to acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to:

- set out the school's approach to Relationships and Sex Education in line with the DfE statutory guidance (2025);
- promote students' physical, mental and emotional wellbeing through an age-appropriate, evidence-informed RSE curriculum;
- ensure students develop the knowledge, skills and attributes they need to build positive, safe and respectful relationships, including online;
- support safeguarding by teaching students to recognise risks, seek help and report concerns;
- ensure content is inclusive of all students and respectful of diversity while not presenting contested views as fact;
- promote transparency by explaining how parents can access curriculum materials, identifying which material constitutes sex education, and how withdrawal from sex education works;
- clarify how RSE is delivered, who is responsible and how teaching is monitored and reviewed.

We adopt a whole-school approach, recognising that RSHE is most effective when embedded within our wider ethos, safeguarding culture and curriculum.

The curriculum is carefully sequenced and age-appropriate to ensure students gain knowledge and skills progressively, enabling them to make informed choices and manage risk safely. Sensitive and complex content is introduced at developmentally appropriate stages, ensuring that teaching reflects students' age, maturity and readiness, in line with statutory expectations.

2. Statutory requirements

The Lowry Academy delivers Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) in line with the Department for Education's statutory guidance (updated July 2025, effective September 2026). RSE is a compulsory part of the curriculum, ensuring all students receive accurate, age-appropriate and inclusive teaching on relationships and sex. Provision addresses safeguarding priorities, including online risks, misogyny, violence against women and girls, harmful influences, and personal safety, while promoting mental health, resilience and respect for diversity. RSE is taught within a safe, supportive environment by trained staff, with clear communication to parents and carers, and is regularly reviewed.

This policy has been developed in accordance with:

- **DfE statutory guidance:** *Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education* (effective from September 2026)
- Education Act 1996 and 2002
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Equality Act 2010

RSHE is **statutory for all secondary-aged students**. Schools must have regard to statutory guidance and publish a written RSHE policy. The school ensures all RSHE provision reflects the most recent statutory guidance and responds to emerging safeguarding risks, including online harms, misogyny and exploitation.

3. Policy Development

This policy has been developed in consultation with staff, students and parents. Parents are consulted regularly through surveys, information events and opportunities to view curriculum materials. Student voice informs curriculum development to ensure RSHE is relevant and responsive to learners' experiences.

4. Definition

RSHE includes Relationships Education, Sex Education and Health Education. It supports students' emotional, social and physical development and prepares them for adult life. RSHE is not about the promotion of sexual activity. All RSHE content is delivered in a factual, evidence-based and impartial manner, particularly in relation to sexual health, reproductive choices and relationships, ensuring students receive accurate and balanced information.

Relationships education is designed to help students build and maintain positive relationships while also recognising potential risks and harms. As part of this, teaching may cover issues such as preventing sexual abuse or avoiding the sharing of inappropriate material online, without the need to describe any sexual activity in detail.

In line with safeguarding best practice, students should also learn the correct names for different parts of the body and be able to use these terms confidently and accurately. These terms can be taught without any reference to, or details of, sexual activity.

Relationships education is compulsory, and parents do not have the right to withdraw their child from relationships education or health education.

Relationships education includes teaching about:

- families, including diverse family structures
- friendships and respectful relationships
- safe, caring and healthy relationships
- harmful relationships, sexual harassment and sexual violence
- boundaries, consent and communication
- online behaviour, digital safety, harmful online attitudes and image-sharing
- recognising and reporting unsafe behaviours

Relationships education does not describe the detail of sexual activity.

Sex Education is teaching about:

- sexual activity and sexual decision-making
- contraception and safer sex
- sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- sexual health services
- intimate relationships and sexual consent in context

5. Delivery of RSHE

RSHE is delivered through a structured PSHE curriculum, supported by Science, Computing and other subjects. A detailed curriculum map outlining content and progression across all year groups is published on the school website.

In line with statutory guidance (2026), the curriculum explicitly includes teaching about:

- Healthy relationships and consent
- Sexual health and reproduction
- Mental wellbeing and physical health
- Online safety, digital relationships and emerging risks (including AI and online harms)
- Sexual harassment and sexual violence
- Pornography and its impact on relationships and expectations
- Coercive control, domestic abuse and violence against women and girls (VAWG)
- Reproductive health, including fertility, pregnancy outcomes and miscarriage.

These areas are taught in a fact-based, age-appropriate and safeguarding-led manner, ensuring students are prepared to recognise risks and seek support. The curriculum also ensures students understand relevant laws relating to relationships, sexual consent, online behaviour and personal safety.

Teaching also develops key skills including communication, risk management, decision-making, and seeking help.

RSE at *The Lowry Academy* is delivered in a way that:

- is appropriate to age and stage
- is scientifically factual, objective and legally accurate
- equips students with communication and decision-making skills
- encourages open discussion while setting safe boundaries
- promotes respect, inclusivity and safeguarding
- avoids teaching contested views as fact
- maintains balance and impartiality

Staff will:

- *use ground rules*
- *prepare students ahead of time where appropriate*
- *signpost students to support*
- *manage disclosures in line with safeguarding procedures*
- *balance the need for accuracy with sensitivity*

Students may ask questions that are outside of the scope of the lesson or what is appropriate for a member of staff to discuss with them. This may be due to the fact that the child in question has been withdrawn from the sex education element of the subject.

Nonetheless, children's curiosity makes it unlikely that an unsatisfied request for information will end there, and it is highly likely that they will seek alternative sources. These are likely to be less reliable and even unsafe.

If a student asks a question that a member of staff cannot answer, the following steps will be followed:

- The member of staff will discreetly and sensitively reassure the student that it is normal to be curious and explain to the student why they are unable to answer the question. They may ask the student whether this is something they would feel able to ask a parent about, or signpost to specialist services if appropriate.
- The member of staff will follow safeguarding policies and procedures as appropriate, but even if the question posed does not constitute a safeguarding concern, the RSHE lead and/or the SLT line manager for RSHE will be informed on the same day.
- Leaders will consider the likelihood of the student seeking answers to their question/s elsewhere and the possible implications of this. They may consider it appropriate to contact parents to discuss how to best support and guide the student.

6. Equality, Inclusion and SEND

All students, including those with SEND, have a full entitlement to RSE, and having an additional need is never a reason to restrict access to essential learning about relationships, safety, consent and wellbeing.

Research suggests that children and adults with SEND can be more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Provision of high-quality, adapted RSE is a critical protective factor.

This section should be read in conjunction with the school's SEND Policy *and Teaching and Learning Policy*.

RSHE will respect religious and cultural diversity, uphold students' rights to accurate information and safety, and comply with the Equality Act. Teaching will avoid discrimination and protect students' dignity.

Principles

- Assume diversity, not uniformity: different students of the same faith will interpret teachings differently.
- Meet statutory RSHE outcomes while treating faith backgrounds fairly and avoiding discrimination.
- Prioritise students' wellbeing, dignity and safeguarding when adapting content.
- Engage fully with parents, students and, where appropriate, members of the community when consulting on the curriculum.

7. Safeguarding

RSHE is a key part of safeguarding. Students are taught how to recognise abuse, exploitation and risk, and how to seek support. Staff follow safeguarding procedures and report concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. RSHE is delivered in a way that does not require students to disclose personal experiences. Clear boundaries are established in all lessons, and students are supported to understand confidentiality limits and when information must be shared to keep them safe.

8. Roles and responsibilities

The governing body

The Governors will approve the RSE policy, oversee compliance, and hold the Principal to account for its implementation. The School will make an annual report to the governors regarding the policy's implementation.

The Principal

The Principal is responsible for ensuring that RSE is implemented consistently across the school, and for managing requests to withdraw students from [non-statutory/non-science] components of RSE (see section **12**).

RSHE Lead

The RSHE lead oversees the design of the curriculum, the delivery of content and staff training to deliver the content in the most appropriate way.

Staff

Staff are responsible for:

- Delivering RSHE in a sensitive way
- Modelling positive attitudes to RSHE
- Monitoring progress
- Responding to the needs of individual students
- Responding appropriately to students whose parents wish them to be withdrawn from the [non-statutory/non-science] components of RSE
- 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 Principal.

Students

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

9. Training

All staff delivering RSHE receive relevant and continued CPD on effective delivery, and it is included in our continuing professional development calendar.

The PSHE Coordinator will also invite visitors from outside the school, such as school nurses or sexual health professionals, to provide support and training to staff teaching RSE. The Lowry Academy supports staff by:

- Holding dedicated CPD and consultation sessions where teachers can review resources, signpost potential risks or barriers (including for SEND and faith sensitivities), and propose adaptations.
- Using structured questionnaires (to capture training needs/confidence) and small subject-team workshops for collaborative planning.
- Ensuring non-specialists have access to planning templates, vocabulary banks and subject knowledge materials.

Recording agreed changes, CPD actions and resource requests and sharing with SLT, who (once agreed) will then share with staff

10. Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation

Learning is assessed through low-stakes quizzes, discussions, and reflective activities. RSHE is monitored through student voice, safeguarding data, curriculum review, lesson visits and work scrutiny. This ensures the school can evidence progression and impact over time.

Assessment in RSHE is low-stakes, formative and safeguarding-led. It includes scenario-based activities, discussion and knowledge checks which assess students' understanding and ability to apply learning safely, rather than personal beliefs or experiences. Assessment does not require personal disclosure and is used to support learning and inform curriculum development.

The PSHE co-ordinator will review this policy annually. The policy will also be reviewed whenever the statutory guidance/requirements relating to RSE is updated. At every review, the governing body and the Principal will approve the policy.

11. Engagement with parents and carers

Parents are provided with clear information about what is taught and when, including the rationale for sequencing sensitive topics. This ensures transparency and supports parents in understanding how content is age-appropriate and safeguarding-led. Parents are informed that sensitive content is sequenced to maximise safeguarding and age appropriateness. The Lowry Academy consults with parents by:

- Publishing a clear consultation timetable at the start of the academic year and invite participation by email, school app and newsletter.
- Providing an online survey and response form with focused questions and space for free-text comments.
- Feeding back decisions and next steps to all parents within two weeks of the consultation closing, including any changes made in response and how concerns were addressed.
- Offering follow-up meetings for parents with specific concerns.

Parents can request to see all student-facing lesson materials by contacting ask.lowry@lowryacademy.org.uk. We will endeavour to respond to requests within 48 hours, but if parents have immediate concerns, please contact *the school office on 0161 529 5200*.

12. Parents' right to withdraw

The Lowry Academy acknowledges the right of parents to withdraw their child from some or all of the sex education provided (except from sex education taught under the science curriculum), but not from relationships education.

Parents wishing to discuss the withdrawal of their child from some or all of the sex education provided should contact ask.lowry@lowryacademy.org.uk, outlining this request.

In considering such a request, *The Lowry Academy* will use the following process:

- *The Principal* will meet with the parent (and, if appropriate, the child) to ensure their wishes are understood and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum and the content that will be covered.
- *The Principal* will discuss with the parent the benefits of the child receiving this important education and any detrimental effects that withdrawal might have on the child, including

social or emotional effects of being excluded as well as the likelihood of the child hearing from their peers what was covered (and having that content channelled through a child's voice rather than a teacher's).

- *The Principal* will outline provision that will be made during lessons where the child has been withdrawn from sex education, which will be appropriate and purposeful.

Once those discussions have taken place, except in exceptional circumstances (e.g. safeguarding concerns), *The Lowry Academy* will respect the parents' request to withdraw the child, up to and until three terms before the child turns 16. After that point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, the school will make arrangements to provide the child with sex education during one of those terms.