A5 Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policy

This policy sets out The Purcell School's whole-school approach to Relationships and Sex Education (RSE). We believe that RSE is vital for the personal, social and emotional development of our students. It equips them with the knowledge, skills and values they need to build safe, respectful and enjoyable relationships, to stay healthy and safe both offline and online, and to take responsibility for their own wellbeing.

The Purcell School believes that all children and young people have a right to good, inclusive RSE that meets their needs. As a specialist music school in which most students board, and where a significant proportion of our boarding community joins us from overseas, we design our provision for young people who live and study together, often far from home, and who rely on the School's support with their relationships, their health and their safety.

In providing RSE we uphold the ethos and values of our School and its commitment to equality and the celebration of difference.

The Purcell School
for young musicians

Contents

Aims 3
Statutory Requirements and Context 3
Policy Development and Consultation 4
Definition 4
Guiding Principles 5
Curriculum and Subject Content 5
Delivery of RSE and Safe and Effective Practice 7
Differentiation of RSE According to Need 8
Roles and Responsibilities 9
Openness and Engagement with Parents 10
Student Voice 10
Parents' Right to Withdraw 11
Safeguarding and Confidentiality 11
Training 11
Working with Visitors and External Agencies 12
Working with Other Departments Across the School 12
Monitoring Arrangements 12
Policy Review 13
Appendix 1 – Curriculum Overview 14
Appendix 2 – Consent 17
Appendix 3 – Specific Issues Relating to RSE 18
Appendix 4 – Requests for Withdrawal 19
Appendix 5 – Ensuring RSE is Inclusive for Students with SEND 20
Appendix 6 – Tackling Sexual Harassment and Online Sexual Abuse 21
Appendix 7 – Student Voice: Consultation Summary 2026 22

Aims

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

- Provide a framework in which sensitive discussions can take place
- Prepare students for puberty and adult life, and give them an understanding of sexual development and the importance of health, hygiene and consent
- Help students develop self-respect, confidence and empathy, and the communication skills and assertiveness to express their needs and boundaries
- Create a positive culture around issues of sexuality and relationships, and build healthy norms and attitudes
- Teach students the correct vocabulary to describe themselves and their bodies
- Enable students to recognise unhealthy, coercive or abusive relationships (offline and online) and to know how and where to seek help

Statutory Requirements and Context

The School must teach relationships and sex education under sections 34 and 35 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019. In delivering RSE we have regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance, Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education, which takes effect from 1 September 2026, and to Keeping Children Safe in Education. As an independent school, the requirement to have a written, published RSE policy applies to us.

Guidance on health education does not formally apply to independent schools, which instead make provision under the Independent School Standards; we nonetheless follow it as a matter of good practice.

When teaching RSE, the School does not unlawfully discriminate against students on the basis of any protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. Although independent schools are not subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty in the same way as maintained schools, we are mindful of its principles and of the SEND Code of Practice when planning and delivering RSE. We make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantage and are mindful of the needs of all students, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

This policy is freely available to anyone on request, is published on the School website, and should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies:

- A8 PSHEE Policy
- P1 Child Protection / Safeguarding Policy
- P16 Peer-on-Peer (Child-on-Child) Abuse Policy
- H10 Online Safety Policy
- P2 Anti-Bullying (including Anti-Cyber Bullying) Policy
- P4 Behaviour and Sanctions Policy
- P8 Drugs and Alcohol Policy
- P17 Preventing Radicalisation and Extremism Policy
- P10 Promotion of British Values Policy
- A6 Careers Education, Information and Advice Policy
- P12 Sixth Form Personal Development Programme

Policy Development and Consultation

This policy has been produced by Tom Burns (Vice-Principal), working alongside the PSHEE Coordinator (Martina Swift), the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Director of Boarding, to ensure that safeguarding and the boarding context are fully reflected. It has been developed in line with the statutory guidance taking effect from 1 September 2026. Following consultation, the policy will be reviewed by the nominated governor for child protection, who will raise any questions, before it is approved by the Governing Body for adoption. The consultation and policy development process was implemented as follows:

- **Staff consultation:** all relevant School staff were given the opportunity to examine the draft policy and make recommendations;
- **Student consultation:** students gave their views through structured student voice sessions led by senior staff with Years 7 to 10 and Year 12, and through ongoing activities in PSHEE lessons. A summary of what students told us and how the School has responded is in Appendix 7;
- **Parent/stakeholder consultation:** the draft policy, together with a detailed curriculum overview describing each unit of RSE taught in every year group, was shared with all parents and carers. Parents were invited to give feedback within a stated period through an online consultation form, with the dedicated PSHE email address (PSHE@purcell-school.org) available for questions or requests to view materials;

We consulted with parents online and in writing rather than through a single face-to-face forum. This reflects the nature of our community as a specialist boarding school with families living across the UK and internationally. Written and online consultation gives every family, wherever they are in the world and whatever the time difference, a genuine and equal opportunity to read the draft policy, review the curriculum overview and respond.

Consultation is not the same as negotiation: while we listen carefully and respond to the views of our community, parents cannot veto curriculum content, and the Governing Body holds ultimate responsibility for the policy and for the curriculum. A summary of consultation themes and the School's response will be retained as part of the policy review record.

Definition

So that students and parents have clear information, we distinguish between the following:

- **Relationships Education:** learning about families and people who care for us, respectful relationships including friendships, being safe, and online and media relationships. Relationships education does not involve explaining the detail of sexual activity, but may cover sensitive topics such as sexual abuse and harassment in order to keep students safe. There is no right to withdraw from relationships education.
- **Sex Education:** learning about intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health, contraception, the law relating to sexual activity and consent, and the influence of pornography. Parents have the right to request that their child is withdrawn from sex education, except for the biological content taught within the Science curriculum (see Parents' Right to Withdraw).
- **Health and wellbeing content:** learning about physical and mental health and wellbeing, taught through the School's PSHEE curriculum. There is no right to withdraw from this content.

RSE is about the emotional, social and cultural development of students. It combines the sharing of factual information with the exploration of issues and values. RSE is not about the promotion of sexual activity.

Guiding Principles

Our curriculum is developed with the Department for Education's guiding principles for relationships, sex and health education in mind:

- **Engagement with students:** the curriculum is informed by meaningful student voice so that it is relevant and engaging (see Student Voice);
- **Engagement and transparency with parents:** we engage parents on the content of RSE and are transparent about all the materials we use (see Openness and Engagement with Parents);
- **Positivity:** we build positive attitudes and healthy norms about relationships, health and wellbeing. We avoid language that might normalise harmful behaviour, including gendered language that could normalise male violence or stigmatise boys;
- **Careful sequencing:** we cover all statutory content, sequenced so that students are equipped with knowledge before they are likely to need it, in order to prevent harm;
- **Relevant and responsive:** the curriculum is age- and stage-appropriate and responsive to the needs of our particular community, including our boarding and international students;
- **Skilled delivery:** RSE is delivered by staff, or carefully chosen external providers, who have the knowledge, skills and confidence to create a safe and supportive environment and who are trained in safeguarding;
- **Whole-school approach:** RSE is embedded within a wider culture of wellbeing, safeguarding and positive relationships across the School.

Curriculum and Subject Content

RSE is taught within the personal, social, health and economic (PSHEE) education curriculum, following a spiral approach that revisits and deepens learning as students mature. Biological aspects of reproduction and puberty are taught within the Science curriculum, and RSE links to and complements learning elsewhere, in particular Science.

RSE is also reinforced through the School's wider pastoral curriculum, including assemblies, tutorials, boarding provision and responsive pastoral sessions. These opportunities allow students to revisit and apply learning in real-life contexts, explore current or emerging issues, and receive timely support where a pastoral or safeguarding need arises. Planned statutory RSE content remains mapped through the PSHEE curriculum and Appendix 1. The sex education content within our planned curriculum is identified in the curriculum overview (Appendix 1), which gives parents advance notice of what is taught and when. Where a responsive pastoral session would introduce sex education content not shown in Appendix 1, we will inform parents in advance.

Our programme is informed by the PSHE Association's Curriculum Model for key stages 3 and 4 and its Programme of Study for PSHE education (2026). As a PSHE Association member school, we use its curriculum guidance and quality-assured resources as a basis for planning, adapted to our students' needs, age and stage, safeguarding priorities, boarding context and wider pastoral provision. A curriculum overview is set out in Appendix 1; units containing content defined as sex education are marked [SE]. Sixth-form students receive RSE through assemblies, the Sixth Form Personal Development Programme and focused sessions on consent, sexual harassment and

sexual violence, supported by external experts. The Sixth Form Personal Development Programme is reviewed annually and will be updated for the relevant academic year. Parents may request further information about sixth-form RSE content in the same way as for Years 7–11.

Because RSE is most meaningful when relationships and sex education are taught in an integrated way, single topics may combine both. We define sex education with reference to the PSHE Association's Programme of Study for PSHE education (2026), which identifies the learning opportunities classified as 'Sex education' at key stages 3 and 4. Where a lesson or unit contains this content, it is clearly identified in our planning and in Appendix 1, so that we can honour the wishes of any parent who has requested withdrawal and so that parents can see in advance what is taught and when. If we need to make a significant change to the published curriculum or to what is set out in this policy, for example to respond to an emerging safeguarding issue, parents will be informed in advance of any change that affects what is set out in this policy.

Teaching about the law

Where relevant, applicable law is taught in a factual, balanced way so that students understand their rights and responsibilities. This includes, for example, the law relating to: consent and the age of consent; marriage, including forced marriage; domestic abuse, stalking and sexual offences; female genital mutilation, 'virginity testing' and hymenoplasty; sexual abuse, harassment and exploitation, including public sexual harassment; the Online Safety Act; the sharing of images, including youth-produced and AI-generated sexual imagery and deepfakes, online grooming and sextortion; pornography; abortion; protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010; alcohol, smoking, vaping and drugs; gambling; carrying knives and weapons; hate crime; medical consent and Gillick competence; and extremism and radicalisation. Students are also taught to recognise and challenge misogyny, including online misogyny and so-called 'incel' culture, and to understand the links between sexism, misogyny and violence against women and girls, alongside the importance of positive male role models (see also Appendix 2).

Assessment

Learning in RSE is assessed within PSHEE using a baseline-and-endpoint approach (drawing out students' prior understanding at the start of a unit and reviewing progress at the end) together with teacher assessment and student reflection. This is evidenced within the School's internal assessment systems and informs future planning.

Delivery of RSE and Safe and Effective Practice

RSE is delivered in a non-judgemental, factual way, using correct terminology where appropriate. Staff do not promote personal views or beliefs when teaching RSE, and present content in a factual, balanced and age-appropriate way. Staff establish and reinforce ground rules with each class, use distancing techniques (for example framing discussion around fictional scenarios rather than personal experience), and create a climate in which sensitive issues can be explored safely and respectfully. Where a student expresses a harmful view (for example a misogynistic idea), staff challenge the idea rather than the person expressing it.

Answering students' questions

Students are encouraged to ask questions, including anonymously. Teachers answer questions honestly and in an age-appropriate way, taking time where needed and clarifying what is being asked. Where a question goes beyond the planned curriculum, or relates to sex education content from which a student has been withdrawn, staff will respond carefully and will not answer in a way that undermines a withdrawal arrangement or is inappropriate for the class; instead they will use their professional judgement, may speak to the student individually where appropriate, and will follow up with parents and the safeguarding team as necessary, so that students are not left to seek answers online. Any question that raises a safeguarding concern is referred immediately in line with the Child Protection Policy.

Sensitive content: self-harm, suicide and eating disorders

Some content requires particular care. When teaching about mental health, self-harm, suicide prevention or eating disorders, staff take account of the age, maturity and personal experiences of students and the views of parents. Staff avoid discussing methods, avoid emotive language, images or video that could inadvertently signpost harmful content, and avoid language that romanticises these conditions. Where a member of staff has a concern about an individual student, or a student discloses, safeguarding procedures are followed without delay.

Differentiation of RSE According to Need

RSE is planned to be inclusive of, and accessible to, all students. We are mindful of the diversity of our community, including students with SEND, students with English as an additional language, LGBT students and those with LGBT family members, and students from a wide range of cultural and religious backgrounds. Teaching related to sexual orientation and gender reassignment is delivered clearly, sensitively and respectfully, in line with the statutory guidance.

For some students with SEND, additional or individual planning is needed; we consider maturity rather than chronological age alone, and work in consultation with the Head of Learning Support and relevant house staff. Small-group or individual sessions may be provided where these would better meet a student's needs. Detailed guidance for staff is set out in Appendix 5. Under the Equality Act 2010, positive action can be taken to address particular disadvantages affecting a group because of a protected characteristic, recognising that some students may be more vulnerable to exploitation or bullying and that RSE can be an especially important subject for them.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body

The Governing Body holds ultimate responsibility for this policy. It approves the policy and holds the Principal to account for its implementation. The nominated governor for child protection reviews the policy on the Governing Body's behalf and raises any questions before it is approved for adoption. Governors satisfy themselves that all students make progress towards the expected outcomes, that teaching is accessible to students with SEND, that curriculum content and materials are aligned with the statutory guidance, and that clear information is available to parents about content, materials, external providers and the right to withdraw.

The Principal

The Principal is responsible for ensuring RSE is taught consistently across the School and for handling requests to withdraw students from sex education (see Parents' Right to Withdraw).

The Vice-Principal

The Vice-Principal holds strategic oversight of the RSE and PSHEE programmes, ensuring that provision is aligned with the School's values, safeguarding priorities, boarding context and wider pastoral curriculum. The Vice-Principal works with the PSHEE Coordinator, Designated Safeguarding Lead, Director of Teaching and Learning and relevant pastoral leaders to monitor the implementation and impact of the RSE programme, respond to emerging needs, and ensure that appropriate training and support are in place. The Vice-Principal also supports reporting to the Governing Body where appropriate.

The PSHEE Coordinator

The PSHEE Coordinator (Martina Swift) leads the design, delivery and day-to-day evaluation of the RSE programme, including curriculum planning, adapting resources, gathering student feedback and identifying emerging curriculum needs. The PSHEE Coordinator manages the involvement of external providers and works with the Vice-Principal, Designated Safeguarding Lead and relevant pastoral leaders to ensure that RSE is delivered safely, consistently and in line with this policy. Quality assurance of RSE teaching and learning is overseen through the School's teaching and learning processes, supported by the Director of Teaching and Learning and Senior Leadership Team.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) supports the PSHEE Coordinator and pastoral staff where RSE content intersects with safeguarding, emerging risks, disclosures or individual student vulnerability. The DSL also helps ensure that relevant safeguarding themes inform curriculum planning and that any disclosures arising from RSE are managed in line with the School's Child Protection / Safeguarding Policy.

Staff

Staff who teach RSE are responsible for delivering it sensitively, modelling positive attitudes, monitoring progress, responding to the needs of individual students, and responding appropriately where a student has been withdrawn from sex education. Staff do not have the right to opt out of teaching RSE; any member of staff with concerns is encouraged to discuss them with the Principal.

Students

Students are expected to engage fully with RSE and to treat others with respect and sensitivity when discussing the issues it raises.

Openness and Engagement with Parents

We work in partnership with parents and carers, recognising that they are the first educators of their children and that open conversations at home are an important form of early intervention and safeguarding. Parents are informed about the RSE programme through this policy, through the curriculum overview, and through advance notice of when sex education content will be taught, so that they can continue conversations started in class and support learning at home.

We proactively share with parents a representative sample of the resources we plan to use, and parents are entitled to view all of the curriculum materials we use to teach RSE. Requests to view materials, and any questions or feedback about RSE, should be sent to our dedicated PSHE email address: PSHE@purcell-school.org. Given that most of our students board and that a significant proportion of our families live overseas, we share representative sample materials electronically. Full curriculum materials can be viewed by appointment, including virtually where appropriate, so that families can engage fully wherever they are in the world. Materials are shared on the basis that parents agree not to copy or share them further except as permitted by copyright law, and the authorship of external providers is acknowledged.

When we commission external providers, we do not agree to any contractual restriction that would prevent us from showing their materials to parents; such clauses are void and unenforceable. Copyright may affect the way materials are made available, but parents will still be able to view the materials used to teach RSE.

Student Voice

Student voice is central to the culture and ethos of the School and to the design of RSE. We use it to check that the programme is relevant and engaging and to help sequence topics appropriately. We gather students' views through structured activities in PSHEE lessons (including topic-prioritisation activities and open questions) about what young people need to learn to build healthy relationships and stay safe, and through the Student Council and other pastoral routes. We ensure that all students' voices are heard, while making clear that views which are hurtful, offensive or exclusionary will be addressed and will not be allowed to dominate. Students' feedback is used to review and adapt the programme.

Student voice sessions were held in July 2026 with Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12, led by members of the Senior Leadership Team, to inform the curriculum and this policy. Students confirmed the value of anonymous question routes and factual, non-judgemental teaching, both of which are embedded in our practice. Consent emerged as a consistent theme: Year 9 students felt that understanding among their peers could be stronger, while Year 10 students, looking back on their consent teaching, reported greater confidence, which supports the emphasis and sequencing of consent across Years 9 to 11. Students also asked for continued focus on online safety, misogyny and the critical evaluation of harmful or misleading online content. Year 12 students shaped priorities for the Sixth Form Personal Development Programme, including a request for teaching on boundaries in professional and music settings. A fuller summary of what students told us and how the School has responded is retained as part of the policy review record (see Appendix 7).

Parents' Right to Withdraw

Parents have the right to request that their child is withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of RSE, up to and until three terms before the child turns 16. There is no right to withdraw from relationships education, from health and wellbeing content delivered through the School's PSHEE curriculum or from the biological content of sex and reproduction taught through Science.

Requests should be made in writing to the Principal.

- Before granting a request, the Principal will normally discuss it with the parents, and with the student where appropriate, to understand the request and to explain the nature and purpose of the curriculum (including the benefits of sex education and the possible effects of withdrawal, such as the likelihood that a student will hear a less accurate account from peers). This discussion is documented and a copy of the request is kept in the student's file.
- In a secondary setting the Principal may refuse a request in exceptional circumstances, for example where there is a safeguarding concern or a particular vulnerability; the reasons will be explained to the parents.
- From three terms before a student turns 16, the student may choose to opt back into sex education even if their parent has requested withdrawal. Students are made aware of this right, and the School will make arrangements to provide the student with sex education during that period.
- Where a student is withdrawn, the School ensures that they receive appropriate, purposeful education during the period of withdrawal, and keeps the arrangement under review with the parents and the student as they mature.

Further detail on the withdrawal process is set out in Appendix 4.

Safeguarding and Confidentiality

Effective RSE can lead to disclosures. Students are told that some information cannot be kept confidential and that, if a disclosure is made, certain actions must follow; at the same time they are offered sensitive support. Following any disclosure or suspicion of abuse, the School's child protection procedures are initiated and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a Deputy DSL is informed as soon as possible. Detailed procedures, including those relating to advice about contraception or a disclosure of pregnancy, are set out in Appendix 3. All visitors and external providers are made aware of, and are required to follow, the School's confidentiality and safeguarding procedures.

Training

Staff who teach RSE receive appropriate training and engage in regular continuing professional development. The PSHEE Coordinator may invite external professionals, such as school nurses or sexual-health practitioners, to support and train staff. All staff receive training to understand the definitions of sexual harassment and sexual violence, including online sexual abuse, and to respond consistently and appropriately.

Working with Visitors and External Agencies

The PSHEE Coordinator may invite external experts to enrich the RSE programme. External visitors are chosen for the particular skills and expertise they bring, and are required to comply with this policy and the School's confidentiality and child protection policies. A member of School staff is always present during such sessions, both to safeguard students and to build on the learning afterwards. There is appropriate preparatory and follow-up work, and visitors are briefed on the cohort, including any specific needs and any relevant safeguarding matters. All materials used by external providers must be available to parents on request.

Working with Other Departments Across the School

The PSHEE Coordinator liaises with senior pastoral staff, the DSL, boarding staff, tutors and relevant members of the Senior Leadership Team to ensure that RSE is supported by the wider pastoral curriculum. This includes assemblies, tutorials, boarding discussions, small-group support and responsive sessions where appropriate. These opportunities are used to reinforce planned PSHEE learning, support students in applying knowledge and skills to real-life situations, and respond proportionately to emerging pastoral or safeguarding themes within the School or wider society.

The wider pastoral curriculum does not replace the planned RSE curriculum set out in Appendix 1. Where a responsive session would materially change what is set out in Appendix 1, or would introduce sex education content not shown there, parents will be informed in advance. All such provision is delivered in accordance with the School's safeguarding procedures, safe teaching principles and expectations around age-appropriate, inclusive and balanced delivery.

Monitoring Arrangements

The quality, implementation and impact of RSE are monitored through curriculum review, student and parent feedback, internal assessment information and the School's teaching and learning quality assurance processes. The Vice-Principal holds strategic oversight of this process, working with the PSHEE Coordinator, Designated Safeguarding Lead, Director of Teaching and Learning and relevant pastoral leaders. The PSHEE Coordinator leads the day-to-day evaluation of the programme, including reviewing student feedback, adapting resources and identifying emerging curriculum needs. RSE-related provision delivered through assemblies, tutorials, boarding or responsive pastoral sessions is monitored by the relevant senior leader in collaboration with the Vice-Principal, PSHEE Coordinator and DSL. Findings are reported to the Governing Body.

Policy Review

This policy is reviewed every year, or sooner if there is a change in guidance or legislation or if the needs of our students require it. Each review involves consultation with staff, students and parents, and the reviewed policy is approved by the Governing Body before publication on the School website. The policy is provided free of charge to anyone who requests it.

Policy author / reviewer:	***Policy date / review date:***	***Next review due:***
T.Burns	April 2021	September 2021
T.Burns	September 2021	September 2022
T.Burns	Autumn 2022	Autumn 2023
T.Burns	Autumn 2023	Autumn 2024
T.Burns	September 2024	September 2025
T.Burns	September 2025	September 2026
T.Burns	September 2026	September 2027

Appendix 1 – Curriculum Overview

- This overview is based on the PSHE Association's Curriculum Model for key stages 3 and 4 (2026), adapted to reflect the needs, age and stage of students at The Purcell School, our safeguarding priorities, boarding context and wider pastoral curriculum.
- The unit descriptions below are drawn from the PSHE Association Curriculum Model. The School remains responsible for reviewing and adapting content to ensure it is appropriate for our students and consistent with this policy.
- We define sex education with reference to the PSHE Association's Programme of Study for PSHE education (2026), which identifies learning opportunities classified as "Sex education" at key stages 3 and 4. Units containing this content are marked [SE]. Parents may request that their child is withdrawn from sex education delivered as part of RSE, subject to the arrangements set out in this policy.
- Some other units address related relationships, health and wellbeing content, such as consent, harmful relationship behaviours, reproductive health and fertility. There is no right of withdrawal from relationships education, health and wellbeing content, or biological content taught within the Science curriculum. The curriculum overview marks all units containing sex education. If, exceptionally, sex education content were taught within a unit not marked [SE], we would inform parents in advance.
- Sixth-form students in Years 12 and 13 receive RSE through the Sixth Form Personal Development Programme, assemblies and focused sessions.
- This curriculum overview reflects the School's planned RSE and PSHEE provision from September 2026. Minor adjustments may be made during the year in response to student need, safeguarding priorities or timetabling requirements. Parents will be informed in advance where any change affects sex education content.

Key:
[SE] = sex education content from which parents may request withdrawal.
All other units include statutory relationships, health and wellbeing content or wider PSHEE content from which there is no right of withdrawal.
***** = Economic Wellbeing or Careers content, taught as part of wider PSHEE.

Year	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
7	**Emotional wellbeing: managing change and transition** This unit helps students transition to secondary school, set learning goals and develop social and emotional skills.	**Friendship and bullying** This unit explores the principles of healthy and unhealthy friendships, as well as how to identify and respond to bullying incidents.	**Families and changing relationships** This unit covers the role of families, including caring for each other in changing circumstances, such as divorce or separation.	**Puberty and keeping safe** This unit revisits learning about puberty from KS2. It then focuses on specific learning about testicular and vulval health, as well as how to identify and report abuse.	**Influences on relationships** This unit helps students consider influences on their expectations of and attitudes towards relationships, including online and media influences.	**Financial decisions*** This unit supports students to develop their financial literacy and rehearse decision-making and risk assessment skills in relation to money and spending.
8	**Health and wellbeing** In this unit, students develop decision-making skills that support a healthy lifestyle and their wellbeing: from considerations about food, exercise and sleep, to assessing the impact of climate change on young people's wellbeing.	**Personal safety and managing risk** This unit is an opportunity for students to assess risk and support their personal safety in a range of contexts, including on the roads, around water, and in relation to alcohol and other drugs.	**Belonging and community** This unit focuses on how to create respectful and cohesive communities. It helps students recognise and challenge bias, stereotypes and discrimination and promote inclusion.	**The online world** This unit helps students to recognise how their behaviour can be manipulated online, through algorithms and targeted content. It helps students assess how online platforms generate income through users.	**Healthy and unhealthy relationships** This unit introduces a range of relationship issues facing young people, including harassment, image-sharing and gendered violence, and how to get support.	**Managing money*** This unit builds on previous learning about financial decision making to explore aspects of daily economic wellbeing, such as managing bank accounts and different ways of saving and borrowing.
9	**Mental health and wellbeing** Building on previous learning, this unit gives students the opportunity to rehearse essential self-regulation strategies and apply them to new and complex situations.	**Drug education** This unit builds on previous learning, focusing on developing skills to manage situations involving alcohol, vapes or other substances.	**Managing risk in relation to the law** This unit helps students to assess the ways young people might be drawn into criminal behaviour, and the impact of breaking the law.	**Intimate sexual relationships [SE]** In this unit, students revisit learning about consent and learn about healthy, safe sexual relationships, including using contraception.	**Navigating online harms** This unit explores online harms young people may be exposed to, focusing on how they can respond to deepfake AI images and misogynistic narratives.	**Careers and future choices*** This unit supports students to prepare for making GCSE option choices by thinking about their career goals and future.

Year	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
10	**Independence, health choices and wellbeing** This unit supports students to make informed, healthy and responsible health choices as they transition to key stage 4.	**Navigating the online world** This unit helps students understand the impacts and risks of AI and digital technologies, including misinformation, deepfakes, and sharing images.	**Friendship, diversity and challenging extremism** This unit supports students to challenge bullying and harmful attitudes, promote inclusion, and recognise and respond to extremism.	**Managing influence** This unit helps students to evaluate online content, understand how harmful attitudes such as misogyny spread, and recognise the impact of content on wellbeing, attitudes and behaviour.	**Exploring consent and recognising abuse** This unit revisits and deepens students' understanding of consent, and helps them recognise, challenge and seek support for harmful behaviours or abuse. [Learning about consent, boundaries, abuse, harassment and online safety may be taught as part of relationships education and safeguarding education, and is not automatically classified as sex education.]	**Study, work and careers*** This unit explores career choices and pathways, work experience, and applications for study or work.
11	**Life-long wellbeing** This unit revisits and builds on prior learning about mental health, helping students to explore strategies that support wellbeing, especially when managing workload and preparing for exams.	**Drugs and personal safety** This unit supports students to understand the risks linked to substance use and gang involvement, manage external influences, and develop strategies to stay safe and seek support.	**Safe relationships and sexual health [SE]** This unit helps students to recognise healthy and unhealthy relationship behaviours, explore power and control, set boundaries, manage conflict and breakups, and make informed decisions about sexual health.	**Families, fertility and pregnancy** This unit explores family life, including committed relationships and parenting responsibilities, fertility and routes to parenthood, and options in the case of unplanned pregnancy.	**Managing and maintaining health** This unit helps students explore behaviours that support their own and others' physical health, through prevention of illness, treatment options and emergency responses.	***Examinations / study leave***

Appendix 2 – Consent

How the law defines consent

Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, a person consents if they agree by choice and have the freedom and capacity to make that choice. Three elements matter: choice (a deliberate, active decision); capacity (whether the person is old enough and able to understand what is happening, and is not incapacitated by alcohol, drugs or other factors); and freedom (a choice made without manipulation, exploitation or duress, whether through force or through a more subtle imbalance of power or age). Consent must be sought and must continue throughout; it is the responsibility of the person seeking consent to ensure it is freely and capably given. The law does not recognise consent where the person did not understand what was happening or was under the age of consent.

The legal age of consent

Any sexual activity involving a person under 16 is unlawful. In practice, the Crown Prosecution Service indicates that children of the same or similar age are highly unlikely to be prosecuted where activity is mutually agreed and there is no abuse or exploitation. Where any person involved is under 13, it is an absolute offence and the question of mutual agreement is irrelevant. Where a person over 16 has sex with someone under 16, it is the older person who commits the offence. Students learn about consent, capacity and the law in an age-appropriate way as part of the programme.

Appendix 3 – Specific Issues Relating to RSE

Confidentiality and advice

Students are made aware that some information cannot be kept confidential and that, if a disclosure is made, certain actions must follow; support is offered throughout. Following any disclosure or suspicion of abuse, the child protection procedures are initiated and the DSL or a Deputy DSL is informed as soon as possible.

Advice about contraception or a disclosure of pregnancy

Where a student seeks advice about contraception or discloses pregnancy, staff follow the School's safeguarding procedures and seek appropriate professional guidance, including from a health professional where necessary. The School encourages young people to talk with their parents where it is safe and appropriate to do so, and may offer support in doing this. Where a young person cannot or does not wish to tell their parents, staff will inform the DSL or a Deputy DSL, who will consider the student's welfare, safeguarding procedures and any need for external professional advice or support. Students are signposted to sources of confidential support such as the school nurse, Childline and the NSPCC.

Human sexual behaviour

As part of the secondary programme, contraception, sexually transmitted infections, sexuality and abortion are addressed factually and in a balanced way.

Complaints

Any complaint about the RSE curriculum should be made to the Principal, in line with the School's Complaints Policy.

Appendix 4 – Requests for Withdrawal

The framework for withdrawal is set out in the Parents' Right to Withdraw section. In summary:

- Parents wishing to withdraw their child from sex education should write to the Principal in the first instance.
- There is no right to withdraw from relationships education, health and wellbeing content delivered through the School's PSHEE curriculum, or the biological content of reproduction and puberty taught within the Science curriculum.
- Parents may request withdrawal from some or all sex education up to and until three terms before the child turns 16; the Principal will normally discuss the request with the parents, and the student where appropriate, and will document the discussion.
- In a secondary setting the Principal may, in exceptional circumstances, decline a request.
- From three terms before turning 16, a student may opt back into sex education; the School will make arrangements for this.
- Where a student is withdrawn, the School documents the process, ensures the student receives appropriate, purposeful education during the period of withdrawal, and keeps the arrangement under review with the family.

Appendix 5 – Ensuring RSE is Inclusive for Students with SEND

Resources and language

Resources and images should be inclusive as a matter of course (representing SEND, LGBT+ people, a range of ethnicities and all protected characteristics) and available in appropriate learning media, including tactile or physical materials where required. Language should be inclusive and precise: for example, using 'most girls / boys' rather than 'all' when describing puberty, and avoiding idioms that may confuse students on the autism spectrum or exclude students with mobility needs. Correct terminology for body parts is always used; where a family word is used, the correct term is given alongside it.

Targeted support and practical approaches

- Use follow-up small-group or one-to-one sessions to personalise learning where needed, in consultation with the Head of Learning Support.
- Recognise that concrete information may be understood while the social nuances of relationships, consent, risk and coercion remain challenging, and that 'social masking' may hide gaps in understanding.
- Create and nurture a safe learning environment with clear ground rules and clear beginnings and endings to sessions.
- Take a steady, matter-of-fact approach; use distancing techniques through story, role-play and video; and use a range of visual, tactile and audio resources and real-life props.
- Repeat key words, phrases and concepts, ideally with supporting visual cues, and reinforce them beyond lessons (for example 'ask before you touch').
- Seek clarification when a student's question is unclear, and check that they feel their question has been answered.

Under the Equality Act 2010, positive action can be taken to address disadvantage arising from a protected characteristic, recognising that RSE can be a particularly important subject for some students with SEND.

Appendix 6 – Tackling Sexual Harassment and Online Sexual Abuse

The School acts on the understanding that sexual harassment and online sexual abuse can affect children and young people, and takes a proactive, whole-school approach even where there are no specific reports. This reflects the findings of national reviews into peer-on-peer sexual abuse and the requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

The Purcell School strives to be an open, tolerant and inclusive community in which sexual harassment and abuse are not tolerated in any form. Our Behaviour and Sanctions Policy, Peer-on-Peer Abuse Policy and Online Safety Policy set out how such incidents are dealt with; our RSE, PSHEE and wider pastoral curriculum set out how we educate for a culture in which students feel safe. Provision includes age-appropriate learning about:

- what sexual harassment and sexual abuse are, and how to recognise and report them;
- how online activity, including the sharing of 'nudes' and AI-generated or manipulated images, can constitute harassment or abuse, and the possible consequences, including in law;
- consent; and
- how concerns are managed within School.

The School also ensures purposeful sixth-form provision on consent, sexual harassment and sexual violence; additional support for students with SEND and EAL; opportunities for less formal discussion during boarding time; routine analysis of records to identify patterns and inform preventative work; and ongoing engagement with local services and up-to-date staff training.

Appendix 7 – Student Voice: Consultation Summary 2026

In July 2026, Senior Leadership led student voice sessions with Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12 as part of developing this policy. The table below summarises the main themes students raised and the School's response. Fuller detail is held in the Student Voice Summary (July 2026).

You Said	We Did
(All years) Anonymous question routes make it easier to ask about sensitive topics without embarrassment.	Confirmed that an anonymous question route (question box or online submission with teacher response) operates in every RSE unit, in every year group.
(All years) Lessons work best when they are factual, clear and non-judgemental, with key words explained and clear signposting to help.	Reaffirmed our commitment to ground rules, distancing techniques and staff neutrality (Delivery of RSE and Safe and Effective Practice), and to signposting sources of support.
(Years 9 and 10) Year 9 students felt peers do not always understand what consent means; Year 10 students, after their consent teaching, felt more confident.	Confirmed the value of our consent sequencing across Years 9 to 11. Consent teaching in Year 9 will be given additional emphasis, with understanding checked through baseline and endpoint assessment.
(Years 9, 10 and 12) Students want clear teaching on sexual harassment, misogyny, and harmful or misleading online content, including AI images and deepfakes.	Validated the expanded content on misogyny, image-based abuse and online harms in the curriculum (Teaching about the Law), and retained it as a priority.
(Year 8) Students were less confident about recognising healthy and unhealthy relationships and staying safe online, and asked to understand more before Year 9.	Noted as a readiness point for the PSHEE Coordinator; Year 8 content on healthy relationships and online safety will be reviewed to strengthen preparation for the Year 9 programme.
(Year 10) Students asked to be more critically aware of gendered stereotypes and misinformation about relationships promoted online.	Reflected in our media-literacy and misogyny content (Managing influence, Navigating the online world), which will continue to address stereotypes and misinformation.
(Year 7) Puberty can be difficult to talk about; students asked to learn more about drugs.	Noted for the PSHEE Coordinator to review the pitch and timing of puberty and drug education content in Years 7 to 8.
(Year 12) Sixth Form students want specialist-led, small-group and near-peer sessions, embedded across the year, including on sexual health, the law, professional and music-setting boundaries, and practical independence.	Fed into Sixth Form Personal Development Programme planning, including specialist input and content on professional boundaries relevant to our specialist music context.