MEPA ACADEMY

PSHE AND RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION POLICY

Policy owner	Principal
Approved by	Senior Leadership Team
Adopted	July 2026
Review date	July 2027, or sooner if guidance changes

Status note: this policy is aligned to the Department for Education statutory RSHE guidance introduced on 1 September 2026 and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026. It should be read with the Academy safeguarding, behaviour, online safety, equality, SEND, attendance, careers and visiting-speaker policies.

Contents

1. Purpose and scope 3
2. Legal and statutory framework 3
3. Governance and responsibilities 3
4. Policy development, consultation and review 4
5. Curriculum intent and definitions 4
5.1 PSHE 4
5.2 Relationships and Sex Education 4
5.3 Health Education 4
5.4 SMSC 4
6. Curriculum content and sequencing 5
7. Teaching, resources and a safe learning environment 5
8. Safeguarding, disclosures and confidentiality 6
9. Equality, inclusion, SEND, religion and belief 6
10. Parents, carers and the right to be excused 7
10.1 What may and may not be withdrawn 7
10.2 Procedure 7
11. Assessment, monitoring and quality assurance 7
12. SMSC and fundamental British values 7
13. External agencies, visitors and support services 8
14. Complaints 8
Appendix A — request to excuse a pupil from sex education within RSE 9
Appendix B — statutory and official reference list 10

1. Purpose and scope

This policy sets out MEPA Academy's approach to Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE), statutory Relationships and Sex Education (RSE), Health Education and the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC). It applies to all pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4.

The Academy's programme is rooted in Kindness, Friendship, Resilience, Curiosity and Respect, and supports the MEPA mantra: Mindful and Respectful; Enthusiastic and Creative; Progress and Attainment; Aiming High. It prepares pupils to make informed decisions, stay safe, build healthy relationships, manage their health and wellbeing, understand the law, participate in democratic society and prepare for adult life.

PSHE is used as the planned curriculum vehicle through which much of statutory RSE and Health Education is taught. Statutory content may also be taught through science, computing, citizenship, physical education and other subjects. Curriculum leaders will coordinate provision to avoid gaps and unnecessary duplication.

2. Legal and statutory framework

The Academy will comply with applicable legislation and have regard to statutory guidance. The principal framework is:

- Children and Social Work Act 2017, sections 34 and 35.
- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019.
- Education Act 1996, including sections 403 and 405, and Education Act 2002, including sections 78, 80 and 80A, as applicable to academies through their funding and regulatory framework.
- Department for Education, Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: statutory guidance for introduction on 1 September 2026.
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, including the requirements relating to PSHE, respect for others and SMSC, as applicable to academies.
- Equality Act 2010, including the public sector equality duty and protected characteristics.
- Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, as updated.
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and current Prevent duty guidance for England and Wales.
- Education and Inspections Act 2006 duty to promote pupil wellbeing, where applicable, and the Academy's funding agreement and articles of association.

PSHE as a named subject is not generally statutory in maintained schools, but academies must meet the Independent School Standards, including the requirement for a written policy and effective PSHE provision. RSE is compulsory for pupils receiving secondary education. Health Education is compulsory in state-funded schools. There is no right to withdraw from Relationships Education, Health Education, or National Curriculum science.

3. Governance and responsibilities

Role	Core responsibilities
Governing body / proprietor	Approve and keep this policy under review; assure statutory compliance, curriculum quality, accessibility, consultation and adequate resourcing; hold leaders to account.
Head of Academy	Implement the policy; ensure a broad, balanced and sequenced curriculum; decide withdrawal requests; ensure staff training, safeguarding and parent communication.
PSHE/RSE Lead	Map statutory content; coordinate delivery; quality-assure resources and visitors; support staff; monitor teaching, learning, pupil voice and outcomes; report to leaders and governors.
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Advise on safeguarding content and local risks; ensure disclosures and concerns are handled under safeguarding procedures; support staff and liaison with agencies.

Role	Core responsibilities
Teachers and other educators	Teach the agreed curriculum accurately and impartially; establish ground rules; adapt teaching; check understanding; follow safeguarding procedures; raise resource or training needs.
Pupils	Engage respectfully, follow agreed ground rules and seek help when needed. Pupils are never required to disclose personal experiences.
Parents and carers	Engage with curriculum information and consultation; support learning; raise questions with the Academy; use the formal process for any request to excuse a child from sex education.

4. Policy development, consultation and review

The Academy will consult parents and carers when developing and reviewing this policy, while retaining responsibility for the final curriculum. Consultation may include publication of the draft, information sessions, surveys and a reasonable period for written feedback. The Academy will also take account of pupil voice, staff expertise, local safeguarding and health information, and the needs and characteristics of the school community.

Parents will be able to see what will be taught and when, and may request to view curriculum materials. The Academy will communicate the purpose of RSE, the distinction between Relationships Education and sex education, and the safeguards applied to sensitive content. Materials may be made available for viewing in a way that protects copyright and safeguarding considerations.

The policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner if legislation, statutory guidance, safeguarding intelligence or pupil need changes materially. The curriculum and resources will be reviewed more frequently as part of routine quality assurance.

5. Curriculum intent and definitions

5.1 PSHE

PSHE is a planned programme that develops the knowledge, skills and attributes pupils need to manage their lives now and in the future. It includes relationships, physical and mental health, economic wellbeing, careers, citizenship-related themes, drugs and alcohol education, online safety, personal safety and preparation for adulthood.

5.2 Relationships and Sex Education

RSE is learning about the emotional, social, legal and physical aspects of relationships, sexual health and human sexuality. It enables pupils to understand healthy, respectful and safe relationships; consent and boundaries; the law; reproduction and sexual health; and how to seek help. It is taught in a way that is factual, age-appropriate, inclusive, sensitive and responsive to pupils' prior learning and needs.

5.3 Health Education

Health Education gives pupils the information and skills needed to make sound decisions about physical health, mental wellbeing and safety, including how and when to seek support. It complements, but does not replace, the science curriculum or personalised clinical advice.

5.4 SMSC

SMSC is the development of pupils' values, self-knowledge, moral reasoning, social participation, cultural understanding and respect for others. It is promoted across the curriculum and wider life of the Academy, not confined to PSHE lessons.

6. Curriculum content and sequencing

The curriculum will be coherently planned and sequenced from pupils' starting points. It will build knowledge and revisit important concepts with increasing complexity. By the end of secondary education, pupils will be taught the statutory content in the DfE guidance, including the areas below.

Domain	Indicative content
Families and committed relationships	Characteristics of healthy family life; marriage and civil partnership; stable and caring relationships; diversity of families; forced marriage and honour-based abuse; support and reporting routes.
Respectful relationships and friendship	Trust, honesty, kindness, boundaries, privacy, conflict resolution, stereotypes, discrimination, bullying and harassment; recognising coercive or controlling behaviour.
Online and media	Online relationships; pornography and unrealistic expectations; image sharing and intimate images; grooming, scams, misinformation, algorithms and persuasive design; privacy, data and digital footprints; reporting and blocking.
Consent and intimate relationships	Freely given and reversible consent; capacity, pressure and intoxication; communication and boundaries; readiness and delaying sexual activity; contraception; pregnancy choices; sexually transmitted infections; accessing confidential health advice.
The law	Consent and sexual offences; exploitation and abuse; domestic abuse; forced marriage; female genital mutilation; sharing sexual images; pornography; harassment, stalking and online conduct; protected characteristics; marriage and civil partnership.
Mental wellbeing	Emotional literacy; resilience and self-worth; loneliness, anxiety, depression and self-harm awareness; healthy coping strategies; recognising when to seek help; routes to urgent and non-urgent support.
Physical health and prevention	Sleep, nutrition, physical activity, dental health, personal hygiene, immunisation, screening and early help; puberty and menstrual health; first aid, including lifesaving skills as required by the statutory guidance.
Drugs, alcohol, tobacco and vaping	Facts, law, risks, addiction, peer influence, harm reduction, medicines and how to access support.
Economic wellbeing and careers	Budgeting, saving, debt, fraud and gambling risks; employment rights and responsibilities; careers, pathways and informed decision-making.
Safety and preparation for adulthood	Personal safety, exploitation, radicalisation, emergency help, travel and community safety; responsible participation in society.

Teaching will clearly distinguish facts, law and evidence from opinions or beliefs. Where topics are contested, teachers will present relevant material in a balanced and impartial way, avoid endorsing a particular political or partisan position, and enable respectful discussion. Questions will be answered honestly and in an age-appropriate manner; staff may defer a question to check accuracy or safeguarding implications.

7. Teaching, resources and a safe learning environment

- A consistent set of ground rules will protect dignity, privacy and respectful discussion. Distancing techniques and fictional scenarios will be used; pupils will not be invited to share personal sexual experiences.
- Teaching will use correct, clear terminology and reliable evidence. Content will be age-appropriate and responsive to pupil maturity, prior knowledge and safeguarding need.
- Teachers will not offer personal opinions as authoritative. Political issues will be taught impartially in line with the Education Act 1996 and DfE guidance on political impartiality.
- Resources, including materials from external organisations, will be quality-assured for accuracy, balance, accessibility, age-appropriateness, safeguarding and alignment with this policy.

- Staff will receive appropriate subject knowledge, pedagogy and safeguarding training. Staff may seek guidance before teaching unfamiliar or sensitive content.
- The curriculum will teach pupils how to evaluate online information and recognise harmful, manipulative or illegal content without exposing them unnecessarily to such material.
- Reasonable notice of sensitive topics will be given through curriculum information. The Academy will respond constructively to parent questions without allowing individual objections to remove other pupils' statutory entitlement.

8. Safeguarding, disclosures and confidentiality

RSE and PSHE are part of the Academy's preventative safeguarding education. Teaching will be informed by local and national safeguarding risks and will help pupils recognise abuse, harassment, exploitation, grooming, coercion and unsafe situations, including online. A disclosure or concerning question will be managed under the Academy's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and current KCSIE.

- Staff must never promise absolute confidentiality. Pupils will be told, in age-appropriate language, that information may need to be shared to keep them or another child safe.
- Any concern must be recorded and reported promptly to the DSL or a deputy using the Academy's safeguarding procedure. Staff must not investigate or ask leading questions.
- Reports of child-on-child sexual violence or sexual harassment will be taken seriously and handled in a child-centred, trauma-informed and proportionate way. Abuse will not be dismissed as banter or an inevitable part of growing up.
- Where there is immediate danger, staff will follow emergency procedures. The DSL will decide referrals and information sharing in accordance with safeguarding law and guidance.
- Pupils will be signposted to trusted adults and appropriate health, counselling and support services. School staff do not provide clinical or contraceptive advice beyond their role.
- If a pupil under 16 discloses sexual activity, staff will not make assumptions. The matter will be referred to the DSL for assessment of consent, age, power imbalance, exploitation and other safeguarding factors.

9. Equality, inclusion, SEND, religion and belief

The Academy will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. Teaching will promote dignity and respect and will not unlawfully discriminate because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

RSE will be inclusive and will teach pupils about different families and relationships at appropriate points in a planned programme. Lesbian, gay and bisexual content will be integrated rather than treated only as a stand-alone topic. When teaching about sex and gender, staff will use clear, factual and respectful language, distinguish legal and biological concepts where relevant, acknowledge that some issues are contested, and avoid presenting contested beliefs as fact. The Academy will not reinforce harmful stereotypes or stigmatise any pupil.

The curriculum must be accessible to pupils with SEND. Teachers will use high-quality adaptive teaching, accessible formats, explicit vocabulary, repetition, visual supports and additional practice where needed. Planning will take account of pupils who may be more vulnerable to exploitation, bullying, social misunderstanding or misinformation. Reasonable adjustments will be made without unnecessarily reducing ambition or withholding statutory knowledge.

The Academy recognises parents' and pupils' religious and philosophical convictions and may teach within its ethos, while ensuring pupils receive the statutory curriculum, accurate information and an understanding of the law. Respect for faith and belief does not permit discrimination or the denial of another pupil's protected rights.

10. Parents, carers and the right to be excused

10.1 What may and may not be withdrawn

Parents and carers have the right to request that their child be excused from some or all of the sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE. There is no right to withdraw from Relationships Education, Health Education, or content taught as part of the National Curriculum for science. A withdrawal from sex education does not remove teaching about safeguarding, consent, healthy relationships, the law, equality or online safety where that content forms part of Relationships or Health Education or another statutory curriculum area.

10.2 Procedure

1. The parent or carer submits the form in Appendix A, identifying the element(s) of sex education concerned.
2. The Head of Academy, or a delegated senior leader, meets the parent or carer and, where appropriate, the pupil. The meeting explains the curriculum, the benefits of participation, the boundaries of the right and any potential social or emotional effects of withdrawal.
3. The Academy records the request, discussion and decision. Except in exceptional circumstances relating to the pupil's specific needs, the request will be granted up to and until three terms before the pupil turns 16.
4. From three terms before the pupil's 16th birthday, if the pupil wishes to receive sex education, the Academy will make arrangements for the pupil to receive it during one of those terms. The pupil's wishes take precedence at that stage.
5. During any period of withdrawal, the Academy will provide appropriate, purposeful education and will take reasonable steps to protect the pupil from embarrassment or stigma.
6. The arrangement will be reviewed if the parent, pupil or Academy requests it or if circumstances change.

"Three terms before age 16" is calculated by reference to the school terms before the pupil's 16th birthday, not simply by year group. The Academy will determine the relevant date for the individual pupil.

11. Assessment, monitoring and quality assurance

Assessment will establish what pupils know and can do, not grade personal beliefs or require disclosure. Baseline and end-point activities, questioning, low-stakes checks, written work, scenario responses and pupil self-reflection may be used. Teachers will identify misconceptions and adapt subsequent teaching.

The PSHE/RSE Lead will monitor curriculum coverage, sequencing, teaching, accessibility and pupil outcomes through planning reviews, learning visits, work sampling, staff feedback and pupil voice. Participation data and feedback will be considered carefully, including the experiences of pupils with SEND and pupils sharing protected characteristics. Governors will receive proportionate assurance at least annually.

Curriculum evaluation will consider safeguarding trends without using identifiable case information inappropriately. The Academy will keep records of policy consultation, withdrawal requests, curriculum maps, resource approvals, staff training and monitoring actions in line with its retention arrangements.

12. SMSC and fundamental British values

The Academy actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. It enables pupils to develop self-knowledge, distinguish right from wrong, respect civil and criminal law, accept responsibility, contribute positively, appreciate cultural influences and acquire respect for other people.

Dimension	How the Academy promotes development
Spiritual	Reflection on beliefs, values and experiences; curiosity and creativity; enjoyment and fascination in learning; self-knowledge and meaning.
Moral	Understanding right and wrong and the law; considering consequences; ethical reasoning; respect for different viewpoints; taking responsibility.

Dimension	How the Academy promotes development
Social	Cooperation across backgrounds; conflict resolution; volunteering and participation; safe use of technology; contribution to school and community life.
Cultural	Understanding pupils' own and others' heritage; Britain's democratic and parliamentary system; participation in artistic, sporting and cultural opportunities; respect for diversity.

SMSC is evidenced across subjects, assemblies, enrichment, pupil leadership, pastoral work and the wider culture. The Academy will take steps to prevent the promotion of partisan political views and, when political issues are brought to pupils' attention, will offer a balanced presentation of opposing views.

13. External agencies, visitors and support services

External contributors can enhance learning but do not replace teacher responsibility. The Academy will check the suitability and expertise of providers, agree content and learning outcomes in advance, review resources, complete safeguarding and risk checks, and ensure an Academy member of staff remains responsible for the lesson. Visitors must follow the Academy's safeguarding, visiting-speaker and confidentiality procedures. Their contribution will be evaluated after delivery.

Pupils will be told how to access trusted support inside and outside school. Signposting will be current, appropriate and clear about confidentiality. Where a service provides healthcare, its professionals are responsible for applying their own legal and professional confidentiality and safeguarding duties.

14. Complaints

Questions should first be raised with the PSHE/RSE Lead or Head of Academy. Formal complaints will be handled under the Academy's published complaints procedure. Safeguarding concerns must be reported immediately through safeguarding procedures and must not wait for the complaints process.

Appendix A — request to excuse a pupil from sex education within RSE

WITHDRAWAL FROM SEX EDUCATION WITHIN PSHE & RSE

STUDENT NAME		**CLASS**	
NAME OF PARENT		**DATE**	

REASON FOR WITHDRAWING FROM SEX EDUCATION WITHIN RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION
ANY OTHER INFORMATION YOU WOULD LIKE THE SCHOOL TO CONSIDER

PARENT SIGNATURE	

AGREED ACTIONS FROM ANY DISCUSSION WITH PARENTS

Appendix B — statutory and official reference list

The following sources were checked for this August 2026 revision. The Academy will use the latest version in force and review this policy if a material change is issued.

- **DfE statutory guidance: Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education — for introduction 1 September 2026 —** https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 — comes into force 1 September 2026 —** https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2
- **Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019 —** https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2019/924/contents/made
- **Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 —** https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/3283/contents/made
- **Equality Act 2010 and DfE advice for schools —** https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools
- **SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years —** https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children —** https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2
- **Prevent duty guidance: England and Wales —** https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance
- **Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools —** https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-fundamental-british-values-through-smsc
- **Political impartiality in schools —** https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/political-impartiality-in-schools

Source check date: 5 August 2026.