



MEPA ACADEMY

PSHE AND RSE POLICY INCORPORATING SMSC

THIS POLICY IS WRITTEN FOR MEPA ACADEMY

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POLICY RATIONALE

This policy covers KS3 and KS4 at MEPA Academy and sets out the school's approach to Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) delivery. It includes drugs education.

At MEPA Academy we have high expectations of our students and strive to ensure that every child achieves academically, socially and personally through our school ethos and values of Kindness, Friendship, Resilience, Curiosity and Respect.

Our PSHE/RSE programme, is rooted in our school values, aims to equip each child with a sound understanding of risk and the knowledge and skills required to safely and successfully make informed decisions that will aid them in navigating their way through life whilst at school and for the years that follow.

We recognise that PSHE/RSE can encompass many areas of study and so our programme draws on the statutory content already outlined in the national curriculum, the basic school curriculum and in statutory guidance on: careers, drug education, financial education, relationships and the importance of physical activity and diet for a healthy lifestyle.

We continue to tailor our PSHE/RSE programme to best reflect the needs of our current students at MEPA Academy through:

1. Promoting their spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development
2. Preparing them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. (Education Act 2002/ Academies Act 2010)

PSHE/RSE education provides a significant contribution to the schools' responsibility to:

- promote children and young people's wellbeing
- promote community cohesion within the school
- provide relationships and sex education.

The teaching of PSHE/RSE will support our school's MEPA Mantra: Mindful and Respectful, Enthusiastic and Creative, Progress and Attainment, Aiming High

The PSHE and RSE programme aims to develop:

- Successful learners who enjoy learning, making progress and achieving
- Confident individuals who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives
- Responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to society. Pupils are also taught explicitly about

British Values which are defined as:

- Democracy & the rule of law
- Individual liberty
- Mutual respect
- Tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs.

These values are taught explicitly through Personal, Social, Health and Emotional Education (PSHE) as well as through the school's broad and balanced curriculum. Parents will be informed about the policy and the policy will be made available through the school website.

LEGISLATION (STATUTORY REGULATIONS AND GUIDANCE)

PSHE is a non-statutory subject. However, to support all young people to stay safe and prepare for life in modern Britain, there are aspects of it we are required to teach. Upon statutory guidance that will come into effect from September 2020, and in line with the Education and Inspections Act 2006 that places a duty on Governing Bodies 'to promote the wellbeing of pupils at the school' and under the Education Act 2002, all schools must provide a balanced broadly-based curriculum which:

- Promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society
- Prepares pupils at the school for opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life

DfE Statutory Guidance: "Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) – 2025 update (effective Sept 2025) and Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework for Schools (DfE 2025)

SAFE AND EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

PSHE and RSE often draw on pupils' real-life experiences. A safe and supportive learning environment will be created by establishing ground rules in each context for the delivery of subject material. They have a right to expect schools to provide a safe and secure environment. Any fears or worries they bring into the classroom should not go unnoticed. Staff delivering PSHE and RSE will ensure the pupils, who indicate they may be at risk, get appropriate support by liaising with the appropriate pastoral staff and adhering to the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

SAFEGUARDING, REPORTS OF ABUSE AND CONFIDENTIALITY

MEPA Academy recognises that at the heart of PSHE/RSE, the focus is on keeping children safe, and acknowledges the significant role we have in preventative education. We will allow children an open forum to discuss potentially sensitive issues. Such discussions can lead to increased safeguarding reports. Children will be made aware of the processes to enable them to raise their concerns or make a report and how any report will be handled. This will also include processes when they have a concern about a peer or friend. In line with the document Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), all staff are aware of what to do if a child tells them that they are being abused or neglected. Staff are also aware of need to manage the requirement to maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality. This means only involving those that need to be involved, such as the Designated Safeguarding Lead and children's social care. A member of staff will never promise a child that they will not tell anyone about a report of abuse, as this is not in the best interests of the child.

The involvement of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead) will ensure that trusted, high quality local resources are engaged, links to the police and other agencies are utilised and the knowledge of any particular local issues it may be appropriate to address in lessons.

Teachers need to be aware that effective sex and relationship education, which brings an understanding of what is and is not acceptable in a relationship, can lead to disclosure of a child protection issue. If a member of staff suspects that a child is a victim of abuse, or they have reason to believe that he/she is at

risk of abuse they must report concerns to the DSL. During any form of PSHE/RSE, staff must be aware of safeguarding issues highlighted in the Safeguarding policy.

Lessons must ensure that pupils are aware of the school's confidentiality policy and how it works in practice students are to be:

- reassured that their best interests will be maintained
- encouraged to talk to their parents or carers and giving them support to do so
- told that teachers cannot offer unconditional confidentiality and that if confidentiality has to be broken, they will be informed first and then supported as appropriate
- informed of sources of confidential help, for example, the nurse, counsellor, GP or local young person's advice service.

PERSONAL DISCLOSURES

Effective RSE should enable and encourage young people to talk to a trusted adult if they are having sex or contemplating doing so. It is desirable, although not always possible, that that person should be their parent or carer. The law allows health professionals to see and, in some circumstances, to treat young people confidentially, and part of this process includes counselling and discussion about talking to parents. In order to be able to take responsibility for their actions, young people need to be more generally aware of the law in relation to sexual activity and local confidential services. There may be rare occasions when a member of staff is directly approached by a child under child who is sexually active or is contemplating sexual activity. This should be viewed as a child protection issue and raised with DSL.

There may be cases where a teacher learns from an under 16-year-old that they are having, or contemplating having, sexual intercourse. In these circumstances we will take steps to ensure that:

- wherever possible, the young person is persuaded to talk to their parent or carer
- any child protection issues are addressed
- the child has been adequately counselled and informed about contraception, including precise information about where young people can access contraception and advice services.

EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

Classroom practice and pedagogy will consider pupils' age, ability, cultural background, SEND needs and will be adjusted to enable all students to access the learning.

PSHE and RSE education will be used to address diversity issues and to ensure equality for all by addressing contextual issues identified by our pastoral management and through surveys. PSHE and RSE delivery is designed to comply with the Equality Act 2010. Provisions within the Equality Act allow the school to take positive action, where it can be shown that it is proportionate, to deal with disadvantages affecting one group because of protected characteristics.

The school will ensure that all teaching is sensitive and age appropriate in approach and content. At the point at which the school considers it appropriate to teach LGBT content, they should ensure that this subject matter is fully integrated into their programmes of study for this area of the curriculum rather than delivered as a stand-alone unit or lesson. The school will determine how they do this and expect all pupils to have been taught LGBT content at a timely point as part of this area of the curriculum.

In line with updated DfE RSHE guidance (2025), gender identity will be addressed factually and age-appropriately, ensuring a clear distinction between biological sex and gender expression. Teachers will be supported to navigate complex topics without promoting contested views.

DEFINITION OF RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION (RSE)

Relationships and sex education (RSE) is learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, relationships, sex, human sexuality and sexual health. It should equip children and young people with the information, skills and positive values to have safe, fulfilling relationships, to enjoy their sexuality and to take responsibility for their sexual health and well-being.

RSE is an entitlement for all children and young people and must:

- Be accurate and factual, covering a comprehensive range of information about sex, relationships, the law and sexual health, to make informed choices. In schools this should be part of compulsory curriculum provision
- Be inclusive in terms of gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, culture, age, religion or belief or other life-experience particularly HIV status and pregnancy
- Include the development of skills to support healthy and safe relationships and ensure effective communication about these issues
- Promote a critical awareness of the different attitudes and views on sex and relationships within society such as peer norms and those portrayed in the media
- Provide opportunities for reflection in order to nurture personal values based on mutual respect and care
- Be part of lifelong learning, starting early in childhood and continuing throughout life. It should reflect the age and level of the learner
- Ensure children and young people are clearly informed of their rights such as how they can access confidential advice and health services within the boundaries of safeguarding
- Be relevant and meet the needs of children and young people, and actively involve them as participants, advocates and evaluators in developing good quality provision
- Be delivered by competent and confident educators
- Be provided within a learning environment which is safe for the children, young people and adults involved and based on the principle that prejudice, discrimination and bullying are harmful and unacceptable.

SMSC POLICY

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) Education aims to help students to develop an inner discipline, integrity and self-respect. It encourages them to not just 'follow the crowd' – they will make independent choices and be ready to accept responsibility for what they do. They will grow through making choices and holding themselves to account for the choices they have made. They will want to be honest with themselves and with others. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of our students is cross-curricular and not limited to specific SMSC lessons.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

Aims Through the implementation of this SMSC Policy, we aim to: Provide a safe, supportive and happy environment where each student is valued as an individual and can develop towards their full potential; Provide for each student a wide, balanced curriculum of high-quality, appropriate to the interests and aspirations of the individual, and encourage the development of the whole person – fulfilling the requirements of the National Curriculum;

- Ensure that students understand, embrace and practice the Fundamental British Values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Adopt and embrace a culture of challenging the behaviour and opinions that are contrary to these values;
- Help students develop a sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others and the world around them, using imagination and creativity in their learning;
- Set and maintain standards of discipline, courtesy and general moral values so that the school community can function effectively;
- Nurture a sense of self-respect, independence and self-motivation – to increase the individual’s capacity to accept responsibility for actions taken;
- Encourage students to recognise their responsibility to, and dependence on, others to help them become active, respectful and responsible members of a democratic society who are always reflective of their experiences in life;
- Provide a non-sexist, non-racist and non-discriminatory atmosphere that fosters respect for religious and moral values linked with tolerance of other people, races, religions and lifestyles.
- Ensure students understand mental health as part of overall well-being, including resilience-building, accessing help early, and recognising symptoms of mental ill-health such as anxiety and depression.

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following: The Education Act 2002 • DfE (2014) ‘Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools.

OBJECTIVES OF EACH AREA OF SMSC

Spiritual Development

The spiritual development of students is shown by their ability to be reflective about their beliefs, religious or otherwise, that inform their perspective on life. Acquisition of knowledge of, and respect for, different people’s faiths, feelings and values. Demonstrate a sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others and the world around them, and use of imagination and creativity in their learning. Students will also demonstrate a willingness to reflect on their experiences.

Moral Development

The moral development of students is shown by their ability to recognise the difference between right and wrong, and readily apply this understanding in their own lives and, in so doing, respect the civil and criminal law of England. Show an understanding of the consequences of their behaviour and actions. Students will also demonstrate an Interest in investigating and offering reasoned views about moral and ethical issues and understand and appreciate the viewpoints of others on these issues.

Social Development

The social development of students is shown by their use of a range of social skills in different contexts, including working and socialising with students from different religious, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. Students will be willing to participate in a variety of community and social settings, including by volunteering, cooperating well with others and being able to resolve conflicts effectively. They will be able to use modern communication technology, including mobile technology, the internet and social media, safely. Students will also be accepting and fully engaged with the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. The students will also develop and demonstrate skills and attitudes that will allow them to participate fully in, and contribute positively to, life in modern Britain.

Cultural Development

The cultural development of students is shown by their understanding and appreciation of the wide range of cultural influences that have shaped their own heritage and that of other as well as an appreciation of the range of different cultures within the school, and further afield, as an essential element of their preparation for life in modern Britain. Students will gain knowledge of Britain's democratic parliamentary system and its significant role in shaping our history and values, and in continuing to develop Britain. Students will also be willing to participate in, and respond positively to, artistic, sporting and cultural opportunities and improve their understanding of, and showing respect for, different faiths and cultures

CROSS-CURRICULUM TEACHING AND LEARNING SMSC EDUCATION

SMSC is not taught as a stand-alone subject, instead will be woven throughout curriculum areas and school life at MEPA Academy. Clear links will be made to the PSHE programme. All areas of the curriculum will draw examples from as wide a range of cultural contexts as possible. To develop a strong sense of identity in our students, we will use classroom discussion to enable them to:

- Talk about their experiences and feelings;
- Express and clarify personal ideas and beliefs;
- Speak about difficult events, e.g., bullying and death;
- Share thoughts and feelings with other people;
- Explore relationships with friends, family and others;
- Consider the needs and behaviour of others;
- Show empathy;
- Develop self-esteem and respect for others;
- Develop a sense of belonging;
- Develop the skills and attitudes that enable them to develop socially, morally, spiritually and culturally, e.g., empathy, respect, open-mindedness, sensitivity, critical awareness, etc.

Many areas across the curriculum provide opportunities for students to:

- Listen and talk to each other;
- Learn to treat all as equals, accepting people who are different because of physical and learning difficulties;
- Agree and disagree;
- Experience good role models;
- Take turns and share equipment;
- Work co-operatively and collaboratively.

CURRICULUM DESIGN

The curriculum is designed around active engagement in learning, rather than passively receiving information. Pupils will be given opportunities to consider and clarify their values and beliefs and to develop enquiry and interpersonal skills.

Pupils are taught about healthy online behaviours, online relationships, digital consent, managing screen time, and recognising online risks, including grooming, misinformation, and image sharing.

In response to the 2025 statutory update, the RSE and PSHE programme will further embed digital literacy, with a specific focus on healthy online relationships, digital consent, managing social media impact, and recognising online coercion and grooming.

INTENDED OUTCOMES

As a result of our PSHE and RSE programme, pupils will:

- Develop the knowledge, skills and attributes they need to manage their lives now and, in the future
- Learn to make responsible decisions and focus on the importance of building healthy and positive relationships
- Learn to recognise and manage risk and take increasing responsibility for themselves and their actions
- Understand the importance of wellbeing and how to tackle issues that can affect their ability to learn
- Be encouraged to make positive contributions to their families, schools and communities
- Explore differences and learn to value diversity in all its forms
- Reflect on their own individual values and attitudes
- Identify and articulate feelings and emotions and manage difficult situations positively.

MONITORING AND ASSESSING

Pupils' knowledge and understanding is assessed through classroom discussion. Teachers should collect evidence of learning to make a judgement about pupils' progress. This may include: presentations, written evidence and group work.

Application of knowledge and skills in wider school participation, resolving conflict, making decisions and forming positive relationships. Pupil voice will be influential in adapting and amending the material for PSHE and RSE to ensure it is up to date and relevant.

Teachers will monitor indicators of mental distress and liaise with pastoral or mental health leads. Curriculum content will be adjusted based on student wellbeing needs.

COUNSELLING SERVICES

Pupils are made aware of counselling and information services both in and out of school and offered appropriate support.

OUTSIDE SPEAKERS

Visiting speakers and professionals should work to the aims, objectives and values that the school policy promotes. Please refer to the Child Protection and Safeguarding policy for details of procedures for Visiting Speakers.

From 2025, all external agencies must align fully with DfE standards. All resources will be pre-approved by senior leadership and evaluated for factual accuracy, balance, and appropriateness.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW

At the start of the academic year, the personal development curriculum plan with RSE embedded is shared and communicated with parents/carers. Parents/carers do have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of Sex Education delivered as part of the statutory RSE programme, up until three terms before the child turns 16. Please note that you cannot request withdrawal from relationship education which is a requirement.

Procedure for Withdrawal

1. Parents/carers wishing to withdraw their child from Sex Education should:
 - Contact the Head of Academy by completing the Appendix 1 form, outlining which elements of Sex Education they wish to withdraw their child from.
 - The school will invite the parent/carer to a meeting to ensure they are clear about what is covered in RSE and to discuss the benefits of receiving this education.
 - Following this discussion, if the parent/carer still wishes to proceed, the withdrawal will be granted (except in exceptional circumstances).
2. A record will be kept of all withdrawal requests and the outcomes.
3. Alternative arrangements:
 - Where a pupil is withdrawn from Sex Education, they will be provided with appropriate, purposeful education in another subject area during that time.
 - The school will respect the wishes of parents/carers while ensuring pupils still receive their statutory entitlement to Relationships and Health Education.

Responsibilities

- **Head of Academy/PSHE Lead:** Responsible for ensuring parents/carers are fully informed of the curriculum and for meeting with parents who request withdrawal.
- **Parents/Carers:** Responsible for submitting a written request for withdrawal and attending the meeting.
- **Pupils:** Where appropriate, pupils will be involved in discussions about withdrawal, particularly as they approach 16 years of age.

APPENDIX 1 - PARENT FORM: WITHDRAWAL 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

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ANY OTHER INFORMATION YOU WOULD LIKE THE SCHOOL TO CONSIDER

--

PARENT SIGNATURE

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AGREED ACTIONS FROM ANY DISCUSSION WITH PARENTS

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