

Yesodey Hatorah Senior Girls School

RSE Policy



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1. Introduction

The school follows the guidelines in The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019, made under sections 34 and 35 of the Young people and Social Work Act 2017. This makes it mandatory for primary schools to offer Relationships Education and for secondary schools to offer Relationships and Sex Education (RSE).

This policy is also informed by:

- o Learning and Skills Act (2000)
- o Education and Inspections Act (2006)
- o Equality Act (2010),
- o Keeping Young people Safe in Education – statutory safeguarding guidance (2022)
- o Young people and Social Work Act (2017)

The RSE policy supports/complements the following policies:

- ❖ Safeguarding Policy
- ❖ Online Safety Policy
- ❖ ICT Acceptable Use Policies
- ❖ Behaviour Policy
- ❖ Curriculum

The purpose of this policy is to set out the aims, rationale, delivery and outcomes of RSE in our school.

The aim of RSE in our school is:

To equip our students with the knowledge, skills and self-efficacy, rooted firmly in Jewish values and teachings, to deal with complexity of relationships as they are growing up and to build a happy and successful adult life.

We recognise that young people are growing up in an increasingly changing and complex world, both online and offline. Young people deserve and need guidance to support them to gain the necessary knowledge, cognitive, emotional and behavioural skills to navigate, understand and become fulfilled, wholesome individuals and be a productive part of society.

Relationships, families and communities are the very fabric of society and ensuring these are rooted in strong values, mutual respect and are harmonious is essential for individuals and transfer to society at large.

Underpinning knowledge will be delivered in the context of the students' Jewish faith and social values. Delivery of RSE will be consistent with the ethos of the school. In shaping this policy, the school consulted with parents to understand the profile and circumstances of the range of families in the school. This ensures that RSE in the school is sensitive and well matched to the students in the school.

2. Intended outcomes for RSE

The school recognises the importance of quality RSE to prepare young people for a happy and successful future. RSE should support core concepts and behaviours that contribute to greater resilience and healthy relationships and intimacy at the appropriate time in adult life. It should lower the risks of young people being drawn in to abusive, coercive or otherwise unhealthy relationships. Many aspects of our lives now have an online element, and young people need to be prepared for the risks that this involves, so that they can navigate their experiences safely.

Even where intimacy generally begins much later than most young people nationally (such as in our school community, meaning in this document the social group to which our young people and their parents affiliate), we believe that there is value in resilience building and promoting a strong understanding of healthy relationships early on. This will develop transferable knowledge for later relationships and the capacity for young people to make sound decisions in their lives at whatever stage they enter into intimate relationships. They will be more prepared for their future when facing risks, challenges and complex contexts.

Young people will also become more empowered to recognise and resist safeguarding risks, by becoming more aware of associated behaviours of inappropriate relationships, touch and attention.

A well-developed RSE curriculum in our school will be based on the DfE guidelines noting that *'content must be age appropriate and developmentally appropriate. It must be taught sensitively and inclusively with respect to the backgrounds and beliefs of students and parents.'*

Our curriculum will take account of the school ethos, demographic profile, lifestyles, risks and challenges faced by students. The school will listen to parents and students through a range of consultation methods (see section below).

The school will ensure that the following topics are included in the PSHE curriculum.

- **Autonomy and Advocacy** will be achieved by building strong personal identity, self-esteem and emotional well-being. Autonomy is core to growth and resilience.
- **Choices and Influences**, will be addressed using the prism of faith and personal values because good choices are achieved through being goal focused and having the strength and objectivity to assess whether a choice is congruent with one's values and goals. For example, when making food choices, students will be considering kashrus (laws of kosher food) and their health needs.
- **Independence and Aspirations** are developed through building on personal strengths and values including those of faith. so as to become a well-functioning, productive individual.

3. Context of our school

The school is Charedi and serves families who are strictly orthodox in their Jewish practice. The School believes that RSE must be matched closely to the needs of the students and the prevailing attitudes and lifestyles that make up the school community.

From our monitoring and consultation, we identified the profile of the parent body. This is important in ensuring that this policy matches the needs of the students. It also helps us to know what additional support may be appropriate or necessary for students with particular protected characteristics.

Marriage is almost universal in our school community. It is undertaken as a religious Jewish ceremony, alongside which civil marriage takes place.

There is a well-developed, traditional education system within the community that prepares young people for intimacy and married life. This provision is conducted by a network of volunteer educators, who provide one-to-one classes to young men and women before marriage in the community, not within school. The majority of young people will participate in this provision, although some children will be taught directly by their parents. Teaching covers the physiological details of reproduction and reproductive health, learning about relationships, and the requirements of Jewish and civil law. Typically, young people will continue to engage in ongoing reading or classes to learn about characteristics of strong and healthy respectful relationships, as a spouse, parent, child and a member of their family and their community. The goal is to create strong relationships incorporating Torah guidelines on intimacy and other relationships, and to engender attitudes that contribute to positive long-term relationships

This community-based system has for many years worked well for the school community. It is familiar, tried and tested, trusted by all and culturally appropriate.

Our students attend a girls' only school and have friendships with peers of the same sex. Their social interaction with young people of the opposite sex is within the family context. To date, our school has not experienced a teenage pregnancy and has not needed to have recourse to sexual health services.

Our school's approach to RSE is built upon this context.

When students reach us from primary school, they will be very aware of the importance of family and the people that care for them, of respectful relationships, and of keeping safe in different contexts, including digital safety.

As students grow through secondary school, we build upon and develop this learning. They will continue to learn about the concept of personal safeguarding, about the sanctity of their bodies, and about harms that they may not inflict upon others and that that other may not inflict on them, both from a legal and Torah perspective.

Based on consultation with parents from various year groups, parents at our school will wish to withdraw their children from those elements of the RSE requirements that relate to SE. Parents will favour the retention of the traditional community system that has served them well and that is consistent with their faith and culture. The school has therefore carefully designated which parts of RSE are classed as SE and from which parents may withdraw their children.

As per DfE guidance, RSE should be taught in a proportionate way to match the needs of the students and we will continue to monitor the student body so that our curriculum and approach remains suitable.

4. Underpinning Principles and Values of RSE at our school

This school believes RSE should:

- Promote the concept that the key quality to be sought of and respected in every person is the innate quality of humanity that is of a Divine source. At the heart of this will be the Torah value; to treat people with the same respect, the same regard and the same courtesy so that students will learn to adopt that way of thinking, on which human happiness depends. Respect will be a core value throughout RSE. Students are expected to meet their duties of respect to all. In achieving this, the school deliberately minimises the focus on differences and instead emphasises universal similarities of 'tzelem elokim' – that all of humankind has a 'Divine' element that commands respect.
- Recognise that parents are *central* to RSE as the key people in teaching their children about relationships and growing up. The school strives for collaboration between home and school. It will consult with parents and ensure that they have information about RSE content, including what elements are mandatory and what sections they can withdraw their children

from. The development of positive relationships depends fundamentally on consistent educational messages and personal example set by caregivers, parents and school.

- Develop independent choice and free will which is encapsulated by a core premise of Judaism called 'bechirah'. Young people face many choices as they are growing up and will face choices independently throughout their adult lives. True choice is when they can understand the range of options before them – without being influenced by stereotyping and prejudice.
- Take an optimal whole school approach whereby parents, staff and students (as appropriate) are engaged through consultation on RSE and the delivery of its curriculum.
- Incorporate school wide a classic Jewish pedagogic approach of 'Mussar' (character development) and 'Derech Eretz' (societal norms of good behaviour, boundary setting). These will provide an important framework for virtues of respect, kindness, integrity, generosity and honesty.
- Expect our students to exemplify social behaviours that are polite and respectful of all, irrespective of differences.
- Understand that parents and teachers need to take responsibility to demonstrate respectful relationships to each other, in all their social interactions and not least in their behaviours towards their children/students.
- Encourage our parents to demonstrate 'shalom bayis' - positive behaviours to each other, so that young people learn and recognize mutually respectful, loving, caring, open relationships. They learn to recognize and value commitment and their family values.
- Expect our staff and teachers to show respect to each other and in particular to their students. *יהי כבוד תלמידך חביב עליך כשלך אבות פרק ד - May the dignity of your students be as precious to you as your own (Mishna Avot ch 4)*
- Incorporate activities and learning to develop character virtues of self-control, which are at the core of considerate and mutually respectful relationships including intimate relationships.
- Students will learn positive regard for disadvantaged groups through fundamental Torah teachings. This will challenge prejudicial assumptions.
- The Torah mandates particular sensitivity to disadvantaged groups (naming in particular widows, orphans and converts to Judaism). This will always be a

consideration in delivery of RSE so that young people from atypical circumstances will never feel stigmatised or less valued.

5. Equality Requirements and Inclusivity

Students are expected to meet their duties of respect to all. In achieving this, the school deliberately minimizes focus on differences and rather emphasizes universal similarities of 'tzelem elokim' – all humankind has a 'Divine' element that commands respect.

Particular focus will be paid to young people who have atypical family profiles including deceased parents, single parent families or blended families. The Torah specifically mandates that children who are orphaned of a parent be given additional support and sensitivity.

Our school takes full responsibility for all its students regardless of their differences, limitations or other characteristics.

Occasionally students will present with questions or situations which are atypical and potentially in conflict with Orthodox Jewish teachings (*these could include LGBT related matters, or other sexual social or behavioural matters*). It is our policy to recognise that young people deserve and need answers and may be experiencing real inner conflict.

For example, a young person may have a family structure which is atypical or have non-religious relatives, and she may see or learn about relationships which are unusual in Orthodox Jewish society. Young people may be asking about relationships or lifestyles contrary to Torah principles. Our school believes that our role as educators is to respond individually to students' specific experiences and questions. We aim to be responsive to their questions and feelings, not suppressive, and will do this through key, skilled pastoral support as part of the staffing structure. External relevant professionals will also be included for both mentoring of staff and direct teaching as appropriate. All teaching to students will be given from a Torah perspective, and will therefore be provided on an individual basis rather than in a classroom context.

Should a child (or their parent/carer) present with questions about understanding non hetero-sexual relationships, they will be able to request to meet with and gain guidance from the pastoral team or be signposted to an external agency that the school works with such as Shema Koli/NOA, that operates from a Torah perspective and in a way that is consistent with the school ethos. At no point will that child be made to feel uncomfortable or inadequate.

We recognise the particular vulnerabilities of students with SEND. The knowledge and competences in RSE are essential for students with SEND to live fulfilled lives, to ensure they are safe and to prevent exploitation. SEND students will be fully integrated into the programme of RSE. Teachers will use differentiation where necessary, and SENCOs will use IEPs to help students with SEND with RSE. The teaching of this subject will be sensitive to the individual needs of all students in the

class, to avoid stereotyping, to prevent any possible embarrassment to SEND students, and to ensure that there is no discrimination towards any of the protected characteristics, as defined in the Equality Act 2010.

6. Right of Withdrawal from SE

Parents / carers have the right to withdraw their child from sex education.

Parents do not have the right to withdraw their young people from relationships education or PSHCE.

A request to withdraw a child should be made in writing on a form provided by the School. The Head teacher has the right to deny such requests, but in line with the School's approach to these matters, as explained in section 3, we do not expect the Headteacher to do so unless there are exceptional circumstances.

From 3 terms prior to a child turning 16, a child may directly request to receive SE rather than to be withdrawn. The school will then make arrangements for the child to receive a programme of SE during one of those terms. This will be delivered by the SE provider (covering the requirements from a Torah perspective) while the school remains responsible for appropriateness and quality of the provision.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

Proprietor / Governing Body

Responsibility for the RSE policy at YHS school ultimately lies with the governing body. At least one representative of the governing body will be part of a working group that develops and reviews the RSE policy. The policy will be reviewed every two years and prior to that the proprietor / governors will consult with and monitor changes to the profile of the school parent body to make necessary changes to ensure that the RSE policy remains up to date and relevant.

Head teacher

The Head teacher takes overall delegated responsibility for the implementation of this policy and for liaison with the Governing Body, parents, the school management and staff.

The head teacher has general responsibility for supporting other members of staff in the implementation of this policy and will provide a lead in the dissemination of the information required relating to RSE and the provision of in-service training as necessary. *(In developing the curriculum, the head teacher may be supported by the curriculum deputy and the member of staff with responsibility for child protection).*

Teachers

RSE is a whole school issue. All teachers have a responsibility of care; as well as fostering academic progress they should actively contribute to the guardianship and

guidance of the physical, moral and spiritual well-being of their students. Teachers will be expected to deliver RSE in accordance with the Jewish ethos of the school.

Parent/Carers

As part of a whole school approach to RSE, parents will be expected to be an integral part of the working group, delivery and support of RSE.

Their attendance at workshops on parenting, child safety and technology risk will be pivotal in achieving some of the more sensitive and personalised elements of RSE.

8. Consultation

Our RSE policy and offer has been developed through in-depth work of a small focus group of school staff and parents. The views of parents have been fundamental in the shaping of the RSE policy.

Regular review will also include consultation to ensure that parents' views, wishes and comments are being captured for monitoring and review purposes. This will ensure that the RSE policy is kept relevant and appropriate to the needs and developmental stages of the students.