

September 2024

Dear parents and carers,

Our children are growing up in an increasingly complex world with new opportunities, but also new challenges. RSHE is an important part of preparing them for life in 21st century Britain, enabling them to embrace diversity, make the most of technology; and understand the importance of, and develop the skills which lead to them being able to sustain healthy and strong relationships.

You will remember that last year we invited you to have your say about relationships, sex and health education at Birchwood Community in line with updated government guidance. You, your children, and many members of our school community played a key role in our consultation process. All secondary schools must teach sex education that is outside of the science curriculum. Sex education at Birchwood Community High School is taught by trained staff in an age appropriate and sensitive way and gives due regard to the law. This will include topics like sex, the advantages of delaying sexual activity and the importance of consent, positive sexual relationships, contraception, pregnancy choices, domestic violence etc. We committed to delivering these lessons during the school year.

The aims of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) at our school are to:

- Provide a framework in which sensitive discussions can take place within school
- Prepare students for puberty, and give them an understanding of sexual development and the importance of health and hygiene
- Help students to develop feelings of self-respect, confidence and empathy
- Teach students the correct vocabulary to describe themselves and their bodies
- Empower all members of the school community by cultivating a positive and inclusive environment around physical, emotional and sexual health and delivering a broad and ambitious curriculum that facilitates learning for all.

To cover the curriculum content outlined in the RSHE Guidance, we will equip our pupils to build positive and respectful relationships online and offline. We seek to ensure that it gives pupils the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will help them to:

- realise their health (including sexual health), wellbeing and dignity
- build self-esteem and self-worth
- explore and value their personal and sexual identity and that of others
- understand family structures, committed relationships and the legal status of different types of long-term relationships
- make sense of the real-life issues they are experiencing in the world around them
- manage and explore difficult feelings and emotions
- understand and ensure the protection of their rights throughout their lives.

Parents' right to withdraw their child from sex education as outlined within the Statutory Guidance, parents/carers have the right to withdraw their children from the non-statutory components of sex education, which is delivered as part of RSE up to and until 3 terms before the child turns 16. We take care to highlight lessons that contain what we define as sex education so that we can respect the wishes of parents who have withdrawn their children from the non-statutory components of sex education within RSE. Please refer to the school's RSE policy for the full curriculum plan. The programme will be delivered in a non-judgemental, factual way, using the correct medical terms where appropriate (for example when teaching about external body parts). In the interests of transparency, we have clearly signposted the lessons that this relates to and included the topics below:

Year group	Topic
Year 7	Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
	periods
	puberty
	dangers of smoking
	drugs
Year 8	Body image
	Safe sex (consent)
	Safe sex (contribution)
	Dangers of pornography
	Sexual orientation
	Healthy relationships
Year 9	Consent
	Consensual sexual activity
	Safe sex
	Social media and mobile phones
	Forced and arranged marriage
	Revenge pornography
Year 10	sexism and gender prejudice
	gender and trans identity
	same sex relationships
	forced and arranged marriage
Year 11	revenge pornography
	Safe sex
	Teenage pregnancy
	Fertility
	Body shaming
	Types of relationships

Please note that parents/carers do not have a right to withdraw their child from:

- Relationships Education
- any sex education delivered as part of the Science curriculum.

Although parents/carers have the right to request to withdraw their child from any or all of sex education as part of relationships education, it is our aim to encourage parents to see the value of RSE learning and its contribution to keeping children safe, developing their emotional, social and physical wellbeing and for promoting equality and social justice.

To find out more about the curriculum see: Government Guidance on RSE and Health Education.

Any further questions please contact the school and note that students will be able to ask anonymous questions about everything covered via a question box and to attend a drop-in session if they want to talk more about what they have any questions that they want to ask in person.

Kind regards