



CHELTENHAM
LADIES'
COLLEGE

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION POLICY

2025-26

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION (RSE) POLICY

The aim of this policy is to:

- Demonstrate Cheltenham Ladies' College (College) whole school approach to Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)
- Communicate clearly to staff, parents, visitors and pupils the way in which Relationships and Sex Education will be delivered at College.
- Ensure alignment with the DfE's statutory guidance on 'Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education'. The policy complies with our statutory obligations to deliver RSE under sections 34 & 35 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017

Related policies: PSHE and Personal Development Policy, Anti-bullying and Anti-cyberbullying policy, Behaviour Discipline and Rewards Policy, Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy.

At Cheltenham Ladies' College, RSE is fully integrated within our Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) Education provision and forms part of our whole-school approach to wellbeing and safeguarding. We believe that Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is an educational entitlement for all pupils and a vital part of their personal development. It supports pupils' emergence into adulthood by equipping them with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values they need to make informed decisions, build healthy relationships, and understand their responsibilities to themselves and to others. Specifically, RSE empowers our pupils to take responsibility for their sexual health and well-being in advance of any potential risks they may encounter and makes them aware of aspects of the Law relating to relationships and sex.

RSE is vital for the personal, social, and emotional development of our pupils. It equips children and young people with the information, skills and values they need to have safe, respectful and enjoyable relationships. PSHE is set up to help pupils make the most of the experience and opportunities within College, and to help them cultivate the skills and resilience to cope and thrive in the wider world. Through the PSHE programme, we aim to equip pupils with a sound understanding of risk, along with the knowledge and skills necessary to make safe and informed decisions.

Pupils in Lower College receive timetabled PSHE lessons, while those in Upper College and Sixth Form engage in a carousel of lectures and presentations during weekly enrichment and personal development sessions.

In addition, aspects of RSE are addressed through other curriculum lessons; the co-curricular programme; and various community and enrichment opportunities that occur across the

academic year. Sessions are delivered by academic and pastoral staff who have an interest or specialism in a particular area, as well as by external speakers.

This is a progressive, age and stage-appropriate programme designed to meet the needs of pupils, who are also given opportunities to help shape its content and provide feedback on its effectiveness. Regular pupil surveys are conducted in this pursuit, taking place during PSHE lessons in the Lower College and through the Carousel sessions for Upper College and the Sixth Form pupils.

Relationship and Sex Education (RSE)

The College defines **Relationships Education** as learning about the physical, social, legal, and emotional aspects of human relationships, including friendships, intimate and sexual relationships, committed partnerships, and family life.

The College defines **Sex Education** as learning about the physical, social, legal, and emotional aspects of human sexuality and behaviour, including human reproduction.

At College, we approach RSE as an integrated programme, meaning that sex education is always taught in the context of healthy relationships and is rooted in gender equity and a human rights framework. We believe that high-quality, comprehensive RSE does not encourage early sexual experimentation. Rather, it helps build pupils' confidence and self-esteem and supports them in understanding the reasons for delaying sexual activity. Evidence shows that effective RSE can play a role in positive behaviour change, including reducing unprotected or unwanted sex and reducing harmful behaviours such as sexual harassment and violence.

Our provision is inclusive, age and stage-appropriate, and aligned with statutory guidance, promoting equality and complying with the Equality Act 2010. We actively address issues such as sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and gender stereotyping. The programme is designed to meet the diverse needs of all pupils, including those with different gender identities, sexual orientations, cultural and religious backgrounds, and physical or learning needs.

College is committed to working in close partnership with parents and carers, recognising them as the primary educators in many aspects of relationships and values. We aim to promote personal responsibility, support self-esteem and emotional wellbeing, foster mutual respect, and provide accurate information and support for pupils and their families.

RSE Curriculum Content

At CLC, our Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) curriculum is developed by the Head of PSHE, in consultation with PSHE teachers, the wider pastoral team, pupils, and parents.

College meets the learning objectives and content outlined in the Relationships Education, Relationships & Sex Education and Health Education statutory guidance. All content is delivered in a timely, age and stage-appropriate, way to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with SEND.

Our RSE programme supports pupils in understanding the importance of consent, managing risk, building emotional and physical health, and recognising the characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships and delivers a breadth of related topics including:

- Healthy relationships, including friendships and intimate relationships
- Families
- Growing and changing
- Puberty

- Personal hygiene
- Changing thoughts, feelings, and emotions
- Becoming more independent
- Consent and keeping safe
- Developing self-esteem and confidence
- Understanding conception and contraception
- Safer sex and sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Sexual health
- Valuing personal and sexual identities
- Understanding different family structures and the legal status of different types of long-term relationships
- Managing and exploring difficult feelings and emotions
- Considering how choices affect personal wellbeing and the wellbeing of others
- Understanding and protecting personal rights throughout life

A critical part of our RSE programme is its role in safeguarding. College believes it is essential that all young people can recognise abusive behaviour and know how to access help when needed. Therefore, the curriculum also includes lessons on:

- Consent and respectful relationships
- Child-on-child abuse
- Harassment and coercion
- Staying safe both offline and online
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Honour-based violence
- Forced marriage

It is essential that where relevant, the teaching of RSE pays explicit attention to the Law, legal provisions and the rights of citizens.

Creating a culture of inclusivity

College actively seeks to challenge all forms of discrimination and prejudice among pupils, and to promote understanding and respect in line with the Equality Act 2010.

In PSHE Education, it is essential that all lessons take place in an atmosphere of trust and respect, with clear ground rules to create a safe and supportive environment for open discussion. This ethos underpins how we deliver RSE across the College and we have worked hard to develop a programme that makes every pupil feel valued, included, and represented.

Steps taken include:

- Providing an LGBTQ+ inclusive and SEND-inclusive curriculum, with careful consideration of the SEND Code of Practice (2014) when planning and delivering content.
- Actively promoting gender equality by challenging gender stereotypes, sexism, and sexual harassment. We ensure that content on gender equality is embedded throughout the curriculum.
- Considering the religious and cultural backgrounds of all pupils carefully when teaching RSE, ensuring that lessons are sensitive, respectful, and relevant to every learner.

Our approach encourages pupils to express their views, listen to others, reflect on different perspectives, and develop as responsible, respectful, and informed individuals.

Delivering Safe and Effective RSE

A vital part of our approach is creating a safe and respectful learning environment where pupils feel secure, valued, and confident to participate. A safe classroom atmosphere helps prevent inappropriate personal disclosures and emotional distress in a public setting.

Staff never assume to know all the life experiences of our pupils; therefore, we avoid using shocking images, stories, or videos that might sensationalise unhealthy or illegal behaviours or re-traumatise those who are vulnerable. We are mindful that pupils cannot easily leave a session without drawing attention to themselves. Therefore, it is crucial not to put them in situations that induce fear, shock, or shame.

RSE is delivered in a non-judgemental, impartial and factual way, using correct medical terminology where appropriate (for example, when teaching about external body parts).

Key strategies to ensure safe and effective practice include:

- Establishing clear ground rules
- Using distanced learning techniques (such as storytelling, scenarios and role play) rather than encouraging personal disclosures
- Providing opportunity for open and/or anonymous questioning
- Assessing what pupils already know and understand before teaching a topic
- Continuously assessing progress and comprehension
- Signposting additional sources of support

Whilst pupil questions are welcomed and addressed openly with the whole class, this will always be in an age and stage-appropriate manner. When a question is deemed too sensitive or not suitable for a group setting, teaching staff handle the situation with care and allow for the question to be addressed privately, after the lesson.

Staff avoid answering personal questions and are not expected to share or express personal views or beliefs during lessons. Equally, staff will avoid asking anything that could make pupils feel uncomfortable or vulnerable.

College believes that honest, open discussion helps prevent misinformation, reduces stigma, and ensures that pupils feel safe to explore sensitive topics with trusted adults. This approach supports their wellbeing and protects them from harm and abuse.

Common safety themes reinforced throughout our RSE programme include:

- Risk management and reduction
- Strategies for resisting peer pressure and managing peer influence

To ensure safe, reliable and accurate information sharing, College uses PSHE Association quality-assured resources that are up-to-date, evidence-based, and accessible to all. These materials are carefully customised by our specialist PSHE team to ensure they are relevant and meaningful for our pupil context.

Lesson activities are designed to develop learning skills and self-awareness, not just factual knowledge and include: quizzes, attitude scales, pair and group discussions, role play scenarios, video, workshops, and prioritisation and response selection tasks. RSE addresses aspects of relationships and sex in an integrated way to promote a more contextualised understanding.

College's whole-school approach to RSE makes use of opportunities outside the classroom, including sport, art and drama lessons, year group talks and whole school assemblies (prayers),

whole school celebrations, enrichment activities, and House events. This wider context helps to embed key messages and reinforce learning in diverse, meaningful ways.

Where appropriate, we enhance our provision by working with external experts. For example, *Chelsea's Choice*, an educational drama production on child sexual exploitation, and 'Smashed' on the risks of underage drinking, both of which provide an impactful learning experience. All external speakers' materials must align with the College's RSE values and will be quality-assured in advance. A CLC teacher will always be present during these sessions to support learning and address any follow-up questions from pupils.

All visitors are required to adhere to this policy and related policies, including those covering confidentiality and child protection. We ensure that external contributors:

- Have a clear understanding of our pupil cohort, including their varying abilities and diverse identities
- Are made aware of any relevant child protection concerns
- Support our strong safeguarding culture and comply fully with statutory obligations, including the requirements set out in *Keeping Children Safe in Education*.

Staff Training

Staff with responsibility for delivering RSE will undergo training on a regular basis to ensure they are up-to-date with the RSE policy and curriculum requirements regarding RSE. College utilises the PSHE Association's 'School Plus' programme which provides all our specialised staff with access to an extensive library of training. The Head of PSHE is responsible for ensuring RSE on-demand training modules are completed by the PSHE team.

School Plus RSE training modules include:

- Teaching sexual health and contraception
- Teaching about puberty confidently
- Addressing sexual harassment
- Pornography: what and how to teach
- Mentoring colleagues new to PSHE
- Using safe and effective group work
- Effective assessment of PSHE
- Adapting PSHE for pupils with SEND

In addition to this ongoing professional training, in-house training sessions will also be delivered in response to updates to our RSE scheme of work.

Managing Disclosures, Confidentiality, and Compliance

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) at Cheltenham Ladies' College supports pupils in recognising the differences between healthy and abusive relationships and knowing how to seek help. College acknowledges that sensitive topics covered in RSE may lead to disclosures of abuse or harm. In such cases, College staff, who receive annual training in child protection, will follow safeguarding procedures to ensure pupil safety and wellbeing.

College is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment where pupils feel confident to seek guidance on matters related to relationships, sexual health, and personal wellbeing. Pupils are made aware that, while staff are approachable and respect their privacy, there are limits to confidentiality. They are helped to understand that if a disclosure suggests they may be at risk of harm, staff have a duty to act in their best interests.

In such cases, the member of staff will consult with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and, where appropriate, the Head of Pastoral Care before any further action is taken. The pupil will always be informed that the information is being shared and will be given an explanation as to why. Throughout this process, they will receive sensitive, age-appropriate, and ongoing support.

Support for pupils with concerns around relationships, sexual matters, or personal safety is readily available through multiple channels. The House system provides a strong foundation for pastoral care, while further assistance is accessible through the Medical Centre and trained counsellors. Pupils are also given information about external support groups and relevant agencies. These signposts are routinely shared during PSHE and RSE lessons so that pupils know where to turn for help when needed.

This joined-up approach ensures that safeguarding is always prioritised, while empowering pupils to seek advice and support in a way that respects their dignity and emotional wellbeing.

College recognises that some pupils may be more vulnerable to RSE lesson material, due to past or ongoing pastoral needs. These pupils will receive additional support to ensure lesson content does not cause distress. If a pupil opts out of a topic due to its sensitive nature, and this involves missing statutory content, the pupil will be encouraged to catch up, when they feel ready to, through a one-to-one seminar with a trusted adult. If the statutory content is missed due to illness or absence, the Departmental catch-up policy will be followed to ensure all required learning is completed.

Rights of Parents

Parents have the right to request that their daughter be withdrawn from some or all aspects of sex education delivered as part of statutory Relationships and Sex Education (RSE), although this right does not apply to content that is a compulsory part of the Science curriculum or to statutory relationships education.

If a parent is considering withdrawing their daughter from RSE, they are encouraged to first discuss the matter with the Head of PSHE, Mrs Lisa Shortland (shortlandl@cheltladiescollege.org), and/or the Head of Pastoral Care, Miss Caroline Ralph (ralphc@cheltladiescollege.org), to ensure they are fully informed about the nature and purpose of the lessons. These conversations provide an opportunity to address any concerns and share additional resources or context to support the decision-making process.

Should parents decide to proceed with a request to withdraw, they must confirm this in writing to the Head of Pastoral Care. Except in exceptional circumstances and considering the individual needs and best interests of the pupil, College will respect a parent's request to withdraw their daughter from sex education up until three terms before she turns 16 in line with statutory guidance. After that point, if the pupil wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, College will arrange for appropriate provision to be made during one of those terms. All withdrawal requests will be recorded, along with any steps taken to accommodate them.

Consultation

At College, pupils are actively encouraged to engage with the PSHE and RSE curriculum, and their feedback plays a vital role in shaping its ongoing development.

Feedback is regularly gathered through surveys conducted during PSHE lessons, particularly in the Lower College, and following carousel sessions in Upper College and the Sixth Form. These responses help evaluate the effectiveness of the content and delivery, including the impact of

external speakers, and inform future planning to ensure the programme remains relevant, inclusive, and responsive to pupils' needs.

In addition, pupils are consulted on what topics they believe should be included in the curriculum. Their views are carefully considered when planning sessions, follow-up resources, and the sequence of content across year groups.

Further pupil input is facilitated through the college-wide pupil voice process, which involves representatives from across the divisions.

The Head of PSHE meets with Sixth Form pupils to share their insights and, where appropriate, support the facilitation of sessions for younger pupils, offering a peer-informed perspective that enhances relevance and relatability. This collaborative, pupil-centred approach ensures that the PSHE and RSE programme at CLC continues to evolve in a way that reflects the lived experiences, concerns, and interests of the pupil body.

Cheltenham Ladies' College is committed to working in partnership with parents to support pupils' learning and personal development. As part of this commitment, the College ensures regular communication about RSE. At the beginning of each academic year, parents receive the RSE policy and a summary of the PSHE/RSE schemes of work, including details of topics to be covered across year groups.

Parents are also invited to share feedback. The Head of PSHE hosts biannual webinars throughout the year that align with the PSHE and RSE curriculum. These include the annual RSE consultation held in the Spring term, which provides further detail on the curriculum and opportunities for parental engagement. Sessions are livestreamed and interactive and include a parental survey. Recordings are made available for two weeks following the event.

To support open communication between College and our parent body, College also sends periodic letters outlining upcoming RSE / PSHE content, along with curated links and resources to help parents continue conversations at home in a supportive and informed way.

Monitoring and Review

The Head of PSHE and PSHE/Biology Lead conduct an internal audit of the Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) programme each year to ensure compliance, rigour, accuracy, relevance, and suitability in terms of age and stage appropriateness. Pupil voice and parent feedback given in webinars and surveys will be included in this audit.

The Head of PSHE is required to give annual updates to the Education Committee to ensure College Council has strategic oversight of our RSE provision. Members of the Leadership Team will monitor and evaluate the quality of Relationship and Sex Education by gathering both structured and informal feedback from pupils and staff in the following manner:

- Teacher evaluations of individual lessons and the overall RSE programme
- Evidence gathered from lesson observations
- Pupil feedback and evaluations through interviews, questionnaires, surveys, and pupil question boxes
- Scrutiny of pupil self-evaluation reports

The whole process is overseen and monitored by the Vice Principal Academic, to ensure a consistently high-quality delivery across the curriculum.

The policy is reviewed every two years, though it will be updated as required, particularly where updates about best practice have been issued and/or changes to regulations have been made.

Appendix 1

RSE Curriculum Overview

Lower College (LC1 – LC3)

In the Lower College, the RSE curriculum focuses on foundational knowledge and awareness, helping pupils understand themselves and build respectful, healthy relationships.

Topics include:

- Identifying and managing risk
- Healthy and unhealthy relationships
- Friendship challenges
- Bullying and Cyberbullying
- Dealing with conflict and emotional regulation
- Permission-seeking and personal boundaries
- Early understanding of consent
- Puberty and physical/emotional changes
- Menstruation and managing change
- Body image and media influences
- Challenging gender stereotypes and exploring inclusivity
- Similarities and differences, diversity and discrimination
- Identity and relationships, sexual orientation and consent
- Inclusive families and being curious about different types of relationships
- Child Sexual Exploitation and Grooming
- Hate crimes and extremism

This stage emphasises self-awareness, empathy, and respectful interaction with others.

Upper College

UC4 sessions build on prior learning and introduces more complex themes relating to sexual health, identity, and digital culture:

- Sexual consent and the law (including age of consent)
- Intimacy relationships & pleasure
- Gender Equality
- Pregnancy Outcomes including miscarriage, adoption, fostering and abortion
- Pressure, coercion, control (including online blackmail)
- Honour based violence and forced marriage

UC5 sessions deepen pupils' understanding of intimacy, sexual decision-making, and relationship dynamics:

- Rites of passage post GCSE: Safety at Festivals
- Managing conflict relationships
- Alcohol & drugs relating to risky behaviours
- Condoms and contraception
- Sexual health, STIs self-examination, screening and accessing services
- Pornography & online sexual behaviours
- Keeping safe at parties

These sessions promote informed choices, emotional literacy, and respect for diversity.

Sixth Form (SFC1 & SFC2)

The Sixth Form programme prepares pupils for independent adult life, with a strong focus on autonomy, safety, and future planning.

Key topics include:

- Safety, sexual health and empowerment
- Managing online life and digital relationships
- 'Something's not right' - Relationship Abuse
- Deep dive on spiking
- Keeping safe at festivals
- The fertility journey from puberty to menopause (includes miscarriage and fem-tech)
- LGBTQ+ matters – transphobia, prejudice and allyship
- Get to know your boobs
- The truth undressed (intimate health & accessing services)

The Sixth Form curriculum equips pupils with the knowledge, judgement, and confidence to manage relationships, health, and wellbeing in their post-school lives.