



WESTMINSTER
SCHOOL

RELATIONSHIPS, SEX AND HEALTH EDUCATION (RSHE) POLICY

Author: Nick Fair
Lead: Deputy Head (Academic)
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INTRODUCTION

Westminster places at the heart of its endeavour the wellbeing of each pupil. We see high quality Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) as an entitlement which helps our boys and girls to understand and to value themselves and others, as they emerge into young adulthood and prepare for an independent life beyond school.

Honest and sensitive discussion with experienced teachers who know pupils and care about them provides a perspective which is often missing from conversations amongst peer groups, whether in real life or online. Many of the aims of RSHE build on skills which are developed throughout school life – listening skills, conflict resolution, help seeking, decision making, reflection, assertiveness, and effective communication. Ethical and moral issues abound within the everyday life of the School, either presented to pupils for consideration or arising by virtue of everyday human interaction.

In short, RSHE enriches and is enriched by the holistic experience of the pupil.

AIMS

One definition of RSHE is “learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, relationships, sex, human sexuality, and sexual health”¹.

Young people need to know how to be safe and healthy, and how to manage their academic, personal and social lives in a positive way. RSHE allows pupils to build up confidence both in real life and the virtual world, to make healthy relationships of all kinds whilst understanding the pressures and risks associated which can accompany intense feelings.

Our aim is to help our pupils to:

- Respect differences of attitudes and opinions.
- Challenge discrimination and stereotypes.
- Develop resilience to be able to recover from setbacks and challenging periods in their lives.
- Build the capacity to forge positive relationships in their lives.
- Understand intimacy, including romantic and sexual intimacy.
- Know how to access support and advice around all aspects of health (sexual, mental or physical).
- Have a basic understanding of the law (including the Equality Act 2010) as relates to relationships, consent and sexual activity.

¹ Sex Education Forum

- Understand the reasons for delaying sexual experience and for any sexual activity to be protected.
- Have an understanding of STIs.
- Have knowledge of contraception.
- Avoid being pressured into unwanted sexual activity.
- Use social media appropriately, lawfully and positively.
- Manage strong feelings (including those of sexual attraction).
- Develop a support network of reliable friends and adults.

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

Pedagogical approaches include the following:

- Establishing ground rules so as to promote a positive and safe climate for discussion.
- Distancing techniques – fictional characters and scenarios are used – often arrived at with pupil input.
- Role-play (this might involve rehearsing refusal skills or responding to a pressurising peer or scenario).
- Reviewing values (clarifying one's own values and discovering how these relate to those of others).
- Providing “trigger warnings” – both in advance of a lesson and on an introductory slide – when teaching topics that some pupils might find traumatic, and allowing pupils to absent themselves (or take a short break) from the lesson.
- An approach which is inclusive and respectful: the Equality Act 2010 is taught explicitly but is also modelled throughout by teachers. We recognise that our pupils will come from a variety of religious and cultural traditions. The School is committed to allowing a variety of perspectives to be expressed, within the law and within the broader ethos of the School. Pupils are affirmed in their equality and uniqueness, whilst recognising that everyone with their differences can be right.
- Differentiating in response to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND): all teaching staff are aware of SEND profiles for pupils in every subject and learning situation. RSHE is no exception to this and teachers will adapt approaches so that each pupil has full access to the content of the programme.

ORGANISATION AND DELIVERY

The day-to-day responsibility of Westminster's RSHE programme falls to the Head of RSHE and Wellbeing. Delivery of timetabled lessons for all year groups is taught by teachers who have on-going professional development training across a range of topics which fall under the aegis of RSHE, and who are also experienced teachers of other subjects at Westminster. Class sizes for these lessons are kept modest in size (usually 10 to 15 pupils), in order to allow for discussion and to foster an even more approachable setting given the nature of the subject.

The content of the lessons is created by three leads (one for the Upper School and two for the Lower School), who tailor resources to be age appropriate for each year group, in line with the topics on the spiral curriculum. Pupil feedback from surveys conducted at the end of each term also help to ensure that content and topics help to fill any gaps in knowledge and tackle misconceptions across theme. These resources are then disseminated to those allocated to teach the course across the School.

The delivery of material is also supplemented by external providers throughout the course of the academic year, as well as supported through tutorial time. The Head of Wellbeing and the Heads of Year liaise to ensure that tutorial material is appropriate and in line with the spiral curriculum for each given year group. The Heads of Year in turn ensure that their tutor team are well equipped to deliver follow-up content; they also notify parents of the up-coming curriculum content, further resources of which can be provided upon request. This allows for a multifaceted approach to the delivery of the same topic, allowing for reflection and more opportunity to discuss with a plethora of different staff members.

Fifth Form

RSHE and Wellbeing lessons

Weekly RSHE and Wellbeing classes are held throughout the year. RSHE is mainly taught during the Election Term, but many relevant areas are covered in the Play and Lent Terms:

- Respect for others.
- Responding to prejudice and seeking help.
- Puberty.
- Digital safety, literacy and AI.
- Healthy relationships.
- Positive masculinity.
- Personal safety and civic boundaries.

In the Election Term pupils will consider the value and benefit of relationships of various kinds (including with ideas, memories, mementoes, places and concepts). Pupils will be encouraged to think more about intimacy, how healthy relationships can be recognised and enjoyed. They will also be encouraged to identify characteristics of unhealthy relationships and where these engage the law. Various scenarios are worked through using fictional characters who ask “agony uncles” for advice when dealing with various worries or dilemmas common during adolescence. The following are discussed:

- Consent, including the legal aspects which relate to sex (including rape and assault).
- Nudes and Semi-Nudes (Youth Produced Sexual Imagery [YPSI]).
- Pornography and the implications for the individual and society.
- The impact of smoking, vaping, nicotine, drugs and alcohol consumption on health and relationships.

Reporting concerns and seeking advice are raised at various points throughout the RSHE and Wellbeing programme and pupils are signposted to further support at the end of each lesson.

Religious Studies

Throughout the Fifth Form in Religious Studies, pupils consider:

- The development of human rights through John Locke and Immanuel Kant.
- Concepts of respect for persons and the idea that humans have innate dignity.
- Freedom of speech and its limits.
- Freedom of religion and conscience (for example what happens when freedom of religion comes into conflict with LGBTQ+ rights).
- Equality (which is both explored and affirmed).

Workshops

Pupils partake in the Foundation Festival, undertaking workshops on a differing theme within the RSHE curriculum each year.

Lower Shell

RSHE and Wellbeing lessons

Weekly RSHE and Wellbeing lessons are held throughout the year. The following topics are included:

- Sex, pressure and risk-taking behaviour.
- Relationships and equality.
- Pregnancy choices.
- Drugs.
- Sextortion.
- Prevention and reporting.

Biology

Biology classes cover the following:

- Reproduction.
- Male and female anatomy.
- Male and female sex cells.
- Fertilisation and pregnancy (and choices within pregnancy in accordance with the law).
- Methods of contraception.
- IVF.
- STIs.

There is an opportunity to ask questions through an anonymous question box. Staff also have a bank of commonly asked questions which can be used to supplement this.

Workshops

Pupils receive the first module of a three-part series on healthy masculinity provided by the charity “Beyond Equality”. The first module is entitled “Introduction to Masculinities, Privilege and Emotion”. The second and third modules are delivered in the Upper Shell.

Upper Shell

RSHE and Wellbeing lessons

Weekly RSHE and Wellbeing lessons are held throughout the year. The following topics are included:

- Identifying harmful sexual behaviours.
- Respectful relationships.
- Forced Marriage and Honour-based violence.
- Testicular cancer.
- Drugs in relation to risky sexual behaviour.
- Online and media awareness.
- Mental Health.
- Citizenship.

Futures Day

The Head of RSHE and Wellbeing and a Sexual Health NHS Consultant team up to answer questions (both those submitted in advance or arising during the session): questions are related to relationships and sexual health, and consent is also revisited.

Broadcaster and NHS Consultant, Dr Stuart Flanagan, has trained members of staff and met with Wellbeing teachers as well as parents so as to ensure that consistent messages are shared.

Biology

Biology classes cover the following:

- Nutrition.
- Male body image.

- Disordered eating.

Workshops

Pupils receive the second and third modules of a three-part series on healthy masculinity. These are entitled “Healthy relationships, Sex and Sexuality” and “Preventing Gender Based Violence”.

Pupils also receive a talk delivered by the Amy Winehouse Foundation.

Sixth Form and Remove

RSHE and Wellbeing lessons

Weekly RSHE and Wellbeing lessons are held throughout the year. The following topics are included:

- Sex and pleasure.
- Sexual health.
- Consent.
- Pornography.
- Relationship abuse.
- Alcohol, drugs and other forms of addiction.
- Self-esteem and body image.
- Wellbeing.
- Support systems.
- Financial independence.

Additional External Offerings

Everyday Sexism lecture

An insightful lecture delivered by Laura Bates on the topic of everyday sexism, which provides a thoughtful and thorough insight into societal harms. Topics covered include consent, sexual harassment and abuse and where to get support.

Everyone’s Invited – Eradicating Rape Culture

Volunteers lead an interactive session on the causes of rape culture in the UK and what we as a community can do to tackle it.

Hyphen mental health lecture

A mental health advocate delivers an impactful talk on the importance of looking after one’s mental health.

School of Sexuality Education

Workshops are delivered to pupils on relationships and sex education. There is also a parent event delivered alongside to ensure consistency in messaging at home.

Sexpressions

A near-peer independent UK charity with the goal of empowering young people to make decisions about relationships and sex by running informal and comprehensive RSHE in the community. First-year medical students from Imperial College London come in to deliver workshops to pupils on a range of topics which fall under the umbrella of RSHE.

Social media law lecture

A popular lecture delivered by Dr Holly Powell Jones, allowing pupils to learn the civil and criminal consequences resulting from a variety of social media scenarios. Youth Produced Sexual Imagery (“sexting”) scenarios are included.

Just Like Us

Talks given by a member of the LGBTQ community to promote educational awareness of issues.

Lady Garden Foundation

Talk delivered to the Upper School for the awareness of gynaecological cancers

Junior Ogunyemi

Interactive assembly delivered by entrepreneur, Junior Ogunyemi, to promote different career paths along with underpinning theories of the importance of mental and physical health

Voicebox

Assemblies and drama based workshops on the topic of positive masculinity.

Tutorials

All pupils will encounter aspects of RSHE in tutorial conversations (discrimination, equality, stereotyping, details of forthcoming pupil led Society talks – e.g.: FemSoc, PrideSoc etc.).

Pupil-led projects

Monitors annually take the initiative to lead a School-wide venture (e.g.: One World Week) which is designed to enhance the quality of relationships within the pupil body. Similarly, the Peer Supporters identify a particular area of concern and promote whole-School activities in response.

#NoExcuses

Volunteers from the Sixth Form are trained by Brook on matters of Consent and how to deliver lessons to younger pupils. The #NoExcuses pupil team then deliver a session to the Upper Shell pupils in the Election Term.

Resources

Appropriate Sexual Health and Wellbeing resources are available for all pupils online on the School's Firefly site. There, pupils can find signposting to organisations offering support and access to confidential sexual and reproductive health advice and treatment. Pupils can also access information relevant to their weekly lessons on their OneNote class notebook.

STAFF TRAINING

Professionals working in the field of sexual health have advised the School at various points in recent years.

The RSHE and Wellbeing team are trained regularly, through the Whole Staff Pastoral INSET where external providers who are experts in their respective fields come in to deliver lectures on relevant topics. Additionally, regular opportunities are taken to share best practice amongst teachers and house staff, including through the analysis of scenarios. Members of the RSHE & Wellbeing Dept and many other interested staff attend professional development seminars externally in order to share the latest thinking with colleagues.

FAITH

The role of the school chaplaincy in matters of relationships and sex education is complementary to the broader curriculum, as well as the expertise of teachers, members of the welfare team and visiting sexual health educators. Collaboration between the chaplaincy and those delivering RSHE ensures that pupils of all faiths can explore their identity and experience of faith (emotional or relational) within a holistic and well-rounded support system.

INVOLVEMENT OF SURGERY

The medical and nursing staff in the Surgery are fully cognisant of the RSHE teaching within the School. They are able to answer any general queries and to provide specific health advice regarding relationships, sexual health and contraception. If required, the Surgery team will signpost pupils to further resources or services as appropriate.

All the staff in the Surgery are trained professionals who are skilled at dealing with sensitive issues in a non-judgmental way. This can help pupils to make skilful choices around their relationships of all kinds as well their physical and mental health. The staff understand that very often all that is required is an informal chat or gentle support.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Head of RSHE and Wellbeing is present at all pastoral evenings with parents, attends Housemaster Strategy meetings, Heads of Department meetings and Heads of Year meetings and reports to the Under Master at fortnightly meetings and the Deputy Head (Academic) periodically. The programme is regularly evaluated by means of pupil questionnaires, assessment and evaluation of pupil needs, and takes into account staff and parental input or observations.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The School acknowledges the support of parents and their wide and long-term engagement, as expressed in many ways and not least by parental participation at Pastoral Evenings, Parents' Evenings and Parent Forum events.

Parents are notified of up-coming curriculum content by the Heads of Year each term, whereupon lesson resources can be provided upon request.

Whenever the policy is subject to amendment, parents will be consulted. Although all views are listened to, they do not amount to a power of veto over statutory curriculum content.

The School seeks to reassure parents that, far from sexualising young people, RSHE serves to protect and promote healthy relationships. This said, parents have the right to withdraw pupils from sex education as part of RSHE, which is documented here:

Right to be excused from sex education (commonly referred to as “the right to withdraw”):

Parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE.

Before granting any request for withdrawal of a child from sex education, it is good practice for the head teacher to discuss the request with parents, and the child if appropriate, to understand the request and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum. This is likely to include discussing the benefits of sex education, and any detrimental effects of withdrawal, including social and emotional impacts on the child, and the likelihood that the child will hear their peers' version of what was said in class, which may not be accurate. Schools will want to document this process to ensure a record is kept.²

² Paras 16-17: *Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers* (July 2025)

For those parents who would like to exercise their right to excuse their children from sex education, they should, in the first instance, write to headmaster@westminster.org.uk. The School will then discuss the request with parents and, as appropriate, with the child, in order to ensure that their wishes are understood and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum. After those discussions, except in exceptional circumstances, the School will respect the parents' request up to and until three terms before the child turns 16. Thereafter, if the child wishes to receive sex education, the School will make arrangements to provide it during one of those terms. Pupils who are withdrawn will receive purposeful education during the period of withdrawal.