



Relationships, Sex and Health Education

Frequently asked questions for parents and carers

Our purpose

RSHE helps children understand healthy relationships, care for their physical and mental wellbeing, recognise unsafe situations and ask for help. Teaching complements the values and conversations children experience at home.

The essentials

1. What does RSHE mean?

RSHE is the collective term used for Relationships Education, Health Education and, where a primary school chooses to provide it, age-appropriate sex education. At Great Leighs it is taught mainly through PSHE, with related statutory content in science, computing and religious education.

2. Why do children learn this at primary school?

Children need knowledge and skills to build kind relationships, set and respect boundaries, stay safe online and offline, understand their changing bodies, look after their wellbeing and seek help. Content begins with familiar ideas and develops gradually as pupils mature.

3. Which parts are compulsory?

At a maintained primary school, Relationships Education and Health Education are statutory. Relevant National Curriculum science is also compulsory. This includes age-appropriate learning about body parts, human growth and development, puberty and reproduction within science. Primary sex education beyond the science curriculum is not compulsory nationally, although the DfE recommends it in Years 5 and/or 6.

4. What does Great Leighs teach?

The programme covers families and people who care for us; caring friendships; respectful relationships; online relationships; personal safety; physical and mental wellbeing; healthy lifestyles; the changing body and puberty; and how to ask for help. Great Leighs also provides non-statutory primary sex education about human conception and birth, taught by a trained teacher.

Sex education and parental rights

A clear distinction between statutory and non-statutory content

5. Is sex education compulsory in primary school?

No. Sex education beyond National Curriculum science is not compulsory in primary schools. Great Leighs chooses to provide a limited, age-appropriate programme so that pupils receive accurate information about conception and birth rather than relying on peers or unsafe online sources.

6. Can I withdraw my child?

You may request withdrawal from some or all of the non-statutory sex education provided by the school. At primary school, the Headteacher must grant that request. The Headteacher will normally offer a discussion first so you understand exactly what will be taught and can consider the possible effects of withdrawal. The decision and agreed arrangements will be recorded.

7. What can my child not be withdrawn from?

There is no right to withdraw from statutory Relationships Education, Health Education or National Curriculum science. This means pupils cannot be withdrawn from statutory learning about relationships, safety, health, puberty or science content relating to reproduction. Safeguarding teaching is also an essential part of keeping every child safe.

8. How do I make a withdrawal request?

Complete the form in Appendix 5 of the school's RSHE Policy and address it to the Headteacher. The school will clarify which lessons are non-statutory and discuss the request with you. A pupil who is withdrawn will receive appropriate, purposeful alternative education and will not be made to feel embarrassed or singled out.

Important distinction

Puberty is not treated as optional sex education. Children need accurate information before changes happen; periods can begin during primary school. Puberty is covered through statutory Health Education and science and is taught sensitively to all pupils.

How learning is organised

9. Is the same content taught to every year group?

No. Learning is sequenced from EYFS to Year 6 and matched to pupils' age and stage of development. Younger children focus on friendships, feelings, families, privacy, body ownership and trusted adults. Later learning develops understanding of online risk, healthy boundaries, puberty, menstrual health and, in non-statutory lessons, conception and birth.

10. Who teaches RSHE?

It is normally taught by trained school staff who know the pupils. A carefully checked external professional may sometimes support learning, but the school remains responsible for the content. Visitors work within school safeguarding arrangements and under teacher supervision.

Sensitive topics, safety and inclusion

Accurate information, respectful discussion and support for every pupil

11. How are different families and LGBT people discussed?

Children learn that families can look different - including single-parent, adoptive, foster, grandparent-led and same-sex-parent families - and that families characterised by love and care should be respected. Teaching is age-appropriate and focuses on relationships, equality, dignity and preventing bullying; it does not sexualise family life.

12. What does the school teach about biological sex and gender?

Where relevant, staff use accurate biological and safeguarding language and distinguish facts and law from opinions or beliefs. Pupils learn that stereotypes can be harmful and that nobody should experience bullying or discrimination. Contested ideas are not presented as settled fact, and children are not encouraged to question their gender.

13. Will teaching respect our faith and beliefs?

Yes. Teaching is sensitive to pupils' religious backgrounds and the school welcomes respectful discussion with families. The curriculum must also meet statutory requirements and the Equality Act 2010. Different beliefs may be acknowledged clearly as beliefs, while all pupils and families are treated with dignity and respect.

14. How is teaching adapted for pupils with SEND?

Teachers adapt language, resources, pace and methods so that learning is accessible and meaningful. Some pupils may need additional preparation, repetition, visual support or individual safeguarding teaching. Adaptation will not remove the knowledge a pupil needs to understand relationships, their body, boundaries and how to seek help.

15. Will children be asked to share personal information?

No. Ground rules make clear that pupils should not be asked to disclose private experiences in class. Teaching uses general examples and may include anonymous question boxes. Staff cannot promise secrecy if a child reveals that they or someone else may be unsafe; concerns are shared promptly with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

16. What happens if my child asks an unexpected question?

Staff respond calmly and use age-appropriate, factual language. A teacher may answer generally, speak with the pupil privately, suggest that the child talks with a parent or trusted adult, or signpost support. Questions indicating possible harm or abuse are handled under safeguarding procedures. Staff will not give graphic or unnecessary detail.

Our classroom approach

Teaching is objective, evidence-informed, sensitive and designed to support rather than alarm pupils. No child is blamed for abuse or unsafe behaviour by another person. Kindness, consent, boundaries, respect and getting help are reinforced throughout school life.

Working openly with families

Parents are important partners in RSHE

17. Can I see what will be taught?

Yes. The RSHE Policy and curriculum overview are available to parents, and you may ask to view all curriculum materials used for RSHE. The school will respond positively and offer a practical way to view them. Copyright may affect whether materials can be copied or downloaded, but it will not be used as a reason to prevent parents from seeing them.

18. Are parents consulted?

Yes. Parents must be consulted when the school develops or reviews its RSHE Policy, and Great Leighs seeks parent views on relevant curriculum content and significant changes. Consultation means that views are considered carefully; it does not give any individual or group a veto over statutory curriculum content.

19. How are resources and visitors checked?

The PSHE lead checks materials and visitors in advance for accuracy, age and stage suitability, safeguarding, impartiality, accessibility, data protection and commercial interests. External resources must be viewable by parents. A visitor supports - but never replaces - the school's responsibility for teaching.

20. How will I know when sensitive content is being taught?

The school provides curriculum information and may communicate before specific puberty or non-statutory sex education lessons so families can continue conversations at home, view resources or raise questions. Exact arrangements may vary by year group and will be explained by the school.

How can I support my child at home?

- Use the same accurate, age-appropriate vocabulary used at school.
- Invite questions and say when you need time to find a reliable answer.
- Talk regularly about kindness, privacy, boundaries, online behaviour and trusted adults.
- Let school know about a family circumstance or individual need that may affect learning.
- Contact us early if you are unsure about content or would like to view resources.

Who should I contact?

Curriculum or resources	PSHE Subject Leader, via the school office
Withdrawal request	Headteacher, using Appendix 5 of the RSHE Policy
School office	01245 361254 office@greatleighs.essex.sch.uk

Sources

This guide summarises the Great Leighs Relationships, Sex and Health Education Policy 2026-27 and the DfE statutory guidance Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education, for introduction on 1 September 2026. The DfE's public FAQ provides additional background. If this guide and the full school policy differ, the policy and current statutory guidance take precedence.

Read the full school policy

The complete policy contains the curriculum maps, science and computing links and the parent withdrawal form. It is available from the school website or school office.