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Relationships and Sex Education Policy

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Policy Statement

Morton Academy is committed to the spiritual, moral, social, cultural, mental and physical development of every student. This is reflected in the ethos of the school and its curriculum, especially the framework within which personal, social and health education is taught. The development of productive and lasting relationships with others is a deeply important part of human growth; Relationships and Sex Education (RSE), therefore, is taught within this context.

The Academy is committed to ensuring that the application of this policy statement is non-discriminatory in line with the UK Equality Act (2010). Further details are available in the Equal Opportunities Policy. This document is reviewed annually or as events or legislation requires.

Morton Academy's RSE Policy should be read in conjunction with the Child Protection (Safeguarding) Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy, as these policies include how the Academy challenges the use of homophobic and other sexually discriminating language and/or behaviour.

Definition of RSE

RSE is lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development. It is about understanding the importance of family life, stable and loving relationships, including marriage, and respect, love and care. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality and sexual health. It is not about the promotion of sexual orientation or sexual activity.

We believe in RSE that is open and inclusive. RSE should recognise and meet the needs of young people of different gender identities, sexual orientations, minority ethnic groups and those with physical or learning disabilities and should celebrate diversity.

Aims and Objectives of RSE

- All children and young people have the right to sex and relationships education (RSE). We believe that the best way to achieve this is through statutory RSE, as a part of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education.

- We believe that RSE should be age-appropriate, evidence-based and centred on the needs of young people.

- PSHE education (including RSE) should be considered as important as other subjects and be taught by trained educators able to deliver a comprehensive programme.

- To recognise that young people learn about sex and relationships from a variety of sources, including parents and carers. Morton Academy will inform and involve parents and carers in the delivery of their RSE programme.

- Create a comprehensive programme to ensure that RSE will provide children and young people with the knowledge and skills they need to recognise, negotiate and enjoy safe and equal relationships and to enjoy their sexuality.

- Promote a programme of RSE that recognises the needs of all children, and should contribute towards combatting the bullying of young people of different genders, sexual orientations, minority ethnic groups and those with physical or learning disabilities. This also adheres to 'Keeping children safe in education' statutory guidance published in 2024.

- Technology is evolving at a tremendous pace. The need to protect children and young people from inappropriate online content, cyber-bullying and exploitation is a growing concern. The Academy endeavours to stay informed of all potential risks to students and to give age appropriate, timely guidance.

In addition, Morton Academy will:

Provide students with the skills, knowledge and understanding that they will need in order to make responsible decisions about their life, to learn to respect themselves and others, and to move with confidence from adolescence into adulthood.

Help all students discuss and deal with difficult social and moral situations that they may be encountering or may encounter in later life and help them to make considered choices that are right for them.

Help students to negotiate their relationships in ways that are positive for them and others.

Prevent prejudice and to challenge it where it occurs. It is not the role of RSE at the Academy to promote any particular sexuality, rather to promote respect for and acceptance of others, whatever their sexuality, and to challenge prejudice based on gender, sexuality or other grounds.

Provide a graduated, age-appropriate programme.

Ensure that students are prepared for the changes through puberty.

Exercise careful judgement in recognising that aspects of RSE delivery may be contentious with regard to the beliefs of some sections of the community and instil a respect for the cultural and religious influences on individual sexuality.

Develop understanding and attitudes that are rooted in values which prepare students to view relationships in a responsible manner based on mutual respect, and develop an acceptance and an appreciation of difference and diversity.

Foster self-esteem and self -awareness, and encourage consideration of values, moral issues, sexuality and personal relationships through the development of communication and decision-making skills.

Help students to have a clear understanding of the arguments for delaying sexual activity and resisting peer pressure, as well as a knowledge of how the law applies to sexual relationships.

Act in loco parentis so that the personal beliefs and attitudes of teachers do not unduly influence the teaching of sex and relationships education, and ensure teaching materials are appropriate to the age and cultural background of the students concerned.

Facilitate students' understanding of the reasons for delaying sexual activity and the benefits of this. Within this context, it ensures that young people have an understanding of contraception and the risks of sexually transmitted infections. It sets out to reduce the incidence of unwanted pregnancy and ensures that young people are able to discuss and develop understanding of abortion in an appropriate way.

Affirm the value of loving and caring relationships and encourage the appreciation of marriage, civil partnerships, family life and the implications of parenthood, recognising that there are strong and mutually supportive relationships outside marriage.

Ensure there is no stigmatisation of students based on their home circumstances or sexual orientation.

Teach the legal and moral principles of consent.

Make students aware of their rights and responsibilities in close personal relationships, including helping students to understand what is inappropriate behaviour, both to reduce its incidence and to build confidence to deal with it if it occurs, seeking to reduce violence, particularly against females.

Set out clearly issues relating to students' personal safety more broadly, including how to communicate about concerns and seek advice without embarrassment.

Programme of Study

RSE programmes of study will be written to ensure that they meet the new statutory guidance for RSE which must be implemented by September of 2020. The new guidance states:

"The aim of RSE is to give young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, not just intimate relationships. It should enable them to know what a healthy relationship looks like and what makes a good friend, a good colleague and a successful marriage or any other type of committed relationship. It should also cover contraception, developing intimate relationships and resisting pressure to have sex (and not applying pressure). It should teach what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in relationships. This will help pupils understand the

positive effects that good relationships have on their mental wellbeing, identify when relationships are not right and how such situations can be managed."

The guidance states that by the end of secondary school content covering the following topics should have been delivered:

- Families
- Respectful relationships including friendships
- Online and media relationships
- Being safe in relationships
- Intimate and sexual relationships including sexual health

Students must also be made aware of what the law says about sex, relationships and young people, as well as broader safeguarding issue.

Full details of the statutory guidance can be found by following this link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education

It is essential that RSE is appropriate to the age and stage of development of the students being taught. The Programmes of Study for RSE will demonstrate:

- Progression: As students mature physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially, language, concepts and content will increase in depth and complexity.

- Relevance and Differentiation: Teachers, in being aware of the levels of development of their students, will identify existing knowledge and needs and build on them appropriately.

- Integration: Sex education will be integrated into a programme of personal, social and health education and into other relevant areas of the curriculum such as Religious Education and Science.

- Different types of relationships, challenging attitudes, promoting inclusion and reducing discrimination are all part of the sex and relationships education programme, and teachers will deal sensitively about issues of sexual orientation. The RSE programme will include an understanding of all different types of relationships.

Morals and Morality

Morals and morality are essential dimensions of sexuality and relationships. The RSE programme respects individual differences including those relating to cultural, religious, ethnic and family backgrounds, and endeavours to promote those values of respect and dignity for human life which are common to all faiths and societies. In so doing the ethos of the Academy should be given particular emphasis.

Relationships
Relationships have a vital role in sex and relationship education. Friendship, making relationships and the valuing of friendship are topics in the early part of the programme. Choosing a partner and assessing personal qualities, will be considered together with roles, avoidance of stereotyping and acknowledging different attitudes and influences. Commitment, trust and love within relationships and honest with self and others will also be included.

Contraception
Teachers should not give personal, individual advice on contraception to students and may never do so to those under 16 years for whom sexual intercourse is unlawful. The different types of contraceptive methods will be dealt with generally together with information about agencies which offer help and advice.

Abortion
It is accepted that abortion is an emotive issue and that any teaching must present a balanced view that respects a range of religious beliefs and takes into account the law relating to abortion. Teaching this topic provides an opportunity to establish fact, clarify thinking and explore values and beliefs.

HIV/AIDS/Sexually Transmitted Diseases
Students in all age groups need to know the difference between HIV and AIDS, modes of transmission, basic hygiene and risky behaviours (for example, picking up discarded needles or any skin piercing; sharing needles and specific sexual behaviour).

Sexuality and Physical Development
Self-awareness and change are important dimensions in sex and relationship education, as are acceptance of the sexuality, sexual orientation and choices made by others. This includes an understanding of the pressures from peers and the media. Equally, it is important that younger students are aware of and prepared for the physical and other changes of puberty before / as they take place.

In line with United Learning policy, Morton Academy supports the discussion of topics such as contraception, abortion, homosexuality, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases through the PSHE/RSE curriculum.

Delivery
These themes will be developed throughout the programme of Relationships and Sex Education in ways which are appropriate to the age and maturity of pupils. RSE is delivered primarily through a PSHCE programme as well as in core curriculum areas such as RE, Science, the Humanities and through the Academy's Form Tutorial Programme this may include discreet provisions such as targeted interventions and bespoke provisions for students identified as being 'vulnerable' or requiring additional support. On occasion, it may be the case that sexual issues are implicit in other curriculum areas e.g. English set texts. Where this is the case, the Academy will seek to deal with such matters in a responsible, sensitive manner.

Delivery of RSE is not the sole responsibility of the Academy. The Academy will work in partnership with parents, health professionals and others in the wider community to enhance RSE provision. Where external specialists are brought in to support RSE, they will be required to conform to the Academy's RSE policy. Such visitors may be used to complement provision (formally and informally) but never used to substitute or replace planned provision.

Parental Partnership

Parents will be consulted and their views considered with regard to the implementation of this RSE Policy, being invited to comment on the extent to which this policy reflects their wishes and the culture of the community served by the Academy. RSE respects the religious and ethical beliefs of pupils and their parents. RSE will focus equally on boys and girls, and all aspects of this policy apply to the education of both.

The 2020 statutory guidance for RSE continues to allow parents to withdraw their children from RSE. Parents can withdraw pupils from some or all of the sex education part of RSE, except for the content covered by the national science curriculum. Should a parent choose to exercise this right to choose the Academy will ensure the following steps have been followed:

- The Principal will discuss with the parent, and if appropriate the child, to ensure that all parties have a clear understanding of the nature and purpose of the curriculum and that the parent's wishes are understood
- The Principal will discuss with the parents the benefits of the child receive this important education and the possible detrimental effects of any withdrawal. This should refer to the possible social and emotional effects of being excluded and the likelihood that the child is likely to hear about the content of the lessons from their peers rather than the teacher.
- Once this discussion has taken place, the school should respect the parent's wishes up to and until three terms before the child turns 16. After that point, if the child wishes to receive sex education the Academy will make arrangements for that to happen during one of these terms. The Academy will also be mindful of exceptional circumstances such as safeguarding issues.
- For students with SEND, their SEND should not be an issue in deciding whether to grant a parental request to withdraw. However, this may need to be a consideration in exceptional circumstances.

Information on a parent's right to withdraw their child from RSE is published on the Academy website.

Care must be taken with regard to teachers counselling and giving advice to individual students, particularly with regard to their sexual behaviour, and must not trespass on the proper exercise of parental rights and responsibilities. The Academy's Pastoral Support staff are trained to an advanced level in Child Protection and liaise closely with Social Care, Local Authority Child Protection staff and multiagency support services who specialise in supporting young people and their families with a range of sexual health, well-being and sexual orientation matters.

Teachers must ensure that at all times they act in accordance with statutory and local child protection policies. Teachers should encourage students to seek advice from parents and/or general practitioners or appropriate health professionals attached to the Academy where relevant. The teaching of apparently unrelated topics may occasionally lead to a discussion of aspects of sexual behaviour. Provided that such a discussion is relatively limited and set within the context of the other subject concerned, it will not necessarily form part of the sex education programme. In such cases, particularly since they may involve students whose parents have withdrawn them from sex education, teachers will need to balance the need to give proper attention to relevant issues with the need to respect students' and parents' views and sensibilities.

Confidentiality

Staff are responsible for adhering to the policy on confidentiality as set out in the Academy's Child Protection (Safeguarding) Policy. It is only in the most exceptional circumstances that the Academy could be in a position of having to handle information without parental knowledge. The Academy will ensure that students know that teachers cannot offer unconditional confidentiality but students will be reassured that their best interests will be maintained, encouraging them to talk to parents/carers. If confidentiality has to be broken, students will be informed first and then supported as appropriate.

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the Academy Local Governing Body unless changes to statutory provisions, United Learning or DfE guidance are issued necessitating interim review/changes.