

THE MOUNT SCHOOL

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION (RSE) AND PSHE POLICY

2026-2027

Version	2.0
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Last updated	August 2026
Effective from	1 September 2026
Review date	August 2027
Approval	Approved by Chris Sellers - Director / Proprietor

This policy sets out The Mount School's whole-school approach to Relationships Education, primary sex education where the School chooses to provide it, and the related PSHE/health and wellbeing curriculum. It applies to pupils, staff and parents/carers. The policy is published on the School website and is available free of charge on request.

1. Statutory status and legal framework

From 1 September 2026, The Mount must have regard to the revised DfE statutory guidance on Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education. Relationships Education is compulsory for pupils receiving primary education. Primary sex education beyond science is not compulsory, but the DfE recommends a graduated, age-appropriate programme. As an independent school, The Mount is required by the Independent School Standards to provide PSHE; the statutory Health Education duty applying to state-funded schools does not apply in the same way to ordinary independent schools, although the health content of the DfE guidance is an important benchmark for the School's PSHE provision.

The policy is informed by the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019; Children and Social Work Act 2017; Education Act 1996; Education Act 2002; Equality Act 2010; Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 as amended; Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026; and the DfE revised statutory RSHE guidance for introduction on 1 September 2026.

2. Aims and definition

The Mount defines RSE/PSHE as learning that equips pupils with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to build safe, respectful and fulfilling relationships, protect their wellbeing, recognise risk and abuse, seek help, understand their bodies and development, and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.

- build self-worth, resilience, kindness, honesty and respect;
- understand friendship, family and trusted relationships;
- recognise healthy and unhealthy behaviour, boundaries and abuse;
- develop the language and confidence to seek help;
- understand privacy, permission and consent in an age-appropriate way;
- stay safer online and understand how online behaviour affects others;
- understand growing, changing, puberty and relevant human reproduction content;
- respect difference and the protected characteristics;
- challenge prejudice, harassment, misogyny and discriminatory behaviour;
- make informed, ethical and safe choices.

3. Policy development, consultation and transparency

The School will proactively engage and consult parents when developing or reviewing this policy and will listen to pupils and staff. Consultation is intended to improve sequencing, accessibility and responsiveness while preserving the School's statutory duties.

Parents will be informed about the broad content and timing of RSE. Before the final year of primary education, the School will consult parents about the detailed content of any primary sex education to be taught beyond science.

Parents may request to view all curriculum materials used for RSHE/RSE. The School will not enter into contractual arrangements that prevent it from showing parents materials used to teach their children. Where copyright applies, access will be provided in a lawful way, for example by supervised viewing rather than copying where necessary.

4. Curriculum organisation

The Mount retains a spiral RSE programme within its JIGSAW PSHE curriculum. Content is revisited at increasing depth as pupils mature. Biological content may also be taught through science. The programme is reviewed against statutory content and emerging pupil needs rather than assuming that a commercial scheme alone guarantees compliance.

The curriculum is carefully sequenced so pupils learn the building blocks of healthy relationships and safety before they are likely to encounter more complex situations. Teaching is positive, preventative, age-appropriate and designed to support rather than alarm pupils.

Curriculum strand	Mount emphasis
Families and people who care for me	Different families; stable caring relationships; trusted adults; seeking help.
Caring friendships	Kindness, honesty, respect, conflict, repair, boundaries and peer pressure.
Respectful relationships	Courtesy, permission, privacy, stereotypes, prejudice, bullying, harassment and respect for difference.

Online relationships	Online identity/behaviour, privacy, contact with others, harmful content, sharing and help-seeking.
Being safe	Boundaries, appropriate/inappropriate touch and behaviour, secrets/surprises, recognising risk, trusted adults and reporting concerns.
Growing and changing	Bodies, hygiene, puberty, emotions and age-appropriate human development.
Health and wellbeing through PSHE	Physical/mental wellbeing, self-care, resilience, safety, healthy choices and help-seeking.

5. Relationships Education - primary

Relationships Education is compulsory for all pupils receiving primary education at The Mount. Parents do not have a right to withdraw a child from Relationships Education.

The focus is the fundamental building blocks of positive relationships: what relationships and friendships are, what family means, kindness, consideration, honesty, truthfulness, permission seeking and giving, personal privacy, respectful behaviour, boundaries, online relationships and where to seek help.

Relationships Education may address sensitive safeguarding themes, including recognising abusive or sexually harmful behaviour, without describing the detail of sexual activity. This distinction is important when considering parental withdrawal.

6. Primary sex education - what The Mount chooses to teach

The Mount provides an age-appropriate programme that prepares pupils for adolescence and transition to secondary school. Where content goes beyond Relationships Education and the applicable science curriculum and constitutes primary sex education, it will be clearly identified to parents in advance.

The programme may include, at an age and stage judged appropriate, how a baby is conceived and born, drawing on prior learning about the human life cycle. The detailed curriculum map will identify what is taught, when and through which subject.

The School will not treat puberty automatically as withdrawable sex education: parents cannot withdraw pupils from Relationships Education or from science content, including relevant science topics. The precise classification of lesson content will be made clear in curriculum information.

7. Parents' right to withdraw

At primary level, the Headteacher must grant a parent's request to withdraw their child from sex education provided by the School beyond the applicable science curriculum. The secondary rule about a pupil opting back in from three terms before age 16 is not relevant to The Mount's primary-age provision and has therefore been removed from the operative withdrawal procedure.

Before implementing a withdrawal, the Headteacher will normally invite the parent to discuss the request, explain the nature and purpose of the curriculum, clarify exactly which content is sex education, and discuss possible social/emotional effects of withdrawal. This discussion does not remove the parent's primary right to withdraw from non-science sex education.

Requests should be made in writing to the Headteacher. The request and outcome will be recorded on the School's current management information/record system.

A pupil who is withdrawn will receive appropriate, purposeful education during the relevant lesson. Staff will not question or stigmatise the pupil or family because of the withdrawal.

8. Health and wellbeing within PSHE

Although the statutory Health Education duty in the 2019 Regulations does not apply to ordinary independent schools in the same way as state-funded schools, The Mount's Independent School Standards duties require suitable PSHE provision. The School therefore uses relevant DfE health and wellbeing content as a strong curriculum benchmark.

Teaching includes age-appropriate physical and mental wellbeing, healthy lifestyles, hygiene, changing bodies, safety, self-care, resilience, help-seeking and the impact of online life. Content is coordinated with science, PE, safeguarding and pastoral provision.

9. Equality, protected characteristics and family diversity

Teaching must comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Independent School Standards. Pupils will be taught, at an age-appropriate level, to respect people with protected characteristics and to understand diversity in modern Britain.

Teaching will reflect sensitively that families may include, among others, single parents, married or unmarried parents, LGBT parents, grandparents, adoptive parents, foster carers and other caring arrangements. No child will be stigmatised because of their family circumstances.

The School may teach about different religious or philosophical perspectives, but will not teach that people with a protected characteristic deserve less respect or legal protection.

10. LGBT-related content

The School will ensure that LGBT-related content is integrated in an age-appropriate and factual way where relevant rather than treated as a standalone or sensational topic. Teaching will distinguish between legal/factual information, respectful discussion and any faith or belief perspectives relevant to the School community.

Questions about sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or related matters will be answered in a way that is age-appropriate, safeguarding-aware and consistent with the School's published curriculum. Staff will not invite pupils to disclose private sexual information about themselves or their families.

11. Sexual harassment, sexual violence and misogyny

From early primary, pupils are supported to develop healthy boundaries, respect and the skills needed for positive relationships. Age-appropriate teaching will make clear that sexual harassment, sexual violence and abusive behaviour are never acceptable and that victims are not to blame.

The School will challenge misogynistic and prejudicial language and harmful stereotypes. Teaching will avoid language that normalises male violence or stigmatises boys and men as inherently harmful. Where harmful online influences affect pupils, the curriculum may respond in an age-appropriate way without introducing developmentally unsuitable material.

Any actual incident or disclosure is handled under the Safeguarding, Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policies, not merely as a curriculum issue.

12. Online safety and harmful content

RSE/PSHE supports the Online Safety curriculum by teaching privacy, boundaries, respectful online communication, reporting/blocking, trusted adults, manipulation and the risks of sharing images or personal information.

Primary teaching will be age-appropriate. Staff will not use sexually explicit material to teach primary pupils. If pupils encounter or ask about pornography or other harmful sexualised online content, staff will respond in a safeguarding-led, developmentally appropriate way and may provide individual support rather than introducing explicit detail to the whole class.

AI-generated or manipulated images, impersonation and deceptive online content may be addressed where relevant to pupils' safety, using age-appropriate examples that do not expose children to harmful material.

13. Consent, permission, privacy and boundaries

At primary age, teaching focuses on everyday consent and permission: personal space, touch, sharing, photographs, borrowing, play, saying no, hearing no, recognising pressure and seeking adult help. This provides the foundation for later learning about sexual consent without prematurely teaching explicit sexual scenarios.

Pupils are taught that they can tell a trusted adult about something that worries them even if someone has told them to keep it secret.

14. SEND and accessibility

The curriculum is inclusive and accessible. High-quality adaptive teaching is the starting point. Staff will consider communication, cognition, sensory needs, social understanding, emotional development and vulnerability to exploitation or abuse.

The School retains the useful PSHE Association SEND planning themes from the previous policy: self-awareness; self-care, support and safety; relationships/managing feelings; changing and growing; healthy lifestyles; and the world I live in.

Some pupils with SEND may need more explicit, repeated or concrete teaching about boundaries, private/public behaviour, online risk and how to report concerns. Adjustments must preserve safeguarding content rather than removing it simply because it is sensitive.

15. Safe and effective classroom practice

- establish age-appropriate ground rules;
- use correct, respectful language;
- avoid asking pupils to share personal experiences publicly;
- permit pupils to ask questions safely, including through anonymous question methods where useful;
- distinguish general teaching from individual advice;
- correct harmful myths and misinformation;
- be alert to distress, disclosures or behaviour indicating risk;
- make reasonable adjustments for SEND; and
- use resources that have been checked for age-appropriateness, factual accuracy, safeguarding and equality.

16. Managing difficult questions

Children's questions will be treated respectfully. Staff will answer honestly at a level appropriate to the pupil's age and development, without providing unnecessary sexual detail. A teacher may defer a question to check facts, consult the PSHE Lead/DSL, speak with parents where appropriate, or respond individually where a whole-class answer would be unsuitable.

If a question suggests that a pupil may have experienced abuse, sexual harm, exploitation or unsafe online contact, safeguarding procedures apply immediately. Staff must not investigate through further curriculum questioning.

17. Safeguarding and disclosures

Effective RSE can increase the likelihood of a child recognising harm and making a disclosure. All staff teaching RSE must understand KCSIE 2026, the School Safeguarding Policy and the route to the DSL/DDSL.

If a pupil discloses or raises a safeguarding concern, staff will listen, avoid leading questions, not promise confidentiality, make an accurate record and refer promptly to the DSL/DDSL. Curriculum delivery must not be used to investigate an allegation.

18. External visitors and resources

External organisations can enhance learning but do not replace the School's responsibility for curriculum quality and safeguarding. The School will check credentials, agree content in advance, ensure it fits the published programme, assess age/SEND accessibility, brief visitors on safeguarding and have a member of staff present unless a specific risk assessment supports another arrangement.

The School will not outsource controversial or sensitive content without understanding exactly what will be taught and which materials will be used.

19. Roles and responsibilities

19.1 Director / Proprietor

The Director/Proprietor approves the policy, ensures statutory consultation and holds the Headteacher to account for effective implementation.

19.2 Headteacher

The Headteacher ensures the policy and curriculum meet statutory/ISS requirements, manages primary sex-education withdrawal requests, ensures transparency with parents and addresses safeguarding or quality concerns.

19.3 PSHE Lead

The PSHE Lead coordinates curriculum sequencing, resources, staff support, accessibility, assessment, parent information and monitoring. The PSHE Lead must not assume that use of JIGSAW alone demonstrates compliance.

19.4 Staff

Staff deliver content sensitively and without discrimination, model respectful attitudes, follow the agreed curriculum, adapt teaching, monitor learning, handle questions appropriately and follow safeguarding procedures.

19.5 Pupils

Pupils are expected to participate respectfully, listen to others, follow classroom ground rules and seek help where something concerns them.

20. EYFS / Kindergarten

The statutory Relationships Education requirements apply to pupils receiving primary education and do not apply merely because a child is in EYFS below compulsory school age. However, the EYFS curriculum provides essential foundations through Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Understanding the World, safeguarding and personal care.

Children learn, developmentally, about feelings, friendships, kindness, families, personal boundaries, privacy, asking for help, self-care and safe behaviour. Teaching is responsive to children's questions and experiences without introducing primary sex-education content inappropriately.

21. Assessment and monitoring

Staff use baseline/end assessment where appropriate; class teachers monitor pupil development; the PSHE Lead and Headteacher monitor implementation through curriculum review, pupil voice, lesson/work scrutiny and staff feedback.

Monitoring will test what pupils know and can apply, not simply whether lessons were delivered. Particular attention will be paid to safeguarding knowledge, SEND accessibility, respectful culture and whether pupils know how to seek help.

22. Parent partnership

The School will work openly with parents, explaining curriculum content and timing and offering opportunities to understand materials. Parents may raise concerns or ask questions with the PSHE Lead/Headteacher.

Where emerging issues require a material change from the published programme, the School will inform parents appropriately and continue to make relevant materials available on request.

23. Complaints

Concerns should normally be raised with the class teacher/PSHE Lead or Headteacher. Formal complaints are handled under the School Complaints Policy. A safeguarding concern must be referred through safeguarding procedures regardless of whether a complaint is also made.

24. Review and inspection evidence

This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner where statutory guidance changes, safeguarding themes emerge or monitoring identifies a need. The School will retain evidence of parent consultation, curriculum maps, materials/resources, withdrawal requests, monitoring and actions arising from review.

For independent-school inspection, the School should be able to demonstrate not only that a policy exists but that Relationships Education/RSE is suitably planned, taught, accessible, consulted upon and consistent with the Independent School Standards, equality duties and safeguarding practice.

Appendix 1 - Primary curriculum classification and withdrawal check

Question	Action
Is the content Relationships Education?	Compulsory; no parental withdrawal.
Is it science curriculum content?	No withdrawal from science content.
Is it additional primary sex education beyond Relationships Education/science?	Parent may withdraw; Headteacher must grant request.
Is the lesson mixed content?	Identify the withdrawable component clearly and arrange purposeful alternative education without removing compulsory content.
Is there a safeguarding reason for teaching about risk/abuse?	Safeguarding content may sit within Relationships Education; do not automatically classify it as sex education merely because it is sensitive.

Appendix 2 - Parent withdrawal record

- Pupil / class:
- Parent/carer making request and date:
- Specific lesson/content requested for withdrawal:
- Curriculum classification checked by Headteacher/PSHE Lead:
- Meeting/discussion offered/held:
- Parent informed of compulsory Relationships Education/science content:
- Withdrawal granted for:
- Purposeful alternative education arranged:
- Staff informed on need-to-know basis:
- Record stored on current School system:
- Review/end date if relevant:

Appendix 3 - RSE resource / external provider approval check

- What statutory/curriculum objective does this resource/session meet?
- Exact age/year group and developmental suitability checked?
- Content viewed in full by the School before use?
- Factual accuracy checked?
- SEND accessibility and reasonable adjustments considered?
- Equality/protected-characteristic implications considered?
- Safeguarding risks/disclosure potential considered?
- Any sexualised, frightening or explicit material? If yes, stop and escalate for senior review.
- Parent transparency: can the material be made available for viewing?
- External provider credentials/safeguarding arrangements checked?
- School staff member responsible for the session identified?
- Approved by PSHE Lead/Headteacher where required?

Appendix 4 - RSE safeguarding response card

- LISTEN - calmly and without shock or judgement.
- DO NOT INVESTIGATE - avoid leading or probing questions.
- DO NOT PROMISE CONFIDENTIALITY - explain that you need to get help.
- REASSURE appropriately - the pupil did the right thing by speaking.
- RECORD - use the pupil's own words where possible and note context/time.
- REFER - contact the DSL/DDSL without avoidable delay.
- ACT IMMEDIATELY - call emergency services/children's social care where immediate danger requires it and safeguarding procedure supports direct action.

Appendix 5 - Annual RSE/PSHE compliance and quality check

- Policy current, website-published and available free of charge.
- Parent consultation evidenced for policy review.
- Final-year primary sex-education detail consulted/shared with parents.
- Curriculum map clearly distinguishes Relationships Education, science and additional sex education.
- All 2026 statutory Relationships Education content mapped.
- PSHE/health provision mapped to Independent School Standards.
- Protected characteristics referenced in curriculum documentation.
- SEND accessibility reviewed.
- Materials available to parents on request.
- Staff training/confidence reviewed, including safeguarding disclosures.
- External providers/resources quality assured.
- Withdrawal records and purposeful alternatives checked.
- Pupil voice/assessment evidence reviewed.
- Safeguarding/behaviour/online-safety themes used to inform curriculum review.
- Actions recorded with owner and deadline.