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Eastern Learning Alliance

Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Policy

Unified Trust Policy 2025–2026

Document Control

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Approved by: ELA Board of Trustees

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School Character Education Intentions (CEI) and RSHE Links

'At Downham Market Academy, our Character Education Programme emphasises the importance of our DMA DNA ethos, encompassing our 5p's; Passion, Pride, Progress, Perseverance and Positivity. Our RSHE curriculum supports these by ensuring that students are developed holistically as individuals by having a thorough understanding of all of the RSHE areas. Students engage in RSHE through an extensive programme that is tailored to our local context and the needs of our students.

Statutory Requirements

This policy aligns with the Department for Education's statutory guidance 'Relationships, Sex and Health Education' (July 2025), effective from September 2026. It should also be read alongside Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025), the Equality Act (2010), and each school's Safeguarding, Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policies.

Policy Context and Rationale

The Eastern Learning Alliance (ELA) is committed to ensuring that all learners receive high-quality, inclusive, and age-appropriate RSHE. Our RSHE provision builds confidence, compassion, and curiosity by developing learners' understanding of relationships, wellbeing, and personal safety in the real and digital world. RSHE is embedded through the ELA Character (ELAC) programme, which integrates PSHE, Citizenship, Careers, and E-Safety within a single, coherent structure.

The 5Rs Framework for RSHE

R	Definition	Purpose within ELA RSHE
RSHE	Relationships, Sex and Health Education — our statutory, inclusive curriculum that promotes respect, consent, health, and personal responsibility.	Embeds safeguarding, equality, and wellbeing through the ELA Character framework.
Research	Ongoing analysis of local, national, and Trust data to inform content, including wellbeing surveys, safeguarding trends, and student voice.	Ensures content is responsive and evidence-led.
Report	Clear systems for students and staff to report concerns or disclosures.	Builds a proactive safeguarding culture and ensures rapid intervention.
Recording	Accurate, secure recording of RSHE-related safeguarding or behavioural issues (e.g. via MyConcern).	Tracks patterns, informs curriculum review, and evidences impact.
Responding and Review	Structured follow-up actions and Trust-wide reflection on RSHE impact, CPD, and QA outcomes.	Ensures continuous improvement through evaluation and feedback cycles.

Responsibilities

Each school is responsible for implementing this policy within its local context. The RSHE or Character Lead will oversee quality assurance, staff training, and student feedback. Trust-wide oversight remains with the ELA RSHE Lead, who coordinates safeguarding and curriculum alignment through the 5Rs process.

Policy Objectives

This policy operationalises the ELA 5Rs Framework, ensuring that RSHE teaching and safeguarding are integrated through Research, Reporting, Recording, and ongoing Responding and Review.

Objectives:

1. Deliver a statutory, inclusive, and high-quality RSHE curriculum across all ELA schools.
2. Equip students with knowledge, skills, and confidence to form safe, respectful, and healthy relationships.
3. Embed digital literacy, online safety, and critical awareness of AI, misinformation, and media influence.
4. Foster emotional regulation, mental wellbeing, and understanding of grief, change, and loss.
5. Empower students to challenge harmful norms such as misogyny, prejudice, and coercive control.
6. Maintain transparent engagement with families and ensure annual review through the 5Rs process.

Teaching and Learning

RSHE is delivered through the ELA Character (ELAC) framework using three Provisions:

- Core Provision: Tutor-led sessions
- Community Provision: Assemblies
- Enhanced Provision: Workshops and external input

Sessions follow the Understand–Speak–Spotlight–Bridge–Disagree (USSBD) oracy model, enabling structured discussion. Each school integrates RSHE through its Character Education Intentions and reviews delivery against the 5Rs process.

Right to Withdraw

Parents and carers have the legal right to request withdrawal of their child from some or all of the elements of **sex education** delivered as part of RSHE. However, there is **no right to withdraw** from content covered under **Relationships Education, Health Education**, or topics taught through the **National Curriculum for Science** (including reproduction and the human body).

Requests for withdrawal should be made **in writing to the Principal**. A meeting will be arranged with the RSHE Lead or a senior leader to ensure clarity about which elements are covered, the statutory nature of the content, and the implications of withdrawal. This meeting will also provide parents with access to all materials used, in line with DfE transparency expectations.

If withdrawal is agreed, the school will support the parent in providing appropriate learning at home to ensure that the pupil's broader understanding of health, relationships, and safeguarding is not compromised. Pupils who are within **three terms of their 16th birthday** have the legal right to opt into sex education, even if previously withdrawn.

All discussions and decisions regarding withdrawal requests will be recorded under the **Recording** element of the ELA 5Rs Framework, and revisited during **Responding and Review** to ensure consistency across the Trust.

Enhanced Provision Rationale

Year	Term	RSHE Focus	Rationale: Why now?
Yr07	Au	Puberty and Relationships: How do our bodies change and how can we form healthy connections?	Students begin puberty; this module provides a safe, factual introduction to physical and emotional changes, building respect and empathy.
Yr07	Sp	FGM: Understanding the Law and Staying Safe	Introduced early to establish awareness of FGM as illegal and harmful, supporting safeguarding and cultural understanding.
Yr07	Su	Understanding Diverse Relationships	Encourages acceptance of diversity in friendship and family structures, supporting inclusion and equality from the start of secondary education.
Yr08	Au	Pornography and Self-Image: How do media and images affect our relationships?	Digital exposure increases at this age; helps students distinguish between real and unrealistic portrayals, linking to PREVENT and online harm.
Yr08	Sp	Sexting and Media Influence	Addresses digital consent and legal risks as personal device use expands; reinforces responsible online behaviour.
Yr08	Su	Relationships and Social Media	Explores how online validation and peer pressure shape self-esteem, supporting mental health and wellbeing education.
Yr09	Au	Contraception and Consent: What should we know before becoming sexually active?	Prepares students as they mature socially and emotionally; focuses on informed consent and factual understanding.
Yr09	Sp	Beyond the Basics: Menstrual Disorders, Pain and Getting Medical Support	Develops health literacy; empowers students to advocate for their physical wellbeing and seek medical help early.
Yr09	Su	Modern Families: Marriage, Divorce and Legal Definitions	Introduced as civic awareness develops; clarifies rights, equality, and the legal basis of family life.
Yr10	Au	Sexual Health and First Experiences	Delivered as students approach legal age of consent; promotes safe choices and challenges myths around intimacy.
Yr10	Sp	Myths and Control: Virginity Testing, Hymenoplasty and Bodily Autonomy	Students can now critically evaluate coercive practices; reinforces legal protection and autonomy.
Yr10	Su	Reproductive Health: Abortion, miscarriage, stillbirth	Provides factual knowledge about reproductive rights and healthcare in preparation for adulthood.
Yr11	Au	Contraceptives and STIs: What do I need to know to stay safe?	Consolidates prior learning to ensure readiness for independence and post-16 life.
Yr12	Au	Staying Safe in Relationships: Emotional and Physical Safety	Reinforces boundaries and healthy communication as students gain more independence and relationships broaden.
Yr12	Sp	Power and Control in Intimate Relationships	Explores coercion and control, including online misogyny and incel ideology; essential for prevention of abusive behaviours.
Yr12	Su	Obsession, Control and Love: Spotting the Line Between Passion and Pressure	Addresses early signs of unhealthy or obsessive relationships, equipping students to seek help or support.

Yr13	Au	Dating and Modern Relationships: Staying Safe and Grounded	Prepares students for adult relationships, including dating apps and consent in digital spaces; supports transition to independence.
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