Relationships and Sex Education Policy

November 2026

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1. Aims

The aims of relationships and sex education (RSE) at our school are to:

- Provide a framework in which sensitive discussions can take place
- Prepare pupils for puberty, give them an understanding of sexual development and the importance of health and hygiene
- Help pupils develop feelings of self-respect, confidence and empathy
- Create a positive culture around issues of sexuality and relationships
- Teach pupils the correct vocabulary to describe themselves and their bodies
- Equip pupils with knowledge about positive male role models and help them develop positive ideas of masculinity and femininity
- Enable pupils to understand and critically evaluate online content, including the risks of pornography, online misogyny, toxic masculinity, and AI-generated sexual imagery
- Support pupils to understand consent, power dynamics in relationships, and ethical behaviour that goes beyond respecting boundaries

Effective RSE can make a significant contribution to the development of the personal skills needed by students if they are to establish and maintain

relationships. It also enables young people to make responsible and informed decisions about their health and wellbeing.

Effective RSE is essential if young people are to make responsible and well-informed decisions about their lives. It helps support young people through their physical, emotional and moral development. It helps young people learn to respect themselves and others and move with confidence from childhood through adolescence into adulthood.

RSE is also about the physical, emotional, social, moral and legal dimensions of human sexuality as well as factual teaching about sex, sexuality and sexual health.

We believe it is important to address this area of the curriculum because pupils have a universal entitlement to learning that will enable them to live safe, fulfilled and healthy lives. The programme contributes to protecting children and young people by addressing national and local health priorities.

This Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) policy is underpinned by the ethos and values of our school and we uphold it as an entitlement for all our pupils. We recognise the need to work as a whole school community to ensure a shared understanding of RSE and the underpinning values and to deliver an effective programme that meets the individual needs of our pupils.

Physis Academy teaches RSE within the following moral and values framework based on the following principles:

- Respect and tolerance towards others who may have different backgrounds, cultures, feelings, views and sexuality
- The right of people to hold their views within the boundaries of respect for the rights of others
- The acceptance of the responsibility for and the consequences of personal actions
- The right not to be abused by or taken advantage of by other people
- The right to accurate information about relationships
- An awareness of the way another person feels
- The value of stable loving relationships
- Mutual support and co-operation
- Honesty and openness
- Self-respect
- Equality and respect for all, regardless of protected characteristics including sexual orientation and gender reassignment

- Active challenge of everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and stereotypes

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2. Statutory requirements

Our requirements at Key Stages 3 and 4

At secondary school age we must provide RSE to all pupils as per section 34 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017. We must follow the updated statutory guidance from September 2026.

At Physis Academy we teach RSE as set out in this policy.

The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019, made under sections 34 and 35 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, make relationships education compulsory for all pupils receiving primary education and relationships and sex education (RSE) compulsory for all pupils receiving secondary education. They also make health education compulsory in all schools except independent schools.

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3. Policy development

This policy has been developed through proactive engagement and consultation with staff, pupils and parents to ensure that effective RSHE is important for promoting and protecting the wellbeing of all children. Relationships and Sex Education Statutory Guidance The consultation and policy development process involved the following steps:

1. **Review** – A comprehensive review of the updated DfE statutory guidance (July 2025), including reference to:
    - Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education statutory guidance (2026)
    - Keeping Children Safe in Education (statutory guidance)
    - The Equality Act 2010 and schools
    - Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools
    - Behaviour in schools
    - Teaching Online Safety in Schools
    - Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance

2. **Staff consultation** – School staff were given the opportunity to review the policy and make recommendations
3. **Clinical consultation** – The policy was shared with Physis Group clinical team to make recommendations
4. **Proprietor consultation** – The policy was shared with the proprietors to make recommendations
5. **Parent/Care Manager consultation** – Parents and care managers were proactively engaged and consulted about the policy development and the content of what will be taught Relationships and Sex Education Statutory Guidance
6. **Pupil consultation** – We investigated what pupils require from their RSE and listened to their views to ensure the policy meets their needs
7. **Ratification** – Once amendments were made, the policy was shared with proprietors and ratified

This policy will be kept under review and parents/carers will continue to be consulted when we review the policy to ensure it continues to meet pupils' needs.

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4. Definition

We define 'relationships and sex education' as learning about physical, moral and emotional development that students need in order to understand their own and others' sexuality. Whilst knowledge of biology and the reproductive system is important, RSE is concerned with attitudes and values, personal and social skills, respect for self and others, family, stable loving relationships, feelings, gender roles and decision-making. RSE involves a combination of sharing information and exploring issues and values.

RSE provides young people with the information they need to develop healthy, safe and nurturing relationships of all kinds. This includes the knowledge they need in later life to keep themselves and others safe, and how to avoid sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancies.

Effective RSE focuses on respect for oneself and others and does not encourage or normalise early sexual experimentation. By supporting confidence and self-esteem, RSE will enable young people to make their own choices about whether or when to develop safe, fulfilling and healthy sexual relationships, once they reach the age of consent, and to resist pressure to have sex.

RSE is not about the promotion of sexual activity.

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5. Curriculum

Our curriculum is set out in Appendix 1 but we will adapt it as and when necessary to meet the needs of our pupils.

We have developed the curriculum through consultation with parents/carers, pupils and staff, taking into account the individual age, needs and feelings of pupils. Relationships and Sex Education Statutory Guidance If pupils ask questions outside the scope of this policy, teachers will respond in an appropriate manner so they are fully informed and don't seek answers online.

Key Stage 3 and 4 RSE Content

RSE builds on primary relationships education by focusing on giving young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds Relationships and Sex Education Statutory Guidance including:

- **Families** - including diverse family structures and same-sex parents/carers
- **Respectful relationships, including friendships** - understanding healthy relationships and recognising unhealthy or abusive relationships
- **Online and media** - including understanding online risks, toxic masculinity, and AI-generated sexual imagery
- **Being safe** - including consent, power dynamics, sexual harassment and sexual violence
- **Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health** - age-appropriate content about sexual relationships, contraception and STIs

New curriculum content (from September 2026)

Our curriculum includes the following topics as required by the updated statutory guidance:

For all pupils:

- How to identify and learn from positive male role models
- Understanding online misogyny and toxic masculinity, including how sub-cultures such as 'incels' might influence understanding of sexual ethics
- The prevalence and risks of AI-generated sexual imagery and 'deepfakes'

- How pornography can negatively influence sexual attitudes and behaviours
- The role of consent and awareness of power dynamics in relationships
- Understanding that ethical behaviour in relationships goes beyond respecting boundaries and consent, and involves kindness, care and attention to the needs and vulnerabilities of others

We also consider how to safely address suicide prevention as part of our health and wellbeing curriculum.

LGBTQ+ Content

Our curriculum includes LGBTQ+ content that goes beyond compliance with the Equality Act. We:

- Include same-sex parents/carers when discussing families
- Teach pupils the facts and the law about biological sex and gender reassignment, including that legal rights may differ based on biological sex
- Ensure there is equal opportunity to explore the features of stable and healthy same-sex relationships
- Ensure same-sex relationships are integrated into RSHE programmes of study, not taught as a standalone lesson

We do not:

- Use materials that use cartoons or diagrams that oversimplify gender identity, or perpetuate stereotypes
- Teach as fact that all people have a gender identity

Differentiation between Relationships Education and Sex Education

Relationships education doesn't involve explaining the detail of different forms of sexual activity, but can cover sensitive topics such as sexual violence in order to keep children safe.

Sex education at Physis Academy includes:

- Intimate and sexual relationships
- Sexual health, including contraception and STIs
- Conception and pregnancy
- The physical and emotional aspects of sexual relationships

For more information about our RSE curriculum content and when topics are taught, see Appendices 1 and 2.

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6. Delivery of RSE

Teaching approach

In Key Stages 3 and 4, Relationships and Sex Education is taught as part of the PSHE programme, some of which is centred on RSHE (delivered by a specialist where practicable). Some content will be delivered as part of the science curriculum and online and e-safety will in part be delivered in PSHE and QLP lessons (CEOP).

Pupils may also receive stand-alone relationships and sex education sessions delivered by a trained health professional or member of our clinical team to enhance the delivery of the RSE programme and subject matter.

Effective teaching will be participative and interactive and will give pupils opportunities to develop skills and to discuss and critically evaluate complex relationship scenarios.

Some areas of learning are taught within the context of family life or support network. This will be done taking care to ensure that there is no stigmatisation of children based on their home circumstances (families can include single parent families, LGBT parents, families headed by grandparents, adoptive parents, foster parents/carers or care managers).

Teaching standards and language

In delivery all staff will:

- Openly teach pupils what 'slang' words mean (where appropriate) and that some are offensive whilst avoiding the use of any slang
- Use correct terminology as this is deemed good practice i.e. medically correct terms for genitalia and sexual parts of the body, for example vulva, vagina, penis and testicles
- Use inclusive language (such as partner instead of boyfriend/girlfriend). The use of respectful language which challenges sexism, homophobia and other forms of prejudice will be established in RSE and will have benefits for the whole school community – both in and out of lessons
- Actively challenge everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and stereotypes
- Children at secondary level need to know that using the word 'gay' to mean something is rubbish is wrong

Addressing sensitive topics

When teaching sensitive topics, teachers will use approaches such as distancing techniques, setting ground rules with the class to help manage sensitive discussion, and using question boxes to allow pupils to raise issues anonymously.

When teaching about online content which normalises harmful or violent sexual behaviours, including sexist and misogynistic influencers, teachers will encourage pupils to consider how this content may be harmful to both men and women, while avoiding stigmatising or perpetuating harmful stereotypes about boys, and avoiding directly signposting to specific content and content producers.

Gender-specific teaching

RSE lessons will ensure that both boys and girls have opportunities to practise respectful communication and understand experiences which are different from their own, including menstruation and menopause. However, in some cases, such as when the school identifies a specific need, the school may consider that separating classes by sex is the best way to create a safe space for discussion of a particular topic. This will be done in a way that avoids stigmatising boys or making girls feel like they will inevitably be victims of abusive behaviour or that it is their responsibility to protect themselves.

Safeguarding

RSE covers a range of topics, including topics related to abusive behaviour. While teaching children how to stay safe, including online, teachers will be clear that being a victim of abuse is never the fault of the child or young person. Different forms of abuse will be addressed sensitively and clearly at appropriate ages. For pupils who are experiencing or have experienced unhealthy or unsafe relationships, including at home, the school has an important role as a place of consistency and safety where pupils can find support.

At Physis Academy we are aware that RSE may be a sensitive subject for some of our learners due to historic RSE-related trauma. We will consult with clinicians and parents/carers in advance of delivering RSE to ensure that the best approach is carefully planned for and delivered.

Discussions about sensitive topics in RSE can lead to increased safeguarding reports. All staff know what to do if they have concerns that a pupil is being neglected or abused. Where lessons are delivered by external agencies, schools must agree in advance of the session how a safeguarding concern would be dealt with by the external visitor.

Some issues may result in children and young people making disclosures which will be addressed in line with school safeguarding policy and procedures.

RSE plays a very important part in fulfilling the statutory duties all schools have to meet. RSE helps children understand the difference between safe and abusive relationships and equips them with the skills to get help if they need it.

Confidentiality

Staff will handle personal information with due care and know how to manage the requirement to maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality. This means only involving those who need to be involved, such as the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy). Staff will never promise a child that they will not tell anyone about a report of abuse, as this may ultimately not be in the best interests of the child. It is equally important that children understand how confidentiality will be handled in a lesson and what might happen if they choose to make a report, about themselves or a peer. Pupils will also understand where they can report any concerns and seek help, including to external services if they do not feel comfortable talking to school staff.

A member of staff cannot promise confidentiality if concerns exist.

Whole school approach

Physis Academy has a whole school approach to ensuring children are taught about how they can confidently report abuse, sexual violence and sexual harassment, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously, and that they can safely express their views and give feedback.

This is covered through:

- Information Safeguarding Board
- Within Assemblies
- Added to the young person's guide as part of the induction process
- Clear processes outlined in RSE lessons

Access to curriculum materials for parents

Parents/carers are able to view all RSHE curriculum materials on request. Parents should be aware of what is being taught and can request to see any materials we use to teach RSHE.

To request to view curriculum materials, parents/carers should contact the school office or the RSE lead. We will arrange a convenient time for

parents/carers to view materials, either in person or by sharing digital copies where appropriate.

If our materials come from an external provider, we will inform the provider that we are legally obliged to share all content with parents/carers.

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7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 The Proprietor

The proprietor will approve the RSE policy and hold the headteacher to account for its implementation.

7.2 The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring that RSE is taught consistently across the school, and for managing requests to withdraw pupils from sex education components of RSE (see section 8).

The headteacher will ensure that:

- The school proactively engages and consults parents when developing and reviewing the RSE policy
- Parents understand that effective RSHE is important for promoting and protecting the wellbeing of all children
- Parents can view all curriculum materials on request
- Staff receive appropriate training to deliver the RSE curriculum effectively

7.3 Staff

Staff are responsible for:

- Delivering RSE in a sensitive way
- Modelling positive attitudes to RSE
- Actively challenging everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and stereotypes
- Monitoring progress
- Responding to the needs of individual pupils
- Responding appropriately to pupils whose parents wish them to be withdrawn from sex education components of RSE
- Following safeguarding procedures if concerns arise during RSE lessons

Staff do not have the right to opt out of teaching RSE. Staff who have concerns about teaching RSE are encouraged to discuss this with the headteacher.

At Key Stage 3 and 4 the school will endeavour to maintain a specialist delivery of RSE through a specialist RSE tutor. However, should this not be available the responsibility for delivery will fall to those deemed most capable by the headteacher or member of SLT.

Teachers who are delivering any aspect of RSE will be responsible for consulting with parents, carers and clinicians before delivering the programme. This will ensure that parents/carers/clinicians are:

- Given the opportunity to withdraw the student from sex education components of RSE
- Given the opportunity to suggest amendments to the delivery to avoid retraumatising students
- Informed about what will be taught and when
- Able to view curriculum materials on request

7.4 Pupils

Pupils are expected to engage fully in RSE and, when discussing issues related to RSE, treat others with respect and sensitivity.

7.5 Designated Safeguarding Lead

The designated safeguarding lead should have knowledge of trusted, high-quality local support that could be engaged, links to the police and other agencies and awareness of local issues which it may be appropriate to address in lessons.

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8. Parents' right to withdraw

In Key Stages 3 and 4

Parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE. Parents/carers can make a request up until 3 terms before their child turns 16. After that, it's the child's decision.

Headteachers should generally grant a request, but can refuse in 'exceptional circumstances', for example because of safeguarding concerns or a pupil's specific vulnerability.

Parents/carers cannot withdraw their children from relationships or health education.

Requests for withdrawal should be put in writing using the form found in Appendix 3 of this policy and addressed to the headteacher.

Process for considering withdrawal requests

When a parent requests withdrawal, the headteacher will:

1. Arrange a meeting (in person, by phone, or virtually) to discuss the request with the parent/carer
2. Listen to the parent's specific concerns and acknowledge their perspective
3. Explain the RSE curriculum, the statutory requirements, and why RSE is important
4. Share the RSE policy, curriculum overview, and representative sample of lesson resources
5. Explain why we teach RSE in the way we do
6. Consider whether there are exceptional circumstances that mean the request should be refused (e.g. safeguarding concerns or the pupil's specific vulnerability)
7. Make a decision and communicate this to the parent/carer in writing

A copy of withdrawal requests and the school's decision will be placed in the pupil's educational record.

If a pupil is withdrawn, it is the school's responsibility to make sure they receive appropriate, purposeful education during the withdrawal period.

Alternative work will be given to pupils who are withdrawn from sex education.

Handling questions from withdrawn pupils

Pupils may ask questions about topics which go beyond any sex education covered by the school or relate to sex education from which they have been withdrawn. Teachers will handle such questions with an emphasis on supporting the child. This may include asking a pupil to speak to their parents or a trusted adult, signposting to support services where needed, and recognising that children whose questions go unanswered might instead turn to inappropriate sources of information, including online.

9. Training

Staff who are responsible for the delivery of RSE will be offered appropriate training programmes to aid in the effective delivery of the subject and will share this with other staff as part of our continuing professional development calendar.

Training will include:

- How to actively challenge everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and stereotypes
- How to safely teach about online misogyny, toxic masculinity, 'incel' culture, and AI-generated sexual imagery
- How to teach about consent and power dynamics in relationships
- How to teach the facts and the law about biological sex and gender reassignment in an age-appropriate and sensitive way
- How to handle difficult questions and disclosures
- Safeguarding procedures related to RSE
- How to handle questions from pupils who have been withdrawn from sex education

The headteacher may also invite visitors from outside the school, such as school nurses or sexual health professionals, to provide support and training to staff teaching RSE.

The Department for Education has produced a one-stop page for teachers on GOV.UK, which can be accessed here: Teaching about relationships sex and health: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-about-relationships-sex-and-health.

This includes teacher training modules on the RSHE topics and non-statutory implementation guidance.

The following resources may also help schools and colleges understand and teach about safeguarding:

- DfE advice for schools: teaching online safety in schools
- UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS) guidance: Education for a connected world
- UKCIS guidance: Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people

- The UKCIS external visitors guidance will help schools to ensure the maximum impact of any online safety sessions delivered by external visitors
- National Crime Agency's CEOP education programme: Thinkuknow

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10. Monitoring arrangements

The delivery of RSE is monitored by SLT through:

- Planning scrutiny
- Learning walks
- Lesson observations
- Discussion with pupils
- Feedback from Student Council
- Review of safeguarding reports arising from RSE lessons
- Parent feedback following consultation

Pupils' development in RSE is monitored by class teachers as part of our internal assessment systems.

This policy will be reviewed annually by SLT. At every review, we will proactively engage and consult parents, and the policy will be approved by the proprietors (or representative of).

The next review is due by June 2027.

Appendices

Appendix 1: RSE Curriculum Overview by Year Group

Year 7 units

1

Communities: How can we better understand and respect people with disabilities?

4 lessons Save

2

Healthy relationships: How can I build good relationships?

4 lessons Save

3

Power in relationships: How can we create positive relationships?

4 lessons Save

4

Media influence: How can I evaluate the truth online?

4 lessons Save

5

Our online lives: How do I report and find support for things I see online?

6 lessons Save

6

Staying safe and healthy: How do I maintain physical health?

3 lessons Save

7

Physical health: Why have a healthy diet?

2 lessons Save

8

Mental health: How can I talk about my feelings?

4 lessons Save

9

Risky substances: What do I need to know about tobacco and vaping?

4 lessons Save

10

Our changing bodies: What do I need to know about menstruation?

3 lessons Save

Year 8 units

1

Communities: How do we respect people of different faiths?

6 lessons Save

2

Healthy relationships: Why should we prevent bullying?

3 lessons Save

3

Power in relationships: What do we need to know about the law?

3 lessons Save

4

Media influence: What's a healthy way to spend my time online?

6 lessons Save

5

Our online lives: How can I stay safe?

4 lessons Save

6

Physical health: Why stay active?

2 lessons Save

7

Mental health: How can I support my mental health?

4 lessons Save

8

Staying safe and healthy: What do I need to know about minor ailments?

3 lessons Save

9

Risky substances: What do I need to know about alcohol?

3 lessons Save

10

Our changing bodies: How will my body change through puberty?

2 lessons Save

11

Staying safe and healthy: Forced marriage, FGM, hymenoplasty & virginity testing

3 lessons Save

Year 9 units

1

Communities: How can we understand and respect different types of relationships?

4 lessons Save

2

Healthy relationships: How do relationships change?

4 lessons Save

3

Power in relationships: How can we keep safe?

3 lessons Save

4

Healthy intimate relationships: How can sex be safe?

6 lessons Save

5

Media influence: How can I look after myself?

5 lessons Save

6

Physical health: What's so important about sleep?

2 lessons Save

7

Risky substances: What do I need to know about illegal and prescription drugs?

4 lessons Save

8

Staying safe and healthy: What do I need to know about basic first aid?

3 lessons Save

9

Our changing bodies: When might I need to seek support?

4 lessons Save

10

Staying safe: what do I need to know about knife crime?

3 lessons Save

Year 10 units

1

Communities: Why is respect, understanding and compassion important?

4 lessons Save

2

Healthy relationships: How do separation and change affect relationships?

3 lessons Save

3

Power in relationships: What does a healthy relationship feel like?

3 lessons Save

4

Healthy intimate relationships: What influences risky sexual behaviour?

5 lessons Save

5

Media influence: Is the internet a good influence in our lives?

5 lessons Save

6

Our online lives: How can being online impact my life?

5 lessons Save

7

Physical health: How can physical health affect others?

2 lessons Save

8

What are common types of mental health conditions?

4 lessons Save

9

Staying safe and healthy: How can I check my body is healthy?

5 lessons Save

Year 11 units

1

Healthy relationships: What is good parenting?

4 lessons Save

2

Healthy intimate relationships: What are my choices in pregnancy?

6 lessons Save

3

Our online lives: How can I stay in control online?

4 lessons Save

4

Mental health: How might my mental health change?

4 lessons Save

5

Staying safe and healthy: How do I use the health care system?

3 lessons Save

Appendix 2: Detailed Curriculum Content

Families and relationships:

- Different family structures including same-sex parents
- Healthy vs unhealthy relationships
- Consent and power dynamics
- Respectful communication

Online safety and media:

- Online risks including sharing of images
- Pornography and its negative influence on attitudes
- AI-generated sexual imagery and deepfakes
- Online misogyny and toxic masculinity
- 'Incel' culture and its influence on sexual ethics

Being safe:

- Sexual harassment and sexual violence
- Consent in detail
- Power dynamics in relationships
- How to report concerns and access support
- Domestic abuse

Intimate and sexual relationships:

- Physical and emotional aspects of sexual relationships
- Sexual health, STIs and contraception
- Pregnancy and conception
- Ethical behaviour beyond consent

Health and wellbeing:

- Mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Suicide prevention (approached sensitively)
- Positive male role models
- Developing positive ideas of masculinity and femininity

LGBTQ+ content:

- Facts and law about biological sex and gender reassignment
- Same-sex relationships integrated throughout
- Equality and respect for all

Appendix 3: RSE Withdrawal Request Form

Physis Academy RSE Withdrawal Request Form

To be completed by parents/carers

Name of child	
Date of birth	
Year group	
Name of parent/carer	
Relationship to child	
Contact telephone number	
Contact email address	
Date of request	

Details of withdrawal request

Please indicate which parts of sex education you are requesting your child be withdrawn from:

☐ All sex education lessons (excluding content in the science curriculum)

☐ Specific topics only (please specify below)

If requesting withdrawal from specific topics only, please list them here:

Topic	Year/Term to be taught

Please explain your reasons for requesting withdrawal from sex education

Any other information you would like the school to consider:

Please confirm you understand the following:

☐ I understand that I cannot withdraw my child from relationships education or health education

☐ I understand that I can only request withdrawal from sex education, not from content covered in the science curriculum

☐ I understand that my child can still ask questions in class, and teachers will handle these appropriately

☐ I understand that the headteacher will contact me to discuss this request before making a decision

☐ I understand that the headteacher can refuse this request in exceptional circumstances (e.g. safeguarding concerns)

☐ I understand that if my child is within 3 terms of turning 16, they can choose to receive sex education even if I request withdrawal

Parent/carer signature: _____ Date: _____

Please return this form to: [School office/Headteacher name]

For school use only

Date form received: _____

Received by: _____

Signatures:	
Headteacher:	
Chair of Governors:	