Eastern Learning Alliance

Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Policy

Unified Trust Policy 2025–2026

Approved by Local Governing Body	
Review cycle	**January 2026 – next review September 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

Character Education helps students to bring our core Vista Values into their everyday lives.
Our Values are:

- **Valued:** Everyone in the Vista community is equally valued and we show appreciation for each other through respect, kindness and compassion.
- **Innovative:** We work collaboratively to create fresh and exciting ideas both in and out of the classroom.
- **Successful:** Success comes in different shapes and sizes and we celebrate passion and perseverance in all areas of our lives.
- **Team:** Everyone is welcome, important and respected in our diverse and friendly school community.
- **Ambitious:** At Vista we do not settle for second best; we aim high, work hard and dream big.

By bringing these core values into every Character Education session, students learn to respect their peers and the world around them. By sympathetically learning about the core issues that affect us and the world around us, students learn to view the world from other perspectives and value the people around them.
Character Education also encompasses learning about careers and the future. Students will explore the different paths open to them after leaving Vista, enabling them to envision an ambitious future for themselves.

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 Headteacher.** 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.

Vista Academy Littleport: specific provision

Every year, we meticulously design the curriculum for our Character Education programme, based on three main considerations:

- **Statutory Requirements:** We conduct a thorough analysis of the legal mandates that need to be covered over a five to seven-year period, ensuring that the content in our Enhanced Provision sessions is age-appropriate, in contrast to the broader scope of Core and Community sessions.
- **Local Needs and Safeguarding Trends:** We assess the needs and trends among our Vista population and the safeguarding concerns reported by staff. The programme is customised to address these specific issues and remains flexible to incorporate any emerging concerns.
- **Feedback Loop:** We incorporate feedback from our students and their families to refine our approach.

In our network of schools, we collaborate to decide the content and sequence of delivery. At Vista Academy Littleport, our Pastoral, Progress, and Safeguarding teams review the programme to ensure it is suitable, relevant, and of significant benefit to our students.

Delivery

At Vista, we deliver RSE through whole year group assemblies. These assemblies are delivered by trained members of staff. “Tricky topics”, such as FGM, cancer checks, and puberty are delivered by members of the SLT, the safeguarding team, PSHE team, and science department. This cross-departmental approach ensures that our resources are suitable and accessible for all.

We also host external speakers for “tricky topics” relating to RSE. In the past, this has included speakers from the Terence Higgins Trust to deliver content about HIV, AIDs and safe sexual relationships.

SEN

We work closely with the SEN department to ensure that our students find all RSE topics accessible. Students who have SEN and/or SEMH conditions are able to access small group settings, rather than joining the whole year group for “tricky topic” assemblies. These small group sessions deliver the essential knowledge that the students need, but in a more accessible fashion. These groups are facilitated by a member of the PSHE team and/or a member of the SEN department.

Values

When delivering RSE, we also refer to our Vista Values. These, in turn, encourage students to be respectful, kind, and thoughtful towards themselves, their own bodies, and each other.

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- **Successful:** Success comes in different shapes and sizes and we celebrate passion and perseverance in all areas of our lives.
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Further information

At the start of each academic year, parents and carers receive a one-off newsletter outlining our full Character Education provision, including information about our RSE provision. This is always available to view on the school website throughout the year.

Parents and carers are also updated via our weekly newsletters.

Our Character Education provision is outlined on our school website: https://vista.tela.org.uk/student-life/curriculum/pshe/