

# Summerhill School Sex and Relationships Guidelines/Policy

## Introduction

This policy is informed by the school's philosophy and the school's **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy** and any guidance referenced in that policy.

This guidance is based on the core principle that the welfare of the young person is paramount and that we will always act in the best interests of the child.

## The law

All staff should be aware of the following aspects of the law:

*'Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, children under the age of 13 are considered of insufficient age to give consent to sexual activity. Any offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 involving a child under 13 is very serious and must be taken to indicate a risk of maltreatment or abuse.'*

*'The Sexual Offences Act 2003 reinforces the fact that the legal age of consent remains at 16. It is acknowledged that some young people under 16 may be involved in consensual sexual relationships and it is accepted that it is not in the public interest to prosecute such young people if they are of the same or similar age and understanding.....' (Working with Sexually Active Young People Under the Age of 18. SSCB. August 2017, p.5)*

Although it is legal for children over the age of 16 to have sexual intercourse, it is of course not allowed whilst they are at school.

## Guidelines/Policy

At Summerhill a child's sexuality is considered natural. We feel that it is normal for children to explore their own sexuality and it is school policy to be supportive and to offer advice and information whenever it is needed.

The school aims for children to feel comfortable and supported so that if sexual problems arise, they will be able to talk openly to the adults and seek help.

Annual sex and relationship chats take place for each boarding area, delivered by house-parents and/or teachers and tailored to each age group.

Parents will be informed of the content of chats and which member(s) of staff will be delivering them at least two weeks in advance of them taking place so that they may review and consult the school if they wish to.

There is a relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum outline with reference to DfE statutory guidance, detailing the provision at Summerhill.

In line with regulations, parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of sex and relationship chats (up until three terms before the child's 16<sup>th</sup> birthday when they may choose to take part), however there is no right to withdraw from relationship education.

Before making a request, parents are encouraged to talk to Zoe and/or view the teaching resources in order to inform any decisions regarding withdrawing their child.

Zoe is responsible for ensuring that RSE is taught consistently across the school, and for managing requests to withdraw pupils from non-statutory components of RSE.

Summerhill is not alone in assisting children with contraception if it is thought necessary. Staff will make sure that young people can have access to condoms. They will also help them to seek medical advice if needed. Parents may be informed if we have concerns, though we will try to comply with a child's wish for confidentiality when possible.

Adults here are expected to be open, honest and professional when talking to pupils about sex, whatever their ages. We need to take an active role with new couples to ensure that they are fully informed on matters of contraception and sexual health. Further, couples, where appropriate, will be reminded of the law, especially regarding age differences and/or power imbalances, and the existence of a sexual offenders register.

Zoe (as principal), or Henry (as DDSL), **and** Andrew (as DSL) need to be informed, **at the earliest opportunity**, if you observe a new couple forming or any problems/issues emerging from an established relationship.

Further, all staff should be alert to inappropriate pupil relationships and the potential for peer on peer abuse. In order to determine whether the relationship presents a risk to the young person, a number of factors must be considered. Of particular importance is the presence of any *'power imbalances which can occur through differences in size, age and development. The larger the age gap between those involved the greater the need to assess the power balance..... Gender, sexuality, race and levels of sexual knowledge may also be used to exert power.'* (*Working with Sexually Active Young People Under the Age of 18. SSCB. August 2017, p.7*)

Whatever your personal views on children's sexuality you will be expected to follow the philosophy of the school on these matters. We believe that sex is not a taboo subject and that children should be able to talk about it when they feel ready. Books are available in houseparents' rooms and the library.

For more information, see *Working with Sexually Active Young People Under the Age of 18. SSCB. August 2017*. It is strongly recommended that all full-time staff read this document, a copy of which is to be found in the *Safeguarding Reference Documents* on the *Summerhill Drive*

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**Document history**