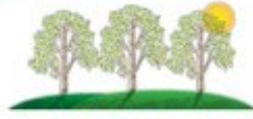


*Where a love of learning grows*



**Birch Wood  
School**



**Birch Wood  
Vale School**



**Birch Wood  
Autism Provision**

# **Relationships and Sex Education Policy**

**Birch Wood Schools**

**School Name:** Birch Wood School

**Policy owner:** Rosalind Hopkins

**Date Ratified by Chair of Governors:**

**Written by:** Julie Peattie PSHE and Student Welfare Lead

**Approved by:**

**Rosalind  
Hopkins**

**Date: January 2023**

**Last reviewed on:**

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**January 2024**

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### 1. Policy statement

RSE is a lifelong learning process of acquiring information, developing skills and forming positive beliefs and attitudes about sex, sexuality, relationships and feelings (Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education July 2019). Effective RSE can make a significant contribution to the development of the personal skills needed by pupils if they are to establish and maintain relationships. It also enables young people to make responsible and informed decisions about their health and well-being. Other related policies and documents include the PSHE & Citizenship policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Equality Policy, Child Protection Policy and the as well as our Social media Policy.

### 2. Aims

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

- Provide a framework in which sensitive discussions can take place

- › Prepare pupils for puberty, and 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
- › Respect and tolerance towards others who may have different backgrounds, cultures, feelings, views and sexuality.
- › Communication, including how to manage changing relationships and emotions
- › Recognising and assessing potential risks
- › Assertiveness
- › Seeking help and support when required
- › Informed decision-making

And is based on the following principles:

- › 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 relationship.
- › Mutual support and co-operation.
- › Honesty and openness.
- › Self-respect.

### 3. Statutory requirements

As a state maintained Special School, we must provide RSE to all pupils as per the [Children and Social work act 2017](#).

In teaching RSE, we utilise, as our principal reference tool the very latest Government Guidance: Relationships Education, Relationships & Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education [guidance](#) – Statutory Governance for teachers This is statutory guidance from the Department for Education issued under Section 80A of the Education Act 2002 and section 403 of the Education Act 1996 [Education Act 1996](#).

We must also have regard to our legal duties set out in:

- Sections 406 and 407 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 6, chapter 1 of the [Equality Act 2010](#)
- The Public Sector Equality Duty (as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). This duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

At Birch Wood School, we teach RSE as set out in this policy.

#### Primary education

As a maintained primary school, we must provide relationships education to all pupils under section 34 of the [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#).

We do not have to follow the National Curriculum, but we are expected to offer all pupils a curriculum that is similar to the National Curriculum including requirements to teach science. This would include the elements of sex education contained in the science curriculum.

In teaching RSE, we are required to have regard to [guidance](#) issued by the secretary of state, as outlined in section 403 of the [Education Act 1996](#). We also have regard to legal duties set out in:

- Sections 406 and 407 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 6, chapter 1 of the [Equality Act 2010](#)
- The Public Sector Equality Duty (as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). This duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

At Birch Wood School, we teach RSE as set out in this policy.

### Secondary education

As a maintained secondary school, we must provide RSE to all pupils under the [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#).

In teaching RSE, we must have regard to [guidance](#) issued by the secretary of state, as outlined in section 403 of the [Education Act 1996](#).

We must also have regard to our legal duties set out in:

- Sections 406 and 407 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 6, chapter 1 of the [Equality Act 2010](#)
- The Public Sector Equality Duty (as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). This duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

## 4. Policy development

This policy has been developed in consultation with staff, pupils and parents. The consultation and policy development process involved the following steps:

1. Review – PSHE Lead pulled together all relevant information including relevant national and local guidance
2. Staff consultation – all school staff were given the opportunity to look at the policy and make recommendations
3. Parent/stakeholder consultation – parents and any interested parties were invited to attend a meeting about the policy
4. Student voice consultation – we investigated what exactly pupils want from their RSE
5. Ratification – once amendments were made, the policy was shared with governors and ratified

## 5. Definition

RSE is about the emotional, social and cultural development of pupils, and involves learning about relationships, sexual health, sexuality, healthy lifestyles, diversity and personal identity.

RSE involves a combination of sharing information, and exploring issues and values.

RSE is not about the promotion of sexual activity.

## 6. Curriculum and Delivery

RSE is taught within the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. Biological aspects of RSE are taught within the science curriculum, and other aspects are included in religious education (RE). Our RSE curriculum is set out as per Appendix 1, but we may need to adapt it as and when necessary.

We have developed the curriculum in consultation with parents, pupils and staff, and taking into account the age, developmental stage, needs and feelings of our pupils. If pupils ask questions outside the scope of this policy, teachers will respond in an appropriate manner so that pupils are fully informed and do not seek answers online.

Across all Key Stages, pupils will be supported with developing the following skills:

- Communication, including how to manage changing relationships and emotions
- Recognising and assessing potential risks • Assertiveness
- Seeking help and support when required
- Informed decision-making
- Self-respect and empathy for others
- Recognising and maximising a healthy lifestyle
- Managing conflict
- Discussion and group work

The primary relationships education focuses on teaching the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships including:

- Families and people who care for me
- Caring friendships
- Respectful relationships
- Online relationships
- Being safe

For more information about our RSE curriculum, see Appendices 1.

Secondary RSE focuses on giving young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds including:

- Families
- Respectful relationships, including friendships
- Online and media
- Being safe
- Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health

For more information about our RSE curriculum, see Appendices 2.

Pupils should receive teaching on LGBT content during their time at Birch Wood. Teaching children about the society that we live in and the different types of loving, healthy relationships that exist can be done in a way that respects and celebrates everyone. Primary pupils will cover LGBT content when learning about different

types of families. Secondary pupils will cover LGBT+ content in their RSE teaching. RSE should meet the needs of all pupils, whatever their developing sexuality or identity. This should include age-appropriate teaching about different types of relationships in the context of the law.

These areas of learning are taught within the context of family life, taking care to make sure 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 and foster parents/carers, amongst other structures), along with reflecting sensitively that some children may have a different structure of support around them (for example, looked-after children or young carers).

We will also be mindful of the law and legal requirements, taking care not to condone or encourage illegal political activity, such as violent action against people, criminal damage to property, hate crime, terrorism or the illegal use of drugs.

Where a need is identified students can be offered 1:1 support, for instance through the PANTS programme (which helps young people and children understand and respect their own privacy and that of others) or through specific tailored work which would always be agreed with parents or carers first. Most lessons are taught in tutor groups, which are generally mixed gender, but sometimes class tutors may decide that for a particular group it is necessary to teach certain topics in single sex groups.

The aim of lessons is always to allow students a safe forum to ask questions and to understand their own thoughts and feelings, and to provide students with the tools to stay safe and happy and, when the time is right, to understand what makes a good healthy relationship and that they have a right to expect this from their own relationships in future.

RSE is not be delivered in isolation but firmly embedded in all curriculum areas, including Personal, Social Health Education (PSHE), Preparation to adulthood and citizenship. The main content is delivered in PSHE lessons. Class teachers in mixed gender groups other than when it is deemed more appropriate for topics to be covered in single sex groups normally deliver RSE. Active learning methods, which involve children's full participation, are used.

For more information about our RSE curriculum, see Appendices 1 and 2.

## 7. 1 Inclusivity

We will teach about these topics in a manner that:

- Considers how a diverse range of pupils will relate to them
- Is sensitive to all pupils' experiences ➤

During lessons, makes pupils feel:

- Safe and supported
- Able to engage with the key messages We

will also:

- Make sure that pupils learn about these topics in an environment that's appropriate for them, for example in:
  - A whole-class setting
  - Small groups or targeted sessions
  - 1-to-1 discussions
  - Digital formats
- Give careful consideration to the level of differentiation needed

## 7.2 Resources

We **will** consider whether any resources we plan to use:

- Are aligned with the teaching requirements set out in the statutory RSE guidance ○ Would support pupils in applying their knowledge in different contexts and settings ○ Are age-appropriate, given the age, developmental stage and background of our pupils ○ Are evidence-based and contain robust facts and statistics ○ Fit into our curriculum plan ○ Are from credible sources
- Are compatible with effective teaching approaches
- Are sensitive to pupils' experiences and won't provoke distress

## 8. Use of external organisations and materials

We will make sure that an agency and any materials used are appropriate and in line with our legal duties around political impartiality.

The school remains responsible for what is said to pupils. This includes making sure that any speakers, tools and resources used don't undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

We **will**:

- Make appropriate checks and engage with external agencies to make sure that their approach to teaching about RSE is balanced, and it and the resources they intend to use:
  - Are age-appropriate ○ Are in line with pupils' developmental stage ○ Comply with:
    - This policy
    - The [Teachers' Standards](#)
    - The [Equality Act 2010](#)
    - The [Human Rights Act 1998](#)
    - The [Education Act 1996](#)
- Only work with external agencies where we have full confidence in the agency, its approach and the resources it uses
- Make sure that any speakers and resources meet the intended outcome of the relevant part of the curriculum
- Review any case study materials and look for feedback from other people the agency has worked with ➤

Be clear on:

- What they're going to say
- Their position on the issues to be discussed
- Ask to see in advance any materials that the agency may use
- Know the named individuals who will be there, and follow our usual safeguarding procedures for these people
- Conduct a basic online search and address anything that may be of concern to us, or to parents and carers
- Check the agency's protocol for taking pictures or using any personal data they might get from a session
- Remind teachers that they can say "no" or, in extreme cases, stop a session
- Make sure that the teacher is in the room during any sessions with external speakers

We **will not**, under any circumstances:

- › Work with external agencies that take or promote extreme political positions
- › Use materials produced by such agencies, even if the material itself is not extreme

## 9. Roles and responsibilities

### 9.1 The governing board

The governing board will approve the RSE policy, and hold the head teacher to account for its implementation.

### 9.2 The head teacher

The head teacher 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 (see section 11).

### 9.3 Staff

Staff are responsible for:

- › Delivering RSE in a sensitive way
- › Modelling positive attitudes to RSE
- › Monitoring progress
- › Responding to the needs of individual pupils
- › Responding appropriately to pupils whose parents wish them to be withdrawn from the non-statutory components of RSE

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 head teacher.

Executive Head teacher: Rosalind Hopkins

Head of RSE: Julie Peattie

SLT RSE Lead: Hannah O'Mara

RSE Governor: Kerry Clarkson

### 9.4 Pupils

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

## 10. Safe guarding and Child Protection

Birch Wood School acknowledges that RSE is crucial for creating a culture of safeguarding within the school and for meeting our statutory obligations as outlined in Keeping Children Safe in Education.

RSE helps children and young people to understand the difference between healthy and abusive relationships and to understand how to get help if they are experiencing abuse, or have experienced abuse.

We recognise that when discussing some of the issues RSE covers, some pupils could disclose abuse or other harmful experiences. In cases of a disclosure, all staff have statutory training around child protection and will follow the schools safeguarding policy and procedures.

We also recognise that some children may be vulnerable to some of the content delivered in RSE due to a previous safeguarding concern, ongoing concerns or changes to their personal life. For those children, additional support will be given to prevent them being affected by the scenarios or topics in their planned lessons.

While Birch Wood School wants to create a learning space that feels safe for children and young people to disclose, we also want to protect children's privacy. At School, we do this by using a number of teaching techniques including the use of a working agreement, where rights respecting ground rules are created with pupils on what makes a safe and welcoming environment for all. Once ground rules have been set, we will check they are in place throughout the scheme of work and actively referred to. With ground rules and other approaches, such as distancing techniques, we believe the school can create a supportive environment for discussions that can be sensitive or difficult.

## 11. Parents' right to withdraw

### Primary RSE curriculum

Parents do not have the right to withdraw their children from relationships education.

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from the non-statutory/non-science components of sex education within RSE.

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

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

### Secondary RSE curriculum

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from the non-statutory/non-science components of sex education within RSE up to and until 3 terms before the child turns 16. After this point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than being withdrawn, the school will arrange this.

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

A copy of withdrawal requests will be placed in the pupil's educational record. The headteacher will discuss the request with parents and take appropriate action. Alternative school work will be given to pupils who are withdrawn from sex education.

## 12. Training

Staff are trained on the delivery of RSE as part of their CPD and it is included in our continuing professional development (CPD) calendar.

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

## 13. Monitoring arrangement

The delivery of RSE is monitored by Julie Peattie and Hannah O'Mara through:

Planned work and SOW scrutiny, learning walks and performance management review meetings.

Class teachers as part of our internal assessment systems monitor pupils' development in RSE.

This policy will be reviewed on a biennial basis. At every review, the governing board will approve the policy.

## Appendix 1: By the end of primary school pupils should know

| TOPIC                                 | PUPILS SHOULD KNOW  |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Families and people who care about me | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That families are important for children growing up because they can give love, security and stability</li> <li>• The characteristics of healthy family life, commitment to each other, including in times of difficulty, protection and care for children and other family members, the importance of spending time together and sharing each other's lives</li> <li>• That others' families, either in school or in the wider world, sometimes look different from their family, but that they should respect those differences and know that other children's families are also characterised by love and care</li> <li>• That stable, caring relationships, which may be of different types, are at the heart of happy families, and are important for children's security as they grow up</li> <li>• That marriage represents a formal and legally recognised commitment of two people to each other which is intended to be lifelong</li> <li>• How to recognise if family relationships are making them feel unhappy or unsafe, and how to seek help or advice from others if needed</li> </ul> |
| Caring friendships                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How important friendships are in making us feel happy and secure, and how people choose and make friends</li> <li>• The characteristics of friendships, including mutual respect, truthfulness, trustworthiness, loyalty, kindness, generosity, trust, sharing interests and experiences and support with problems and difficulties</li> <li>• That healthy friendships are positive and welcoming towards others, and do not make others feel lonely or excluded</li> <li>• That most friendships have ups and downs, and that these can often be worked through so that the friendship is repaired or even strengthened, and that resorting to violence is never right</li> <li>• How to recognise who to trust and who not to trust, how to judge when a friendship is making them feel unhappy or uncomfortable, managing conflict, how to manage these situations and how to seek help or advice from others, if needed</li> </ul>  |
| TOPIC                                 | PUPILS SHOULD KNOW  |

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <p>Respectful relationships</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The importance of respecting others, even when they are very different from them (for example, physically, in character, personality or backgrounds), or make different choices or have different preferences or beliefs</li> <li>• Practical steps they can take in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful relationships • The conventions of courtesy and manners</li> <li>• The importance of self-respect and how this links to their own happiness</li> <li>• That in school and in wider society they can expect to be treated with respect by others, and that in turn they should show due respect to others, including those in positions of authority</li> <li>• About different types of bullying (including cyberbullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders (primarily reporting bullying to an adult) and how to get help</li> <li>• What a stereotype is, and how stereotypes can be unfair, negative or destructive</li> <li>• The importance of permission-seeking and giving in relationships with friends, peers and adults</li> </ul> |
| <p>Online relationships</p>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That people sometimes behave differently online, including by pretending to be someone they are not</li> <li>• That the same principles apply to online relationships as to face-to face relationships, including the importance of respect for others online including when we are anonymous</li> <li>• The rules and principles for keeping safe online, how to recognise risks, harmful content and contact, and how to report them</li> <li>• How to critically consider their online friendships and sources of information including awareness of the risks associated with people they have never met</li> <li>• How information and data is shared and used online</li> </ul>   |
| <p>Being safe</p>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What sorts of boundaries are appropriate in friendships with peers and others (including in a digital context)</li> <li>• About the concept of privacy and the implications of it for both children and adults; including that it is not always right to keep secrets if they relate to being safe</li> <li>• That each person's body belongs to them, and the differences between appropriate and inappropriate or unsafe physical, and other, contact</li> <li>• How to respond safely and appropriately to adults they may encounter (in all contexts, including online) whom they do not know</li> <li>• How to recognise and report feelings of being unsafe or feeling bad about any adult</li> <li>• How to ask for advice or help for themselves or others, and to keep trying until they are heard</li> <li>• How to report concerns or abuse, and the vocabulary and confidence needed to do so • Where to get advice e.g. family, school and/or other sources</li> </ul>   |

## Appendix 2: By the end of secondary school pupils should know

| TOPIC    | PUPILS SHOULD KNOW  |
|----------|---|
| Families | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• That there are different types of committed, stable relationships</li><li>• How these relationships might contribute to human happiness and their importance for bringing up children</li><li>• What marriage is, including their legal status e.g. that marriage carries legal rights and protections not available to couples who are cohabiting or who have married, for example, in an unregistered religious ceremony</li><li>• Why marriage is an important relationship choice for many couples and why it must be freely entered into</li><li>• The characteristics and legal status of other types of long-term relationships</li><li>• The roles and responsibilities of parents with respect to raising of children, including the characteristics of successful parenting</li><li>• How to: determine whether other children, adults or sources of information are trustworthy: judge when a family, friend, intimate or other relationship is unsafe (and to recognise this in others' relationships); and, how to seek help or advice, including reporting concerns about others, if needed</li></ul> |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>Respectful relationships, including friendships</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The characteristics of positive and healthy friendships (in all contexts, including online) including trust, respect, honesty, kindness, generosity, boundaries, privacy, consent and the management of conflict, reconciliation and ending relationships. This includes different (non-sexual) types of relationship</li> <li>• Practical steps they can take in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful relationships</li> <li>• How stereotypes, in particular stereotypes based on sex, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability, can cause damage (e.g. how they might normalise non-consensual behaviour or encourage prejudice)</li> <li>• That in school and in wider society they can expect to be treated with respect by others, and that in turn they should show due respect to others, including people in positions of authority and due tolerance of other people's beliefs</li> <li>• About different types of bullying (including cyberbullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders to report bullying and how and where to get help</li> <li>• That some types of behaviour within relationships are criminal, including violent behaviour and coercive control</li> <li>• What constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why these are always unacceptable</li> <li>• The legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality (particularly with reference to the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010) and that everyone is unique and equal</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

| TOPIC                   | PUPILS SHOULD KNOW   |
|-------------------------|--|
| <p>Online and media</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their rights, responsibilities and opportunities online, including that the same expectations of behaviour apply in all contexts, including online</li> <li>• About online risks, including that any material someone provides to another has the potential to be shared online and the difficulty of removing potentially compromising material placed online</li> <li>• Not to provide material to others that they would not want shared further and not to share personal material which is sent to them</li> <li>• What to do and where to get support to report material or manage issues online</li> <li>• The impact of viewing harmful content</li> <li>• That specifically sexually explicit material e.g. pornography presents a distorted picture of sexual behaviours, can damage the way people see themselves in relation to others and negatively affect how they behave towards sexual partners</li> <li>• That sharing and viewing indecent images of children (including those created by children) is a criminal offence which carries severe penalties including jail</li> <li>• How information and data is generated, collected, shared and used online</li> </ul> |

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| Being safe | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The concepts of, and laws relating to, sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, forced marriage, honour-based violence and FGM, and how these can affect current and future relationships</li> <li>• How people can actively communicate and recognise consent from others, including sexual consent, and how and when consent can be withdrawn (in all contexts, including online)</li> </ul> |
|------------|--|

| TOPIC  | PUPILS SHOULD KNOW   |
|--|--|
| Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to recognise the characteristics and positive aspects of healthy one-to-one intimate relationships, which include mutual respect, consent, loyalty, trust, shared interests and outlook, sex and friendship</li> <li>• That all aspects of health can be affected by choices they make in sex and relationships, positively or negatively, e.g. physical, emotional, mental, sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing</li> <li>• The facts about reproductive health, including fertility and the potential impact of lifestyle on fertility for men and women</li> <li>• That there are a range of strategies for identifying and managing sexual pressure, including understanding peer pressure, resisting pressure and not pressurising others</li> <li>• That they have a choice to delay sex or to enjoy intimacy without sex</li> <li>• The facts about the full range of contraceptive choices, efficacy and options available</li> <li>• The facts around pregnancy including miscarriage</li> <li>• That there are choices in relation to pregnancy (with medically and legally accurate, impartial information on all options, including keeping the baby, adoption, abortion and where to get further help)</li> <li>• How the different sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDs, are transmitted, how risk can be reduced through safer sex (including through condom use) and the importance of and facts about testing</li> <li>• About the prevalence of some STIs, the impact they can have on those who contract them and key facts about treatment</li> <li>• How the use of alcohol and drugs can lead to risky sexual behaviour</li> <li>• How to get further advice, including how and where to access confidential sexual and reproductive health advice and treatment</li> </ul> |

### Appendix 3: Parent form: withdrawal from sex education within RSE

| TO BE COMPLETED BY PARENTS   |  |       |  |
|--|--|-------|--|
| Name of student  |  | Class |  |
| Name of parent   |  | Date  |  |
| Reason for withdrawing from sex education within relationships and sex education |  |       |  |
| <br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>   |  |       |  |
| Any other information you would like the school to consider                      |  |       |  |
| <br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>   |  |       |  |
| Parent signature   |  |       |  |

| TO BE COMPLETED BY THE SCHOOL               |  |
|---|--|
| Agreed actions from discussion with parents |  |
| Page   15                                   |  |

