Department for Education

Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education

Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, and teachers

July 2025

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Introduction

1. Children and young people need knowledge and skills that will enable them to make informed and ethical decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships. High quality, evidence-based teaching of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) can help prepare pupils for the opportunities and responsibilities of adult life, and can promote their moral, social, mental and physical development. Effective teaching will support young people to cultivate positive characteristics including resilience, self-worth, self-respect, honesty, integrity, courage, kindness, and trustworthiness. Effective teaching will support prevention of harms by helping young people understand and identify when things are not right.

2. The duties on schools in this area are set out in legislation.[1] 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.[2] They also make health education compulsory in all schools except independent schools. Personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) continues to be compulsory in independent schools. Parents[3] have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE.

3. The subjects are part of the basic school curriculum, which allows schools flexibility in developing their planned programme, integrated within a broad and balanced curriculum. Key aspects of RSHE are in scope for Ofsted inspection, for example, through inspectors' consideration of pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

What is the status of this guidance?

4. 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 – further details are in Annex A.

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[1] Maintained schools and academies are required to provide a curriculum which is broad and balanced in accordance with Section 78 of the Education Act 2002. Part I of the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 requires independent schools other than academies to make provision for PSHE (paragraph 2(2)(d)), and to prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society (paragraph 2(2)(i). Part 2 of the Schedule requires independent schools (including academies) to meet the standard relating to the Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development of pupils.

[2] For ease of reference, this guidance refers to primary schools and secondary schools, but the statutory requirements refer to pupils receiving primary/secondary education.

[3] The word "parents" is used henceforth to mean both parents and carers.

5. Schools[4] must have regard to the guidance, and where they depart from those parts of the guidance which state that they should (or should not) do something they will need to have good reasons for doing so.

About this guidance

6. This document contains information on what schools **should** do and sets out the legal duties with which schools **must** comply when teaching relationships education, relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education.

7. Unless otherwise specified, 'school' means all schools, whether maintained, non-maintained or independent schools, including academies and free schools, non-maintained special schools, maintained special schools and alternative provision, including pupil referral units.

8. This guidance updates the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education statutory guidance 2019. This guidance will be kept under review.

Who this guidance is for

9. This statutory guidance applies to all schools, and is therefore aimed at:

- governing bodies of maintained schools (including schools with a sixth form) and non-maintained special schools (including residential special schools)
- trustees of academies and free schools
- Multi Academy Trust central staff team
- proprietors of independent schools (including academies and free schools)
- providers of alternative provision, including AP Academies and AP Free Schools
- management committees of pupil referral units (PRUs)
- teachers, other school staff and school nurses
- head teachers, principals and senior leadership teams
- dioceses and other religious bodies, and
- for reference, relevant local authority staff.

10. Pupil referral units (PRUs), alternative provision (AP) academies and free schools, and independent schools that provide AP, are required to make provision for relationships education, RSE and health education in the same way as mainstream schools; and they must have regard to this guidance in delivering their programme. In teaching these subjects in PRUs, AP academies and free schools, and independent[5] AP schools, specific

[4] Guidance on health education does not apply to independent schools, which must meet the Independent School Standards as set out in the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. However, they may find the sections on health education helpful. It does, however, apply to academies and free schools.

[5] Independent schools do not have to have regard to the guidance on health education, although they may find it helpful in planning.

thought should be given to the particular needs and vulnerabilities of the pupils and what adjustments might be needed.

11. The statutory requirements do not apply to sixth form colleges, 16-19 academies or Further Education (FE) colleges,[6] although we would encourage them to support students by offering these subjects. These settings may find the principles helpful, especially in supporting pupils in the transition to FE.

Developing a policy

12. All schools must have an up-to-date written policy for relationships education or, where they teach sex education, for RSE. Schools must proactively engage and consult parents when they develop and review their policy, ensuring parents understand that effective RSHE is important for promoting and protecting the wellbeing of all children (see the section on openness with parents on page 33). Listening and responding to the views of pupils and parents helps to ensure that RSHE meets pupils' needs and that topics are taught at the right time to support children to build positive relationships and avoid harms before they occur. Schools must provide a copy of their policy free of charge to anyone who asks for one and publish the policy on the school website.[7] Schools may need to include new content in RSHE to respond to emerging needs or issues in the school but should be careful to inform parents of any shifts away from the policy and continue to share relevant materials on request.

13. While schools are not required to publish a policy for health education, it would be good practice for schools to set out some of the details about how health education will be taught.

14. The RSE policy should:

- Set out the subject content, how and when it will be taught, and who is responsible for teaching it, including any external providers the school will use.
- Differentiate between relationships and sex education (where sex education is taught), so that parents have clear information. 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.
- Include information about a parent's right to request that their child is withdrawn from sex education.
- Explain how content will be made accessible to all pupils, including those with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND).

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[6] Further education and sixth form colleges that provide full time education for 14-16-year olds are required to follow Department for Education guidance which covers a number of areas including the curriculum. From September 2020, these included the subjects of relationships and sex education and health education, and such providers need to follow this guidance.

[7] If a school does not have a website, they should ensure that the policy is available by other means.

- Describe how the subject is monitored and evaluated.
- Set out how parents can view curriculum materials.
- Explain how teachers will answer questions about topics in sex education that the school does not cover (in primary) or that relates to sex education from which the child has been withdrawn.
- Explain how the policy has been produced, who approves the policy, and how and when it will be reviewed.

Guiding principles for relationships, sex and health education

15. Schools should develop a curriculum with the following key principles in mind:

a. **Engagement with pupils.** An inclusive and well-sequenced RSHE curriculum should be informed by meaningful engagement with pupils to ensure that the curriculum is relevant and engaging.
b. **Engagement and transparency with parents.** Schools should engage with parents on the content of RSHE and be transparent with parents about all materials used in RSHE. All materials should be available to parents, as described in the section on openness with parents on page 33. Parents have a right to request that their children are withdrawn from sex education (pupils can opt back in from three terms before they turn 16) and schools should ensure parents are aware of sex education content within lessons in advance.
c. **Positivity.** Schools should focus on building positive attitudes and skills, promoting healthy norms about relationships, including sexual relationships where relevant, and about health, including mental health. Schools should avoid language which might normalise harmful behaviour among young people – for example gendered language which might normalise male violence or stigmatise boys.
d. **Careful sequencing.** Schools should cover all statutory topics, recognising that young people can start developing healthy behaviour and relationship skills as soon as they start school. Schools should sequence teaching so that pupils are supported and equipped with the knowledge to navigate different experiences in a positive way before they occur, and to prevent harms.
e. **Relevant and responsive.** Schools should develop the curriculum to be relevant, age and stage appropriate and accessible to pupils in their area, where appropriate working with local partners and other bodies to understand specific local issues and ensure needs are met.
f. **Skilled delivery of participative education.** The curriculum should be delivered by school staff or, where schools choose to use them, external providers who have the knowledge, skills and confidence to create a safe and supportive environment and to facilitate participative and interactive education which aims to support and not to alarm pupils. Staff should be trained in safeguarding and offering support, recognising the increased possibility of disclosures.
g. **Whole school approach.** The curriculum is best delivered as part of a whole school approach to wellbeing and positive relationships, supported by other school policies, including behaviour and safeguarding policies.

Parents' right to request withdrawal from sex education

16. Parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE.

17. Before granting any request for withdrawal of a child from sex education, it is good practice for the head teacher to discuss the request with parents, and the child if appropriate, to understand the request and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum. This is likely to include discussing the benefits of sex education, and any detrimental effects of withdrawal, including social and emotional impacts on the child, and the likelihood that the child will hear their peers' version of what was said in class, which may not be accurate. Schools will want to document this process to ensure a record is kept.

18. Where primary schools provide sex education, head teachers must automatically grant a request to withdraw a pupil from it, other than content that is taught as part of the science curriculum. In secondary, head teachers can refuse a request in exceptional circumstances, for example because of safeguarding concerns or a pupil's specific vulnerability.

19. From three terms before the pupil turns 16, a pupil can choose to opt back into sex education even if their parent has requested withdrawal. For example, if a pupil turns 16 during the autumn term, the pupil can opt back into sex education at any time after the start of the previous autumn term. Schools should ensure that pupils know they have this option.

20. If a pupil is withdrawn from sex education, it is the school's responsibility to ensure that the pupil receives appropriate, purposeful education during the period of withdrawal.

21. Parents do not have the right to withdraw their pupils from relationships and health education, nor can they be withdrawn from topics taught as part of the science curriculum, including science topics related to puberty or sexual reproduction.

22. Everyone has relationships with others, and most pupils will develop sexual relationships at some point in their lives. Relationships education should equip pupils with the knowledge and skills they need to act with kindness and respect in all their relationships as they grow into adulthood, to enjoy their relationships, and to keep themselves and others safe.

23. Relationships education will focus on how to form and sustain positive relationships but will also help children identify risks and harms. Relationships education may therefore include topics related to preventing sexual abuse, for example, or avoiding sharing inappropriate material online. This can be done without describing the detail of any sexual

activity involved. Similarly, good safeguarding practice requires young people to understand the correct terms for different parts of the body and to be able to confidently use these terms. This can be provided as part of health education in primary, without describing any detail of sexual activity.

Curriculum Content

Relationships education (Primary)

24. The focus for primary relationships education should be on teaching the skills and knowledge that form the building blocks of all positive relationships, supporting children from the start of their education to grow into kind, caring adults who have respect for others and know how to keep themselves and others safe.

25. Building children's understanding and skills at primary is essential for preparing them for more complex content at secondary. For example, in primary, children will learn skills for managing difficult feelings in their friendships, like disappointment or anger. This prepares them to reflect on how to behave with kindness in more complex or challenging relationships at secondary.

26. Schools should be sensitive to pupils' circumstances, recognising that families of many forms provide a nurturing environment for children, and can include single parent families, same-sex parents, families headed by grandparents, young carers, kinship carers, adoptive parents and foster parents/carers. Teaching should illustrate a wide range of family structures in a positive way, and care should be taken to ensure that children are not stigmatised based on their home circumstances.

27. Primary relationships education should be anchored in an understanding of positive relationships, but should also equip children to keep themselves and others safe, and to recognise and report risks and abuse, including online. This can be delivered by focusing on boundaries, privacy, and children's rights over their own bodies and personal information. Pupils should be able to recognise emotional, physical and sexual abuse. Even very young children can be equipped to understand what counts as abusive behaviour and to trust their instincts about behaviour that doesn't feel right. In addition, pupils should understand about bullying, and that this can include the use of derogatory terms relating to sex, race, disability or sexual orientation.

28. Pupils should know how to report concerns and seek advice. While teaching children how to stay safe, including online, teachers should be clear that being a victim of abuse is never the fault of the child.

29. Primary children should be introduced to protective and preventative content in a way that does not cause unreasonable alarm and does not appear to normalise risky behaviours or activities. For example, in late primary, schools may decide to discuss the

pressure to share naked images if this is affecting pupils in the school. There may also be cases, such as when they know that pupils have seen pornography, in which schools may feel the need to discuss online sexual content. Teaching should be age appropriate and respectful of all children, including those who may have no familiarity with the topics under discussion. Schools should also inform parents of any deviation from their published RSE policy in advance and share any relevant materials with them on request.

Relationships education: content to be covered by the end of primary

Families and people who care for me

Curriculum content:

1. That families are important for children growing up safe and happy because they can provide love, security and stability.
2. The characteristics of safe and happy family life, such as 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.
3. That the families of other children, 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.
4. That stable, caring relationships are at the heart of safe and happy families and are important for children's security as they grow up.
5. That marriage and civil partnerships represent a formal and legally recognised commitment of two people to each other which is intended to be lifelong.
6. How to recognise if family relationships are making them feel unhappy or unsafe, and how to seek help or advice from others if needed.

Caring friendships

Curriculum content:

1. How important friendships are in making us feel happy and secure, and how people choose and make friends.
2. That healthy friendships are positive and welcoming towards others, and do not make others feel lonely or excluded. Pupils should learn skills for developing caring, kind friendships.
3. That not every child will have the friends they would like at all times, that most people feel lonely sometimes, and that there is no shame in feeling lonely or talking about it.
4. The characteristics of friendships that lead to happiness and security, including mutual respect, honesty, trustworthiness, loyalty, kindness, generosity, trust, sharing interests and experiences, and support with problems and difficulties.
5. That most friendships have ups and downs, and that these can often be worked through so that the friendship is repaired or even strengthened.
6. How to manage conflict, and that resorting to violence is never right.
7. How to recognise when a friendship is making them feel unhappy or uncomfortable, and how to get support when needed.

Respectful, kind relationships

Curriculum content:

1. How to pay attention to the needs and preferences of others, including in families and friendships. Pupils should be encouraged to discuss how we balance the needs and wishes of different people in relationships and why this can be complicated.
2. The importance of setting and respecting healthy boundaries in relationships with friends, family, peers and adults.
3. How to communicate effectively and manage conflict with kindness and respect; how to be assertive and express needs and boundaries; how to manage feelings, including disappointment and frustration.
4. Pupils should have opportunities to discuss the difference between being assertive and being controlling, and conversely the difference between being kind to other people and neglecting your own needs.
5. That they can expect to be treated with respect by others, and the importance of respecting others, including those who are different (for example, physically, in character, personality or backgrounds), or make different choices, or have different preferences or beliefs.
6. Practical steps they can take and skills they can develop in a range of different contexts to improve or support their relationships.
7. The conventions of courtesy and manners.
8. The importance of self-respect and how this links to their own happiness. Pupils should have opportunities to think about how they foster their own self-esteem and build a strong sense of their own identity, including through developing skills and interests.
9. The different types of bullying (including online bullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders (primarily reporting bullying to an adult), and how to get help.
10. What a stereotype is, how stereotypes can be unfair, negative, destructive or lead to bullying and how to challenge a stereotype.
11. How to seek help when needed, including when they are concerned about violence, harm, or when they are unsure who to trust.

Online safety and awareness

Curriculum content:

1. That people should be respectful in online interactions, and that the same principles apply to online relationships as to face-to-face relationships, including where people are anonymous. For example, the importance of avoiding putting pressure on others to share information and images online, and strategies for resisting peer pressure.
2. How to critically evaluate their online relationships and sources of information, including awareness of the risks associated with people they have never met. For example, that people sometimes behave differently online, including pretending to be someone else, or pretending to be a child, and that this can lead to dangerous situations. How to recognise harmful content or harmful contact, and how to report this.
3. That there is a minimum age for joining social media sites (currently 13), which protects children from inappropriate content or unsafe contact with older social media users, who may be strangers, including other children and adults.
4. The importance of exercising caution about sharing any information about themselves online. Understanding the importance of privacy and location settings to protect information online.
5. Online risks, including that any material provided online might be circulated, and that once a picture or words has been circulated there is no way of deleting it everywhere and no control over where it ends up.
6. That the internet contains a lot of content that can be inappropriate and upsetting for children, and where to go for advice and support when they feel worried or concerned about something they have seen or engaged with online.

Being Safe

Curriculum content:

1. What sorts of boundaries are appropriate in friendships with peers and others (including online). This can include learning about boundaries in play and in negotiations about space, toys, books, resources etc.
2. The concept of privacy and its implications for both children and adults; including that it is not always right to keep secrets if they relate to being safe.
3. That each person's body belongs to them, and the differences between appropriate and inappropriate or unsafe contact, including physical contact.
4. How to respond safely and appropriately to adults they may encounter (in all contexts, including online), including those they do and do not know.
5. How to recognise when a relationship is harmful or dangerous, including skills for recognising who to trust and who not to trust.
6. How to report abuse, concerns about something seen online or experienced in real life, or feelings of being unsafe or feeling bad about any adult and the vocabulary and confidence needed to do so.
7. How to ask for advice or help for themselves or others, and to keep trying until they are heard. Where to get advice e.g. family, school and/or other sources.

Sex Education (Primary)

30. Sex education is not compulsory in primary schools, but we recommend that primaries teach sex education in years 5 and/or 6, in line with content about conception and birth, which forms part of the national curriculum for science. The national curriculum for science includes subject content in related areas, such as the main external body parts, the human body as it grows from birth to old age (including puberty) and reproduction in some plants and animals. Schools may also cover human reproduction in the science curriculum, but where they do so, this should be in line with the factual description of conception in the science curriculum.

31. Primary schools should consult parents about the content of anything that will be taught within sex education. This process should include offering parents support in talking to their children about sex education and how to link this with what is being taught in school as well as advice about parents' right to request withdrawal from sex education.

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE): Secondary

32. RSE in secondary should provide a clear progression from primary relationships education. RSE should provide young people with the information they need to develop healthy, safe and nurturing relationships of all kinds. This should include the knowledge they need in later life to keep themselves and others safe, and how to avoid sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancies.

33. 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.

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

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

36. When teaching sensitive topics, teachers can 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.

Secondary relationships and sex education curriculum content

Schools should continue to develop knowledge of topics specified for primary as required and in addition cover the following content by the end of secondary:

Families

Curriculum content:

1. That there are different types of committed, stable relationships.
2. How these relationships might contribute to wellbeing, and their importance for bringing up children.
3. Why marriage or civil partnership is an important relationship choice for many couples. The legal status of marriage and civil partnership, including that they carry legal rights, benefits and protections that are not available to couples who are cohabiting or who have, for example, undergone a non-legally binding religious ceremony.
4. That 'common-law marriage' is a myth and cohabitants do not obtain marriage-like status or rights from living together or by having children.
5. That forced marriage and marrying before the age of 18 are illegal.[8]
6. How families and relationships change over time, including through birth, death, separation and new relationships.
7. The roles and responsibilities of parents with respect to raising children, including the characteristics of successful parenting and the importance of the early years of a child's life for brain development.
8. How to judge when a relationship is unsafe and where to seek help when needed, including when pupils are concerned about violence, harm, or when they are unsure who to trust.

[8] Age of Marriage Act 2023

Respectful relationships

Curriculum content:

1. The characteristics of positive relationships of all kinds, online and offline, including romantic relationships. For example, pupils should understand the role of consent, trust, mutual respect, honesty, kindness, loyalty, shared interests and outlooks, generosity, boundaries, tolerance, privacy, and the management of conflict, reconciliation and ending relationships.
2. How to evaluate their impact on other people and treat others with kindness and respect, including in public spaces and including strangers. Pupils should understand the legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality, and that everyone is unique and equal.
3. The importance of self-esteem, independence and having a positive relationship with oneself, and how these characteristics support healthy relationships with others. This includes developing one's own interests, hobbies, friendship groups, and skills. Pupils should understand what it means to be treated with respect by others.
4. What tolerance requires, including the importance of tolerance of other people's beliefs.
5. The practical steps pupils can take and skills they can develop to support respectful and kind relationships. This includes skills for communicating respectfully within relationships and with strangers, including in situations of conflict.
6. The different types of bullying (including online bullying), the impact of bullying, the responsibilities of bystanders to report bullying and how and where to get help.
7. Skills for ending relationships or friendships with kindness and managing the difficult feelings that endings might bring, including disappointment, hurt or frustration.
8. The role of consent, including in romantic and sexual relationships. Pupils should understand that ethical behaviour goes beyond consent and involves kindness, care, attention to the needs and vulnerabilities of the other person, as well as an awareness of power dynamics. Pupils should understand that just because someone says yes to doing something, that doesn't automatically make it ethically ok.
9. How stereotypes, in particular stereotypes based on sex, gender reassignment, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability, can cause damage (e.g. how they might normalise non-consensual behaviour or encourage prejudice). Pupils should be equipped to recognise misogyny and other forms of prejudice.
10. How inequalities of power can impact behaviour within relationships, including sexual relationships. For example, how people who are disempowered can feel they are not entitled to be treated with respect by others or how those who enjoy an unequal amount of power might, with or without realising it, impose their preferences on others.
11. How pornography can negatively influence sexual attitudes and behaviours, including by normalising harmful sexual behaviours and by disempowering some people, especially women, to feel a sense of autonomy over their own body and providing some people with a sense of sexual entitlement to the bodies of others.
12. Pupils should have an opportunity to discuss how some sub-cultures might influence our understanding of sexual ethics, including the sexual norms endorsed by so-called "involuntary celibates" (incels) or online influencers.

Online safety and awareness

Curriculum content:

1. Rights, responsibilities and opportunities online, including that the same expectations of behaviour apply in all contexts, including online.
2. Online risks, including the importance of being cautious about sharing personal information online and of using privacy and location settings appropriately to protect information online. Pupils should also understand the difference between public and private online spaces and related safety issues.
3. The characteristics of social media, including that some social media accounts are fake, and / or may post things which aren't real / have been created with AI. That social media users may say things in more extreme ways than they might in face-to-face situations, and that some users present highly exaggerated or idealised profiles of themselves online.
4. Not to provide material to others that they would not want to be distributed further and not to pass on personal material which is sent to them. Pupils should understand that any material provided online might be circulated, and that once this has happened there is no way of controlling where it ends up. Pupils should understand the serious risks of sending material to others, including the law concerning the sharing of images.
5. That keeping or forwarding indecent or sexual images of someone under 18 is a crime, even if the photo is of themselves or of someone who has consented, and even if the image was created by the child and/or using AI generated imagery. Pupils should understand the potentially serious consequences of acquiring or generating indecent or sexual images of someone under 18, including the potential for criminal charges and severe penalties including imprisonment. Pupils should know how to seek support and should understand that they will not be in trouble for asking for help, either at school or with the police, if an image of themselves has been shared. Pupils should also understand that sharing indecent images of people over 18 without consent is a crime.
6. What to do and how to report when they are concerned about material that has been circulated, including personal information, images or videos, and how to manage issues online.[9]
7. About the prevalence of deepfakes including videos and photos, how deepfakes can be used maliciously as well as for entertainment, the harms that can be caused by deepfakes and how to identify them.
8. That the internet contains inappropriate and upsetting content, some of which is illegal, including unacceptable content that encourages misogyny, violence or use of weapons. Pupils should be taught where to go for advice and support about something they have seen online. Pupils should understand that online content can present a distorted picture of the world and normalise or glamorise behaviours which are unhealthy and wrong.
9. That social media can lead to escalations in conflicts, how to avoid these escalations and where to go for help and advice.
10. How to identify when technology and social media is used as part of bullying, harassment, stalking, coercive and controlling behaviour, and other forms of abusive and/or illegal behaviour and how to seek support about concerns.

[9] For example, see Report Remove

11. That pornography, and other online content, often presents a distorted picture of people and their sexual behaviours and can negatively affect how people behave towards sexual partners. This can affect pupils who see pornographic content accidentally as well as those who see it deliberately. Pornography can also portray misogynistic behaviours and attitudes which can negatively influence those who see it.
12. How information and data is generated, collected, shared and used online.
13. That websites may share personal data about their users, and information collected on their internet use, for commercial purposes (e.g. to enable targeted advertising).
14. That criminals can operate online scams, for example using fake websites or emails to extort money or valuable personal information. This information can be used to the detriment of the person or wider society. About risks of sextortion, how to identify online scams relating to sex, and how to seek support if they have been scammed or involved in sextortion.
15. That AI chatbots are an example of how AI is rapidly developing, and that these can pose risks by creating fake intimacy or offering harmful advice. It is important to be able to critically think about new types of technology as they appear online and how they might pose a risk.

Being Safe

Curriculum content:

1. How to recognise, respect and communicate consent and boundaries in relationships, including in early romantic relationships (in all contexts, including online) and early sexual relationships that might involve kissing or touching. That kindness and care for others requires more than just consent.
2. That there are a range of strategies for identifying, resisting and understanding pressure in relationships from peers or others, including sexual pressure, and how to avoid putting pressure on others.
3. How to determine whether other children, adults or sources of information are trustworthy, how to judge when a relationship is unsafe (and recognise this in the relationships of others); how to seek help or advice, including reporting concerns about others, if needed.
4. How to increase their personal safety in public spaces, including when socialising with friends, family, the wider community or strangers. Pupils should learn ways of seeking help when needed and how to report harmful behaviour. Pupils should understand that there are strategies they can use to increase their safety, and that this does not mean they will be blamed if they are victims of harmful behaviour. Pupils might reflect on the importance of trusting their instincts when something doesn't feel right, and should understand that in some situations a person might appear trustworthy but have harmful intentions.
5. What constitutes sexual harassment or sexual violence, and that such behaviour is unacceptable, emphasising that it is never the fault of the person experiencing it.
6. That sexual harassment includes unsolicited sexual language / attention / touching, taking and/or sharing intimate or sexual images without consent, public sexual harassment, pressuring other people to do sexual things, and upskirting.
7. The concepts and laws relating to sexual violence, including rape and sexual assault.
8. The concepts and laws relating to harmful sexual behaviour, which includes all types of sexual harassment and sexual violence among young people but also includes other forms of concerning behaviour like using age-inappropriate sexual language.
9. The concepts and laws relating to domestic abuse, including controlling or coercive behaviour, emotional, sexual, economic or physical abuse, and violent or threatening behaviour.[10]
10. That fixated, obsessive, unwanted and repeated behaviours can be criminal, and where to get help if needed.
11. The concepts and laws relating to harms which are exploitative, including sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and abuse, grooming, and financial exploitation.
12. The concepts and laws relating to forced marriage.
13. The physical and emotional damage which can be caused by female genital mutilation (FGM), virginity testing and hymenoplasty, where to find support, and the law around these areas. This should include that it is a criminal offence for anyone to perform or

[10] The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognised children who see, hear, or experience the effects of abuse, and are related to either the victim of the abusive behaviour, or the perpetrator, as victims of domestic abuse in their own right (part 1 section 3). The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 statutory guidance is designed to support statutory and non-statutory bodies working with victims of domestic abuse, including children.

assist in the performance of FGM, virginity testing or hymenoplasty, in the UK or abroad, or to fail to protect a person under 16 for whom they are responsible.

14. That strangulation and suffocation are criminal offences, and that strangulation (applying pressure to the neck) is an offence, regardless of whether it causes injury. That any activity that involves applying force or pressure to someone's neck or covering someone's mouth and nose is dangerous and can lead to serious injury or death.
15. That pornography presents some activities as normal which many people do not and will never engage in, some of which can be emotionally and/or physically harmful.
16. How to seek support for their own worrying or abusive behaviour or for worrying or abusive behaviour they have experienced from others, including information on where to report abuse, and where to seek medical attention when required, for example after an assault.

Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health

Curriculum content:

1. That sex, for people who feel ready and are over the age of consent, can and should be enjoyable and positive.
2. The law about the age of consent, that they have a choice about whether to have sex, that many young people wait until they are older, and that people of all ages can enjoy intimate and romantic relationships without sex.
3. Sexual consent and their capacity to give, withhold or remove consent at any time, even if initially given, as well as the considerations that people might take into account prior to sexual activity, e.g. the law, faith and family values. That kindness and care for others require more than just consent.
4. 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.
5. That some sexual behaviours can be harmful.
6. The facts about the full range of contraceptive choices, efficacy and options available, including male and female condoms, and signposting towards medically accurate online information about sexual and reproductive health to support contraceptive decision-making.
7. That there are choices in relation to pregnancy. Pupils should be given medically and legally accurate and impartial information on all options, including keeping the baby, adoption, abortion and where to get further help.
8. How the different sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, are transmitted. How risk can be reduced through safer sex (including through condom use). The use and availability of the HIV prevention drugs Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) and how and where to access them. The importance of, and facts about, regular testing and the role of stigma
9. The prevalence of STIs, the short and long term impact they can have on those who contract them and key facts about treatment.
10. How the use of alcohol and drugs can lead people to take risks in their sexual behaviour.
11. How and where to seek support for concerns around sexual relationships including sexual violence or harms.
12. How to counter misinformation, including signposting towards medically accurate information and further advice, and where to access confidential sexual and reproductive health advice and treatment.

Health and wellbeing

37. The aim of teaching about health and wellbeing is to enable pupils to make good decisions about their own health and wellbeing, to understand the links between physical and mental health, to recognise when things are not right in their own health or the health of others and to seek support when needed. Schools should support pupils to develop strategies for self-regulation, perseverance and determination, even in the face of setbacks.

38. Effective teaching should aim to reduce stigma attached to health issues, in particular relating to mental health, and discourage the pejorative use of language related to ill health. Schools should promote openness, so that pupils can check their understanding and seek any necessary help and advice.

39. Curriculum content related to puberty and menstruation should be complemented by sensitive arrangements to help girls prepare for and manage menstruation, including with requests for period products. Schools should use appropriate language such as period pads and menstrual products instead of sanitary items or feminine hygiene products. The Department for Education's Period Products Scheme is available for state-funded primary schools, secondary schools, and colleges in England.

Health and wellbeing: Primary

40. Health education in primary starts with the benefits and importance of physical activity, good nutrition and sufficient sleep, and supports pupils to develop emotional awareness. Schools should emphasise the relationships between physical health and mental wellbeing, and the benefits of physical activity and time spent outdoors. As in all of RSHE, care should be taken to avoid exposing pupils to concepts which are not appropriate for them. Schools should continue to build on the primary health and wellbeing curriculum content in secondary.

Primary health and wellbeing: content to be covered by the end of primary

General wellbeing

Curriculum content:

1. The benefits of physical activity, time outdoors, and helping others for health, wellbeing and happiness. Simple self-care techniques, including the importance of rest, time spent with friends and family, as well as hobbies, interests and community participation.
2. The importance of promoting general wellbeing and physical health.
3. The range and scale of emotions (e.g. happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, nervousness) that they might experience in different situations. Pupils should understand that worrying and feeling down are normal, affect everyone at different times, and are not in themselves a sign of a mental health condition.
4. How to recognise feelings and use varied vocabulary to talk about their own and others' feelings.
5. How to judge whether what they are feeling and how they are behaving is appropriate and proportionate.
6. That isolation and loneliness can affect children, and the benefits of seeking support.
7. That bullying (including cyberbullying) has a negative and often lasting impact on mental wellbeing and how to seek help for themselves or others.
8. That change and loss, including bereavement, can provoke a range of feelings, that grief is a natural response to bereavement, and that everyone grieves differently.
9. Where and how to seek support (including recognising the triggers for seeking support), including who in school they should speak to if they are worried about their own or someone else's mental wellbeing or ability to control their emotions (including issues arising online).
10. That it is common to experience mental health problems, and early support can help.

Wellbeing online

Curriculum content:

1. That for almost everyone the internet is an integral part of life. Pupils should be supported to think about positive and negative aspects of the internet.
2. Pupils should be supported to discuss how online relationships can complement and support meaningful in-person relationships, but also how they might be in tension, and the reasons why online relationships are unlikely to be a good substitute for high quality in-person relationships, looking at the pros and cons of different ways of using online connection.
3. The benefits of limiting time spent online, the risks of excessive time spent on electronic devices and the impact of positive and negative content online on their own and others' mental and physical wellbeing.
4. How to consider the impact of their online behaviour on others, and how to recognise and display respectful behaviour online.
5. Why social media, some apps, computer games and online gaming, including gambling sites, are age restricted.
6. The risks relating to online gaming, video game monetisation, scams, fraud and other financial harms, and that gaming can become addictive.
7. How to take a critical approach to what they see and read online and make responsible decisions about which content, including content on social media and apps, is appropriate for them.
8. That abuse, bullying and harassment can take place online and that this can impact wellbeing. How to seek support from trusted adults.
9. How to understand the information they find online, including from search engines, and know how information is selected and targeted.
10. That they have rights in relation to sharing personal data, privacy and consent.
11. Where and how to report concerns and get support with issues online.

Physical health and fitness

Curriculum content:

1. The characteristics and mental and physical benefits of an active lifestyle.
2. The importance of building regular physical activity into daily and weekly routines and how to achieve this; for example, walking or cycling to school, a daily active mile or other forms of regular, moderate and/or vigorous physical activity.
3. The risks associated with an inactive lifestyle, including obesity.
4. How and when to seek support including which adults to speak to in school if they are worried about their health.

Healthy eating

Curriculum content:

1. What constitutes a healthy diet (including understanding calories and other nutritional content).
2. Understanding the importance of a healthy relationship with food.
3. The principles of planning and preparing a range of healthy meals.
4. The characteristics of a poor diet and risks associated with unhealthy eating (including, for example, obesity and tooth decay) and other behaviours (e.g. the impact of alcohol on diet or health).

Drugs, alcohol, tobacco and vaping

Curriculum content:

1. The facts about legal and illegal harmful substances and associated risks, including smoking, vaping, alcohol use and drug-taking. This should include the risks of nicotine addiction, which are also caused by other nicotine products such as nicotine pouches.

Health protection and prevention

Curriculum content:

1. How to recognise early signs of physical illness, such as weight loss, or unexplained changes to the body.
2. About safe and unsafe exposure to the sun, and how to reduce the risk of sun damage, including skin cancer.
3. The importance of sufficient good quality sleep for health, the amount of sleep recommended for their age, and practical steps for improving sleep, such as not using screens in the bedroom. The impact of poor sleep on weight, mood and ability to learn.
4. About dental health and the benefits of good oral hygiene, including brushing teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, cleaning between teeth, and regular check-ups at the dentist.
5. About personal hygiene and germs including bacteria, viruses, how they are spread and treated, and the importance of handwashing.
6. The facts and scientific evidence relating to vaccination and immunisation. The introduction of topics relating to vaccination and immunisation should be aligned with when vaccinations are offered to pupils.

Personal safety

Curriculum content:

1. About hazards (including fire risks) that may cause harm, injury or risk and ways to reduce risks.
2. How to recognise risk and keep safe around roads, railways, including level crossings, and water, including the water safety code.

Basic first aid

Curriculum content:

1. How to make a clear and efficient call to emergency services if necessary, including the importance of reporting incidents rather than filming them.
2. Concepts of basic first aid, for example dealing with common injuries and ailments, including head injuries.

Developing bodies

Curriculum content:

1. About growth and other ways the body can change and develop, particularly during adolescence. This topic should include the human lifecycle, and puberty should be discussed as a stage in this process.
2. The correct names of body parts, including the penis, vulva, vagina, testicles, scrotum, nipples. Pupils should understand that all of these parts of the body are private and have skills to understand and express their own boundaries around these body parts.
3. The facts about the menstrual cycle, including physical and emotional changes, whilst the average age of the onset of menstruation is twelve, periods can start at eight, so covering this topic before girls' periods start will help them understand what to expect and avoid distress.

Health and wellbeing: Secondary

41. Teaching in secondary should build on primary content, supporting pupils to understand their changing bodies and their feelings, how to protect their own health and wellbeing, and when a physical or mental health issue requires attention.

42. Secondary schools may also choose to teach about issues which are not listed in the secondary curriculum content. This includes topics such as eating disorders and self-harm. These topics can be taught about in secondary schools in a safe and sensitive way but are specialised areas and schools should use qualified support or advice, ensure that they are using reliable high-quality teaching material, and signpost to external support as needed. Schools may consider accessing support from the NHS or local specialist services who may be able to provide advice and CPD for teachers. It is important that schools ensure that teachers are properly equipped to lead discussions about these topics, including what to do if a pupil makes a disclosure.

43. Secondary schools should also consider how to safely address suicide prevention. Many aspects of suicide prevention are addressed through the mental wellbeing curriculum. Starting in primary school, the curriculum includes recognising and talking about emotions, looking after one's own and others' wellbeing, being worried about friendships, other relationships, and judging whether feelings or behaviour require support. Teachers should discuss isolation, loneliness and bullying, and how to cope when things go wrong in life. It is also important to ensure pupils understand how to seek help from a trusted adult, including when they are concerned about another person.

44. Schools should consult mental health professionals and put in place high quality, evidence-based staff training before addressing suicide directly with secondary aged pupils, to ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills to do this safely. It is important that teachers use language and content that is accurate, straightforward and appropriate

to the level of understanding of the class. They should take particular care not to discuss instructions or methods of self-harm or suicide and avoid using emotive language, videos or images as there is a risk this could signpost pupils towards dangerous ideas and online content of which they may not previously have been aware.

45. Secondary schools should consider carefully when it is suitable to deliver suicide prevention content, taking into account the age, maturity, and personal experiences of pupils as well as the views of parents and the confidence and skills of teachers, recognising that pupils' emotional and cognitive maturity to understand this material increases across the early secondary years.

46. It is also important that schools take a similar approach to addressing eating disorders, ensuring that staff have the knowledge and skills to do this safely. Teachers should take care to avoid language with romanticises eating disorders and avoid discussing instructions, methods or ideas of restriction, bingeing or purging.

47. If teachers have concerns about a specific pupil in relation to eating disorders, self-harm or suicidal ideation or attempts, or a pupil discloses information, they must follow safeguarding procedures.

Secondary health and wellbeing curriculum content

Schools should continue to develop knowledge of topics specified for primary as required and in addition cover the following content by the end of secondary:

Mental wellbeing

Curriculum content:

1. How to talk about their emotions accurately and sensitively, using appropriate vocabulary.
2. The benefits and importance of physical activity, sleep, time outdoors, community participation and volunteering or acts of kindness for mental wellbeing and happiness.
3. That happiness is linked to being connected to others. Pupils should be supported to understand what makes them feel happy and what makes them feel unhappy, while recognising that loneliness can be for most people an inevitable part of life at times and is not something of which to be ashamed.
4. That worrying and feeling down are normal, can affect everyone at different times and are not in themselves a sign of a mental health condition, and that managing those feelings can be helped by seeing them as normal.
5. Characteristics of common types of mental ill health (e.g. anxiety and depression), including carefully-presented factual information about the prevalence and characteristics of more serious mental health conditions. This should not be discussed in a way that encourages normal feelings to be labelled as mental health conditions.
6. How to critically evaluate which activities will contribute to their overall wellbeing.
7. Understanding how to overcome anxiety or other barriers to participating in fun, enjoyable or rewarding activities – that it's possible to overcome those barriers using coping strategies, and that finding the courage to participate in activities which initially feel challenging may decrease anxiety over time rather than increasing it.
8. That gambling can lead to serious mental health harms, including anxiety, depression, and suicide, and that some gambling products are more likely to cause these harms than others.
9. That the co-occurrence of alcohol/drug use and poor mental health is common and that the relationship is bi-directional: mental health problems can increase the risk of alcohol/drug use, and alcohol/drug use can trigger mental health problems or exacerbate existing ones. That stopping smoking can improve people's mental health and decrease anxiety.

Wellbeing online

Curriculum content:

1. About the benefits of limiting time spent online, the risks of excessive time spent on electronic devices and the impact of positive and negative content online on their own and others' mental and physical wellbeing.
2. The similarities and differences between the online world and the physical world, including: the impact of unhealthy or obsessive comparison with others online (including through setting unrealistic expectations for body image); how people may curate a specific image of their life online; the impact that an over-reliance on online relationships, including relationships formed through social media, can have.
3. How to identify harmful behaviours online (including bullying, abuse or harassment) and how to report, or find support, if they have been affected by those behaviours.
4. The risks related to online gambling and gambling-like content within gaming, including the accumulation of debt.
5. How advertising and information is targeted at them and how to be a discerning consumer of information online, understanding the prevalence of misinformation and disinformation online, including conspiracy theories.
6. The risks of illegal behaviours online, including drug and knife supply or the sale or purchasing of illicit drugs online.
7. The serious risks of viewing online content that promotes self-harm, suicide or violence, including how to safely report this material and how to access support after viewing it.

Physical health and fitness

Curriculum content:

1. The characteristics of a healthy lifestyle, including physical activity and maintaining a healthy weight, including the links between an inactive lifestyle and ill-health, including cardiovascular ill-health.
2. Factual information about the prevalence and characteristics of more serious health conditions.
3. That physical activity can promote wellbeing and combat stress.
4. The science relating to blood, organ and stem cell donation.

Healthy eating

Curriculum content:

1. How to maintain healthy eating and the links between a poor diet and health risks, including tooth decay, unhealthy weight gain, and cardiovascular disease.
2. The risks of unhealthy weight gain, including increased risks of cancer, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.
3. The impacts of alcohol on diet and unhealthy weight gain.

Drugs, alcohol, tobacco and vaping

Curriculum content:

1. The facts about which drugs are illegal, the risks of taking illegal drugs, including the increased risk of potent synthetic drugs being added to illegal drugs, the risks of illicit vapes containing drugs, illicit drugs and counterfeit medicines, and the potential health harms, including the link to poor mental health.
2. The law relating to the supply and possession of illegal substances.
3. The physical and psychological risks associated with alcohol consumption. What constitutes low risk alcohol consumption in adulthood, and the legal age of sale for alcohol in England. Understanding how to increase personal safety while drinking alcohol, including how to decrease the risks of having a drink spiked or of poisoning from potentially fatal substances such as methanol.
4. The physical and psychological consequences of problem-use of alcohol, including alcohol dependency.
5. The dangers of the misuse of prescribed and over-the-counter medicines.
6. The facts about the multiple serious harms from smoking tobacco (particularly the link to lung cancer and cardiovascular disease), the benefits of quitting and how to access support to do so.
7. The facts about vaping, including the harms posed to young people, and the role that vapes can play in helping adult smokers to quit.

Health protection and prevention, and understanding the healthcare system

Curriculum content:

1. Personal hygiene, germs and how they are spread, including bacteria and viruses, treatment and prevention of infection, and about antibiotics.
2. Dental health and the benefits of good oral hygiene, including brushing teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and cleaning between teeth, reducing consumption of sugar-containing food and drinks, and regular check-ups at the dentist.
3. How and when to self-care for minor ailments, and the role of pharmacists as knowledgeable healthcare professionals.
4. The importance of taking responsibility for their own health, and the benefits of regular self-examination and screening.
5. The facts and scientific evidence relating to vaccination, immunisation and antimicrobial resistance. The introduction of topics relating to vaccination and immunisation should be aligned with when vaccinations are offered to pupils.
6. The importance of sufficient good-quality sleep for good health, the importance of screen-free time before bed and removing phones from the bedroom, and how a lack of sleep can affect weight, mood and ability to learn.
7. The importance of healthy behaviours before and during pregnancy, including the importance of pre-conception health, including taking folic acid. The importance of pelvic floor health. Information on miscarriage and pregnancy loss, and how to access care and support.
8. How to navigate their local healthcare system: what a GP is; when to use A&E / minor injuries; accessing sexual health and family planning clinics; the role of local pharmacies; and how to seek help via local third sector partners which may have specialist services.
9. The concept of Gillick competence. That the legal age of medical consent is 16. That before this, a child's parents will have responsibility for consenting to medical treatment on their behalf unless they are Gillick competent to take this decision for themselves. Pupils should understand the circumstances in which someone over 16 may not be deemed to have capacity to make decisions about medical treatment.

Personal safety

Curriculum content:

1. How to identify risk and manage personal safety in increasingly independent situations, including around roads, railways – including level crossings - and water (including the water safety code), and in unfamiliar social or work settings (for example the first time a young person goes on holiday without their parents).
2. How to recognise and manage peer influence in relation to risk-taking behaviour and personal safety, including peer influence online and on social media.
3. How to develop key social and emotional skills that will increase pupils' safety from involvement in conflict and violence. These include skills to support self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making, as well as skills to recognise and manage peer pressure.
4. Understanding which trusted adults they can talk to if pupils are worried about violence and/or knife crime.
5. The law as it relates to knives and violence. Content and examples should relate to the local context and avoid using fear as an educational tool. Children should be taught that carrying weapons is uncommon, and should not be scared into the perception that many young people are carrying knives (which can lead to the misconception that they need to carry a knife too).
6. The risks and signs that they may be at risk of grooming or exploitation, and how to seek help where there is a concern.

Basic first aid

Curriculum content:

1. Basic treatment for common injuries and ailments.
2. Life-saving skills, including how to administer CPR.[11]
3. The purpose of defibrillators, when one might be needed and who can use them.

Developing bodies

Curriculum content:

1. The main changes which take place in males and females, and the implications for emotional and physical health.
2. The facts about puberty, the changing adolescent body, including brain development.
3. About menstrual and gynaecological health, including: what is an average period; period problems such as premenstrual syndrome; heavy menstrual bleeding; endometriosis; and polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). When to seek help from healthcare professionals.
4. The facts about reproductive health, including fertility and menopause, and the potential impact of lifestyle on fertility for men and women.

[11] Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation is usually best taught after 12 years old.

Related guidance

48. The guidance should be read in conjunction with:

- National curriculum in England: citizenship, religious education, computing, science and physical education programmes of study
- Keeping children safe in education (statutory guidance)
- Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework - GOV.UK The safeguarding and welfare requirements in section 3 cover children from 0-5 and therefore schools must follow this for children in reception year
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (statutory guidance on multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children)
- Behaviour in schools (advice for schools, including advice for appropriate behaviour between pupils)
- Technical guidance for schools in England | EHRC
- SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years (statutory guidance)
- Alternative Provision (statutory guidance)
- Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools (advice for schools)
- Promoting Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing (guidance for schools and colleges)
- Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance
- Preventing and Tackling Bullying
- Teaching Online Safety in Schools
- The Equality and Human Rights Commission Advice and Guidance (provides advice on avoiding discrimination in a variety of educational contexts)
- Promoting Fundamental British Values as part of SMSC in schools (guidance for maintained schools on promoting basic important British values as part of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC))
- SMSC requirements for independent schools (guidance for independent schools on how they should support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development)
- Guidance for schools on colleges on gender questioning children (currently in draft, to be finalised after consultation)

Developing a curriculum, choosing resources and working with external agencies

49. Schools have significant freedom to implement this guidance in the context of a broad and balanced curriculum.

50. A school's curriculum should be in line with the needs of pupils. Effective, high-quality teaching will break down core knowledge and skills into manageable and well-sequenced units, including opportunities for pupils to practise skills so that they will be confident to use them in real-life situations. The curriculum should build knowledge and skills sequentially, with regular feedback provided on pupil progress. Lessons should

ensure that all pupils are challenged, and assessments should identify where pupils need extra support or intervention.

51. The lead teacher will need to work closely with colleagues in related curriculum areas to ensure the subjects complement and do not duplicate content covered in national curriculum[12] subjects such as citizenship, science, computing and PE. The lead teacher will want to look for opportunities across other curriculum subjects to reinforce concepts introduced in RSHE, for example discussing misogyny in the context of history or using examples in literature to discuss positive and less positive examples of relationships.

52. Working with external organisations can enhance delivery of these subjects, bringing in specialist knowledge and different ways of engaging with young people, but schools always remain responsible for the content and the way in which children are taught. Schools should check that external resources are accurate, age and stage appropriate and unbiased. Schools should be particularly cautious about using resources from organisations that have a broader interest in promoting harmful products (e.g. cigarettes and alcohol) or that have a strong partisan view on a contested topic. Schools are responsible for checking the credentials of any visitor or visiting organisation. Schools should ask to see materials and a lesson plan in advance, and should seek the views of parents, making sure that all materials can be viewed by parents (see the section on openness with parents below).

53. Examples of resources funded by the Government to complement classroom teaching are listed in Annex B. It is ultimately the school's responsibility to ensure resources and teaching materials are appropriate for the age and maturity of pupils, are accessible for all pupils, including those with SEND, fit with their planned programme and policy, and are sensitive to pupils' needs.

54. It is important to agree how confidentiality will work in any lesson, and that any visitor understands how safeguarding reports should be dealt with in line with school policy. Further information for teachers in handling potential safeguarding or child protection reports is on page 34.

Openness with parents about RSHE materials

55. Schools should take steps to pro-actively engage parents and make sure they are aware of what is being taught in RSHE. These steps might include inviting parents into school to discuss the curriculum content and the importance of RSHE for wellbeing and safety, inviting them to discuss any concerns, and supporting parents in managing conversations with their children about RSHE topics. Schools must consult parents when developing and reviewing their RSE policies, in accordance with the section on developing a policy, above.

[12] The national curriculum does not apply to academies or independent schools.

56. Schools should show parents a representative sample of the resources that they plan to use, enabling parents to continue conversations started in class, and should ensure that parents are able to view all curriculum materials used to teach RSHE on request. Parents are not able to veto curriculum content, but schools must consult with parents when developing their RSHE policy and it is right that they are able to see what their children are being taught, especially in relation to sensitive topics, and schools should respond positively to requests from parents to see material.

57. There is a public interest in parents being given the opportunity to see materials used in RSHE teaching if they would like to. When contracting with external providers, schools should not agree to any contractual restrictions on showing parents any content that the school will use. Schools should communicate to providers that they are legally obliged to have regard to this statutory guidance, including the expectation that all content can be shared with parents.

58. Where contractual clauses exist that seek to prevent schools sharing any material at all with parents, they are void and unenforceable. This is because they contradict the clear public policy interest of ensuring that parents are aware of what their children are being taught in sex and relationships education.

59. Where copyright law applies, schools must comply with it when sharing resources with parents. It is best practice to share materials via a "parent portal" or, if this is not possible, through a presentation. When schools make documents available to parents, they should acknowledge the provider's authorship. They should include a statement, that parents agree to as a condition of access, that the content should not be copied or shared further except as authorised under copyright law. Where relevant and possible, IT systems should also be in place to prevent downloading.

60. Where parents are unable to view materials via a "parent portal", or cannot attend a presentation, schools can provide copies of materials to parents to take home, providing parents agree to a similar statement that they will not copy the content or share it further except as authorised under copyright law. For the avoidance of doubt – copyright law affects the way in which materials are shared, but should never be used as a reason to refuse to share them.

Governors and Trustees

61. As well as fulfilling their legal obligations, governing boards and proprietors of academy trusts should also make sure that:

- all pupils make progress in achieving the expected educational outcomes
- teaching is accessible to all pupils with SEND
- curriculum content and teaching materials are aligned with this statutory guidance

- clear information is provided for parents on the subject content, teaching materials and external providers, and on the right to request that their child is withdrawn from sex education

Foundation governors of maintained schools and trustees of academy trusts that include schools with a designated religious character will also have wider responsibilities in relation to maintaining and developing the religious ethos of their faith schools

Teaching about the law

62. There will be a range of opinions regarding some topics within RSE. The starting principle should be that applicable law should be taught in a factual way so that pupils are clear about their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

63. Pupils should be made aware of the relevant legal provisions when relevant topics are being taught, including for example those relating to:

- marriage, including forced marriage and civil partnerships
- consent, including the age of consent
- domestic abuse, stalking, rape, sexual offences, female genital mutilation (FGM), 'virginity testing' and hymenoplasty
- sexual abuse, harassment and exploitation, including public sexual harassment and harmful sexual behaviour
- the Online Safety Act
- online behaviours including image and information sharing (including sexual imagery, youth-produced sexual imagery, nudes, etc, and including AI-generated sexual imagery and deepfakes). Pupils should understand the law about online sexual harassment and online sexual abuse including grooming and sextortion
- pornography
- abortion
- protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation)
- alcohol, smoking, vaping and nicotine products and illicit drug use
- gambling
- carrying knives and weapons
- extremism/radicalisation
- grooming or exploiting children into criminal activity, which can include gang involvement and county lines drug running
- hate crime
- the age of criminal responsibility

- medical consent, Gillick competence and parental responsibility

Equality

64. Schools are required to comply with relevant requirements of the Equality Act 2010, including the Public sector equality duty (PSED) (s.149), when teaching RSHE. [13]

65. Schools must ensure topics in RSHE are taught in a way which does not discriminate against pupils or amount to harassment.

66. Pupils should understand the importance of equality and respect and learn about the law relating to the protected characteristics by the end of their secondary education. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sex.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender content

67. As above, pupils should understand the importance of equality and respect throughout their education. They should learn about all protected characteristics, including sexual orientation and gender reassignment, by the end of their secondary education.

68. We strongly encourage primary schools to teach about healthy loving relationships, and to include same-sex parents along with other family arrangements when discussing families. At secondary school, there should be an equal opportunity to explore the features of stable and healthy same-sex relationships, and secondary schools should ensure that this content is integrated into RSHE programmes of study rather than delivered as a standalone unit or lesson. Schools should ensure that they cover all the facts about sexual health, including STIs, in a way that is relevant for all pupils, including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or gender questioning.

69. Pupils should also be taught the facts and the law about biological sex and gender reassignment. This should recognise that people have legal rights by virtue of their biological sex which are different from the rights of those of the opposite sex with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment. Pupils should also be taught to recognise that people with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment, as with the other protected characteristics, have protection from discrimination and should be treated with respect and dignity.

70. In teaching this, schools should be mindful that beyond the facts and the law about biological sex and gender reassignment there is significant debate, and they should be careful not to endorse any particular view or teach it as fact. For example, they should not teach as fact that all people have a gender identity. Schools should avoid language and

[13] Equality Act provisions in relation to schools are in Part 6, Chapter 1. Independent schools that are not academies are not subject to the PSED.

activities which repeat or enforce gender stereotypes. Schools should be mindful to avoid any suggestion that social transition is a simple solution to feelings of distress or discomfort.

71. Schools should encourage young people to consider how to express their views while remaining respectful of the opinions of others. Schools should be clear that bullying or disrespectful language or behaviour is never appropriate.

72. Where schools decide to use external resources, they should avoid materials that use cartoons or diagrams that oversimplify this topic, that could be interpreted as being aimed at younger children, or that perpetuate stereotypes or encourage pupils to question their gender. Schools should consult parents on the content of external resources on this topic in advance and make all materials available to them on request as set out in the section on openness with parents.

Religion and belief, including teaching in schools with a religious character

73. RSHE should be sensitive to the religious background of pupils, and schools must ensure they comply with the relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010, under which religion or belief are amongst the protected characteristics.

74. All schools may teach about faith perspectives on these topics. In particular, schools with a religious character may teach their distinctive faith perspective on relationships, and balanced debate may take place about issues that are contentious. For example, the school may wish to reflect on faith teachings about certain topics as well as how their faith institutions may support people in matters of relationships and sex. Schools should be clear when they are delivering content that reflects religious belief.

Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

75. Teaching should be developed to ensure these subjects are accessible for pupils with SEND and prepare pupils for adulthood,[14] as set out in the SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years. This applies to both mainstream and special schools.

76. Schools should be aware that pupils with SEND may be more vulnerable than their peers to harmful sexual behaviour, sexual abuse, exploitation and violence, bullying and other issues. RSHE can be particularly important for these pupils, particularly those with social, emotional and mental health needs or learning disabilities.

[14] "Preparing for adulthood" outcomes are set out at section 7.38 of the SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years.

Addressing sexual harassment and sexual violence

77. Relationships education has an important role in supporting young people to develop the skills they need to build healthy relationships and grow into kind and respectful adults. From early primary, schools can support young children to develop skills for positive relationships, including skills for navigating boundaries with kindness and respect. Schools can support young children to behave with respect and to understand and identify prejudice. Preventing sexual violence and abusive behaviour starts from this support for children in primary.

78. Supporting young people to develop the skills they need to build healthy relationships should be part of a whole school approach and underpin schools' policies, including behaviour and safeguarding, to ensure that an ethos of kindness and respect is evident throughout the school.

79. Pupils should understand that anyone can be a victim of sexual violence, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or any other protected characteristic, and that the victim is never to blame. It is important to acknowledge that most sexual violence is committed against women and girls, and it often has a gendered component – for example, manifesting an inequality of power between men and women. However, anyone can be affected by sexual violence and teachers should avoid language which stigmatises boys or suggests that boys or men are always perpetrators or that girls or women are always victims.

80. Both within and beyond the classroom, staff should be conscious of everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and stereotypes, and should take action to build a culture where prejudice is identified and tackled. Staff have an important role in modelling positive behaviour and avoiding language that might perpetuate harmful stereotypes. Pupils should understand the importance of challenging harmful beliefs and attitudes and should understand the links between sexism and misogyny and violence against women and girls. Where misogynistic ideas are expressed at school, staff should challenge the ideas, rather than the person expressing them.

81. Pupils should have opportunities to develop positive conceptions of masculinity and femininity, including how to identify and learn from positive male role models. It is important for pupils to understand that most boys and young men are respectful to girls and young women and each other. Pupils may be exposed to online content which normalises harmful or violent sexual behaviours, which might include sexist and misogynistic influencers who normalise sexual harassment and abuse. Young people may be more vulnerable to this content when they have low self-esteem, are being bullied, or have other challenges in their lives. Teachers should 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.

82. It is important for pupils to understand that ethical behaviour in friendships and other relationships goes beyond respecting boundaries and consent, and that strong relationships of all types involve kindness and care. RSE lessons should be clear that all sexual activity should involve kindness, care, attention to the needs and vulnerabilities of the other person and an awareness of the power dynamics that can exist within relationships.

83. RSE lessons should 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 a 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 should 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

84. Discussions about sensitive topics in RSHE can lead to increased safeguarding reports. All staff should know what to do if they have concerns that a pupil is being neglected or abused, including those who have seen, heard or experienced the effects of domestic abuse.[15] The Department publishes statutory safeguarding guidance *Keeping children safe in education* (KCSIE); this guidance provides a strong safeguarding framework and is clear on the actions a school or college should take if there are any concerns about a child or young person's wellbeing and/or safety. Staff should also be aware of mandatory reporting duties, including relating to FGM, and that virginity testing and hymenoplasty became illegal in 2022. The Government is also introducing a new law which will create a legal requirement for anyone in regulated activity relating to children in England, including teachers, to report if they are made aware a child is being sexually 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.

85. If staff have any concerns about a child's welfare, they should act on them immediately. Part 1 of KCSIE sets out the process staff should follow when they have concerns about a child. Staff should 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 should 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

[15] Resources to help teachers and school staff identify the signs and indicators of child sexual abuse can be found here – Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse

a lesson and what might happen if they choose to make a report, about themselves or a peer. Pupils should 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.

86. If staff have a concern about a risk of pupils experiencing or perpetrating harms, they should follow their own organisation's child protection policy and speak to the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy). 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.

Managing difficult questions

87. 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. The school's policy should explain how 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. Teachers may require support and training in handling questions that are better not dealt with in the classroom.

Annex A Regulations

Relationships education, Relationships and Sex Education, and Health education

The Relationships education, Relationships and Sex Education, and Health education (England) Regulations 2019 are made under sections 34 and 35 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and provide that pupils receiving primary education must be taught relationships education; pupils receiving secondary education must be taught RSE; and that all primary and secondary pupils must be taught health education. The subjects of relationships education and RSE must be taught in all maintained schools, academies and independent schools. This includes pupil referral units, maintained special schools, special academies, and non-maintained special schools. All schools, except independent schools, must make provision for health education.

To give effect to the duty in section 34 of the 2017 Act and the power in section 35 of that Act, the Relationships education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health education (England) Regulations 2019 amend existing provisions in the Education Act 1996 and the Education Act 2002 and insert new provisions into the Education (Pupil Referral Units) (Application of Enactments) (England) Regulations 2007, the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and the Non-Maintained Special Schools (England) Regulations 2015. The provisions include a requirement for the Secretary of State to publish guidance on relationships education, RSE, and health education; require schools to have regard to that guidance; require schools to make a statement of policy on their provision of relationships education and RSE; and set out the circumstances in which a pupil is to be withdrawn from RSE.

The regulations and guidance in relation to health education do not apply to independent schools – they will continue to make provision for the health education element of PSHE under the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Annex B Government resources

Curriculum resources

The Department for Education page brings together all existing information available to schools on the teaching of the RSHE curriculum. This includes parent guides and guidance in engaging parents on Relationships education. Schools will also want to refer to Keeping children safe in education (statutory guidance).

- Schools may also wish to see a series of DfE sexual harassment webinars covering domestic abuse, pornography and sexual exploitation.
- Non-statutory framework for Citizenship KS 1 and 2 (Non-statutory programme of study). Schools may wish to draw on the statutory Citizenship programme of study for KS 3 and 4 in their planning.
- Oak National Academy, the independent provider of freely available online curriculum and lesson resources, are developing curriculum materials to make sure every school can access high-quality, compliant resources which will build on what is already available for schools.
- Example of a model RSHE curriculum produced in 2019 by the Catholic Education Service in conjunction with the Department for Education: the primary RSE Model Curriculum and secondary RSE Model Curriculum

Wider resources

These subjects support many cross-government strategies of which schools will want to be aware. Whilst we have not referenced all strategies or supporting documents, we have included some of the key areas below.

- The Working together to safeguarding children statutory guidance on multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children.
- The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 statutory guidance which is intended to increase awareness and inform the response to domestic abuse, also conveying standards and promotes best practice.
- Statutory guidance on FGM, including the mandatory reporting duty which applies to teachers, health and social care professionals, and statutory guidance on forced marriage.
- The report Teaching Relationships Education to Prevent Sexual Abuse is a rapid evidence assessment of the academic and grey literature on teaching relationships education to prevent sexual abuse.

- Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse. Advice, research and resources to help professionals identify, respond and support children and young people who have experienced sexual abuse.

- Crimestoppers Fearless. Definitions, advice on how to spot the signs, and guidance to support young people affected by sexual harms, including child sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour.

- The Virginity testing and hymenoplasty: multi-agency guidance offers advice for chief executives, directors, senior managers, frontline professionals within agencies and anyone else who may come in to contact with women and girls affected by virginity testing and hymenoplasty. It encourages agencies to cooperate and work together to protect and support those at risk of, or who have undergone, these procedures.

- The Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Education programme, part of the National Crime Agency, which aims to protect children and young people from the threat of online child sexual abuse. Their offer for professionals includes training, guidance and free educational resources that are aligned to the RSHE curriculum.

- The National Crime Agency in partnership with the PSHE association have developed lesson plans that explore the risks involved in committing cybercrime and help students to recognise and avoid the techniques used to manipulate young people online: National Crime Agency: Exploring Cybercrime (pshe-association.org.uk).

- Report Remove is a service designed for young people in the UK, under 18, to confidentially report and remove sexual images or videos of themselves from the internet. This initiative, a collaboration between Childline and the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), offers a secure and anonymous way for minors to take control of their online presence and safety.

- The Youth Endowment Fund (YEF, the 'what works' centre for preventing violence) Education Practice Guidance outlines evidence-based recommendations on how to help prevent children's involvement in violence. Education guidance | Youth Endowment Fund The YEF also produce an online toolkit that fund and evaluate interventions. The toolkit currently summarises 32 different approaches to violence prevention, highlighting impact on violent crime, evidence quality and cost. The YEF's Toolkit outlines 12 approaches to preventing violence among school-age children within Education and Children's Services Youth Endowment Fund Toolkit.

- The Children's Commissioner Digital 5 A Day provides a simple framework that reflects the concerns of parents as well as children's behaviours and needs.

- Better Health (NHS) have produced a website for teachers which covers a broad range of health and relationships issues in a format which is accessible for young people, targeted at primary and secondary age pupils. This includes Every Mind Matters resources for lessons which are accredited by the NHS: *School Zone | Campaigns | Campaign Resource Centre*. *Additionally, 'Talk to Frank' provides*

tailored, youth centred information about nicotine/vaping, alongside other substances. Home Office guidance and resources for teachers and school staff on responding to and preventing abuse in a school setting, as well as resources for teaching about sexual harassment and sexual abuse, including preventing violence against women and girls: Guidance and resources for teachers and school staff | ENOUGH

- Shore Space. An anonymous and confidential chat service and website for children and young people who are worried about their own or others' sexual thoughts, feelings or actions.

- The Drug Education suite of drug and alcohol education lesson materials incorporates the latest evidence, information and statistics, along with additional content on vaping, synthetic drugs and more.
- The National Centre For Smoking Cessation and Training (NCSCT) provides resources and practice guidance for healthcare professionals and teachers to support children and young people quit tobacco and/or vaping.
- The Teenage Pregnancy prevention framework provides evidence based guidance for local authorities, including the important role of RSE and links to local sexual health services. Additionally, the Fingertips tool offers a large public health data collection where information on teenage pregnancies can be found. The Department of Health and Social Care's Framework for Sexual Health Improvement in England supports the prevention of early, unplanned pregnancy.

- Reproductive health - a public health issue (PHE. 2018) A consensus statement, data and women's experiences, covering reproductive health through the life course, from menstruation to menopause. (PHE. 2018)

- Period product scheme for schools and colleges - GOV.UK

- Physical activity guidelines (Guidance from the Chief Medical Office) on how much physical activity people should be doing, along with supporting documents.

- The Eatwell Guide is a policy tool used to define government recommendations on eating healthily and achieving a balanced diet.

- The Children's health: migrant health guide contains advice and guidance on the health needs of migrant patients for healthcare practitioners.

- The Children's Oral Health elearning programme provides information and advice about children's oral health. It is aimed at parents, expectant mothers, early years healthcare workers, teachers, nurses, GPs and the public.

- The Commissioning and delivering supervised toothbrushing schemes in early years and school settings - GOV.UK guidance and toolkit has been updated to support commissioners and providers of local supervised toothbrushing schemes to ensure activities are evidence-informed, safe and have clear accountability and reporting arrangements to demonstrate impact.

- The Yellow Card Scheme – self-care and the importance of reporting suspected side effects to medicines. A fully tested and evidence-based guide for pupils and teachers on the potential risks of medicines and healthcare products, including side effects, problems with medical devices, blood products, e-cigarettes, and vapes, and what to do about them.

- NHS Blood and Transplant curriculum resources on blood, organ and stem cell donation: Educational resources - NHS Blood and Transplant

- Briefing for primary schools on the Flu vaccination programme in schools - GOV.UK

- Briefing for secondary schools on the Adolescent vaccination programme in secondary schools for 2024 to 2025 - GOV.UK

- The UKHSA e-bug resources cover a broader health education programme that includes vaccination and developed materials from early years to Key stage 3. These can be found here: e-bug home

- The Government response to the consultation on the structure, distribution and governance of the statutory levy on gambling operators - GOV.UK

- The Gambling Levy Regulations 2025 – GOV.UK

- Educational resources to help young people stay safe around the railways can be found here: Safety education - Network Rail

Data to understand the health and wellbeing needs of the local school-age population

- The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) through its Fingertips tool offers a large public health data collection. Data is organised into themed profiles including a child and maternal health profile. The indicators included in the profile allow areas to see how they perform against the national average and against other local areas. These tools, accompanied by local health intelligence, can be used by schools to identify and respond to the particular health and wellbeing needs of their local school-age population.

Department for Education

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