THE HOWARD PARTNERSHIP TRUST

RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION, RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION (RSE) AND HEALTH EDUCATION POLICY

Date of review: July 2026	Responsible body: The Howard Partnership Trust
Review period: Annually	THPT Committee: Standards & Performance
Next due for review: July 2027	Executive Lead: Head of Special phase
Status: Statutory	Publication: Internal

This policy is in keeping with THPT's aims, SEND policy and the individual schools' Single Equality Scheme and Teaching and Learning Policies. Trustees and staff of THPT will ensure that all students have access to relationships and sex education (RSE) as well as health education, that enables them to make responsible and well-informed, safe decisions. Relationships Education, RSE and Health Education will be specifically tailored to the different educational phases. This guidance responds to the diversity of children and young people's cultures, faiths, family background and protected characteristics.

Related policies/statutory guidance:

This policy complies with the revised statutory guidance, Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (Department for Education, 2026), which came into effect on 1 September 2026. The policy has been reviewed and updated to reflect new statutory requirements relating to online safety, personal safety, mental wellbeing, prevention, internet safety and harms, and the broader safeguarding role of RSHE.

- Equality Act (Government Equalities Office, 2010)
- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Guidance (Department for Education, 2021-updated)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (Department for Education, 2026)
- Review of sexual abuse in school and colleges (Ofsted, 2021)
- SEND code of practice: 0-25 years (Department for Education, 2020- updated)
- THPT Equality Policy (2026)
- THPT SEND Policy (2025)
- THPT Safeguarding and CP Policy (2026)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2023)
- Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales (DfE)
- Children's Well-being and Schools Act (2026)

Purpose

The overall purpose of Relationships Education, Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education within The Howard Partnership Trust (THPT) schools is to keep pupils safe and enable them to embrace the challenges of creating a happy and successful adult life. This supports the Trust vision of providing a "life changing education".

For this, they require knowledge that will enable them to make informed decisions about their safety, wellbeing, health and relationships and to build their self-efficacy. RSE supports pupils to develop resilience, to know when to ask for help, to know where to access support and how to identify and report sexual harassment and abuse. It aims to support the development of self-respect and empathy for others and promotes the development of the skills and understanding necessary to manage conflict peaceably and learn how to recognise and protect themselves from exploitation and abuse.

This policy has been updated to reflect the revised statutory guidance for Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE), effective from 1 September 2026. The curriculum has been reviewed to incorporate strengthened content relating to online safety and digital literacy, mental wellbeing, personal safety, consent, healthy relationships, vaping and substance awareness, knife crime prevention, artificial intelligence (AI) literacy, misogyny and harmful online influences, reproductive and sexual health, and accessing health services. Across all phases, there is an increased emphasis on communication skills, respectful relationships, safeguarding, online financial harms, critical engagement with online content, and the development of resilience and wellbeing. These updates further support the Trust's commitment to safeguarding, wellbeing and the development of respectful, informed, resilient and responsible young people.

For the purposes of this policy, THPT defines RSE as learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, relationships, sex, human sexuality and sexual health. Some aspects are taught in Science and others are taught as part of Personal, Social Health and Economic education (PSHE). Online safety, digital literacy and AI literacy are taught through the Computing curriculum and reinforced through Relationships Education, RSE and Health Education. Pupils are supported to understand the opportunities and risks associated with emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, online influence and digital content. A comprehensive programme of Relationships Education (primary pupils), RSE (secondary pupils) and Health Education provides accurate information on the body, reproduction, sex and sexual health. It gives children and young people essential skills for building positive, enjoyable, respectful and non-exploitative relationships and staying safe both online and offline.

The focus of Relationships Education in primary schools is on teaching the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive and safe relationships, with particular reference to friendships, family relationships and relationships with other children and adults, including loneliness, loss and bereavement.

The aim of RSE in secondary schools is to give young people the information they need to help them develop safe, healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, not just intimate relationships. It enables them to know what a healthy relationship looks like and what makes a good friend, a good colleague and a successful marriage, civil partnership or other type of committed relationship. The curriculum aims to

educate and empower our pupils to keep safe when developing relationships both in the real and virtual worlds, recognising unhealthy, coercive and unsafe relationships and where to get help and support. It helps pupils to understand the positive effects good relationships have on their mental wellbeing, identify when relationships are not right and understand how such situations can be managed.

Health Education forms a key part of the Trust's commitment to promoting the wellbeing, safety and personal development of all pupils. Through a planned and progressive curriculum, pupils develop the knowledge, understanding and skills required to maintain positive physical and mental health, manage risk, make informed choices and access appropriate support. Health Education covers Mental Wellbeing (MW), Internet Safety and Harms (ISH), Physical Health and Fitness (PHF), Healthy Eating (HE), Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco (DAT), Prevention (P), and Health Protection and First Aid (HPFA), ensuring that pupils are prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and challenges of modern life.

THPT values strong partnerships with parents and carers and is committed to providing clear, accessible information about Relationships Education, RSE and Health Education. Parents and carers will be informed about curriculum content, consulted where appropriate, and supported in their role as the primary educators of their children. The Trust promotes an open and transparent approach to communication, ensuring families understand both the content and purpose of the curriculum. Where questions arise outside the planned curriculum, or from pupils who have been withdrawn from sex education, staff will provide an appropriate response that is consistent with safeguarding responsibilities, the age and maturity of the pupil, and the school's Relationships, Sex and Health Education policy.

Context

When teaching Relationships Education, RSE and Health Education, THPT schools do not unlawfully discriminate against children and young people because of their age, sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity or sexual orientation (protected characteristics). We make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantage, mindful of the SEND Code of Practice when planning these subjects and ensure parity of offering. Each individual school considers the makeup of their own cohorts – including the profile and age range of their pupils – and considers whether it is appropriate or necessary to put in place additional support for pupils with particular protected characteristics (which mean that they are potentially at greater risk).

The delivery of Relationships Education, RSE and Health Education across the Trust considers the Ofsted Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges. We take a proactive approach, whilst being mindful of the need to address emerging themes, potentially contextual to our schools. Student feedback underpins the assessment of the positive impact of the RSE curriculum.

As a Trust, we are aware that some pupils are more vulnerable to exploitation, bullying and other issues, due to the nature of their special educational needs. We take this into account when designing and teaching these subjects. We believe that high quality inclusive RSE education is the key for respect for others without discrimination now and in their future. There may be a need to tailor content and teaching to meet the specific needs of pupils at different developmental stages whilst ensuring statutory end of Key Stage

outcomes are met. We ensure that the teaching of these subjects is sensitive, age-appropriate, developmentally appropriate and delivered with reference to the law.

Relationships Education, RSE and Health Education is accessible for all pupils, ensuring high quality teaching, that is accessible and personalised, from EYFS to Year 11. RSE and Health Education are covered as part of 6th form programmes but is non-statutory. Content and teaching may be tailored to meet the specific needs of pupils at different development stages, addressing emerging themes identified by the leadership and wider safeguarding teams. The teaching of RSE is sensitive, age and stage appropriate and delivered with reference to the statutory guidance.

Aims and Objectives

Aims

Within THPT, all children and young people, regardless of their culture, faith or family background, are provided with inclusive teaching, which enables them to develop attitudes and values, personal and social skills and knowledge and understanding within Relationships Education, RSE and Health Education in order to prepare them for a safe and fulfilling future where they are empowered to make a positive contribution to society.

- **Attitudes and values** include the values of honesty, equality inclusion, trust, love, care, compassion and respect for self and others. These values reflect our duty to promote British Values as part of SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural) within the schools. Children and young people will be provided with opportunities to reflect upon values and consider individual conscience and moral considerations, learn the importance of positive values within family life (including stable and loving relationships and marriage or civil partnership), explore moral dilemmas and develop critical thinking which supports safe decision making. They will be taught about what a relationship and friendship are, both face to face and online.

- **Personal and social skills** help children and young people to understand and manage their emotions and relationships appropriately and sensitively. They assist with informed decision-making, the development of empathy, communication skills, risk management, self-esteem and resilience, thus positively impacting upon their ability to resolve disputes/conflict, maintain positive relationships, understand difference and recognise and avoid exploitation, bias and abuse (see Appendix 2).

- **Knowledge and understanding** in relation to Relationships Education, RSE and Health Education includes learning and understanding physical and emotional development at appropriate stages. It provides children and young people with opportunities to consider respect, stereotyping, equality, reproduction, sexual health, emotions, the importance of positive relationships and the variety of relationships they have and will encounter. Within these subjects, children and young people appropriately address contraception, choice, local and national health and support services, reasons and benefits of delaying sexual activity, the law and avoidance of unplanned pregnancy. Topics covered differ depending on the school phase and setting. (see Appendix 1). Pupils will be taught how to keep safe physically, in relationships and online.

The Relationships Education, RSE and Health Education curriculum is an essential vehicle in supporting our statutory duty to:

- Safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and young people
- Advance the Equality Act (Government Equalities Office, 2010)
- Encourage the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children and young people
- Promote British Values
- Prepare children and young people for the challenges, opportunities and responsibilities of adult life, along with the coverage of the National Curriculum for Science, computing curriculum and the RE curriculum.

Organisation

a) Relationships Education, RSE and Health Education is coordinated by the PSHE, Science and computing leads in the primary phases and the PSHE or Personal Development coordinator, Head of Religious Studies, Head of Computing and the Head of Science in the secondary phase, who are responsible for the overall planning, implementation and review of the programme.

b) Delivery is through:

- Planned aspects within the Science and PSHE curriculum in the primary phase and the Science, PSHE/PD and Religious Studies curriculum in the secondary phase.
- Addressing moral and ethical issues which may arise from apparently unrelated topics in all subjects. Within this category, if a discussion takes place within the context of the subject, it will not be deemed to be part of the relationship and sex education programme and therefore not subject to the parental right of withdrawal.

c) Teaching approaches

a. Various approaches are used to give children and young people relevant information, to enable moral issues to be explored through discussion and to acquire appropriate skills. Details can be seen in the progression maps.

b. When teaching Relationships Education, RSE and Health Education, it is important that staff feel comfortable with the subject matter. Staff delivering the content will be appropriately trained. Support will be offered through training and resources within school and working with external organisations.

d) Student groupings

a. Children and young people are taught in mixed ability groups. When there is a specific need (for example, members of faith groups), arrangements are made to teach children and young people in appropriate alternative groupings.

e) Resources

a. THPT schools use various curriculums (Jigsaw, PSHE Association) from recognised providers that meet the individual needs of the children in their school. In addition to this, Life Lessons support the training and delivery of Relationship and Sex Education across the secondary phase. Curriculum

content is mapped against the revised 2026 statutory guidance for Relationships Education, RSE and Health Education, including the strands of Mental Wellbeing (MW), Physical Health and Fitness (PHF), Prevention (P), Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco (DAT), Safety and Risk (SR), Internet Safety and Harms (ISH) and Basic First Aid (BFA). Content reflects contemporary safeguarding and wellbeing issues relevant to pupils' lives, including online financial harms, privacy and personal data, bereavement and loss, vaping, personal safety, AI literacy, knife crime prevention, misogyny and harmful online influences, where age and phase appropriate.

b. These resources may be viewed by contacting the individual schools.

See Appendix 1 for further information regarding suggested curriculum content at all Key Stages.

SPECIFIC ISSUES

The following issues may occur as part of Relationships Education, RSE and Health Education and there are specific procedures that school staff will need to follow in these circumstances.

a) Confidentiality and advice

Children and young people are made aware that some information cannot be kept confidential and that if disclosures are made, certain actions will need to be taken. At the same time, children and young people are offered sensitive and appropriate support. The following procedures are adhered to by adults working within the school.

i. Safeguarding and Child Protection Issues

Following disclosure or suspicion of possible abuse, the school's child protection procedures are initiated (see Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy). The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL is informed as soon as possible. All THPT schools utilise and manage safeguarding concerns. In line with the 2026 statutory guidance, RSHE is recognised as a key safeguarding curriculum. It supports pupils to identify and respond appropriately to harmful behaviour, online risks, exploitation, coercion, misogyny, discrimination, violence, abuse and unhealthy relationships, and empowers them to seek help when needed.

ii. Disclosure of pregnancy or advice about contraception within the secondary phase The THPT Safeguarding and Child Protection policy outlines guidance on 'Disclosures of under-age sexual activity, sexual health advice and suspected pregnancy', with safeguarding of the child at the centre of any response. This guidance should be followed and the DSL informed.

b) Family life

The value of family life is an important aspect, which is approached largely through a consideration of the qualities and relationships between groups of people, with an emphasis on stability, respect, caring and support and diversity. There is acceptance that families can have different dynamics (including single parents, same sex parents, adoptive parents and foster parents), which can also be characterised by love and care.

c) Human sexual behaviour

As part of the RSE programme, issues of contraception, sexually transmitted infections (including HIV/AIDS), sexuality and abortion are addressed in the secondary phase. Facts are presented in an objective and balanced way.

Whilst there is no mandatory requirement to deliver sex education in the primary phase, the guidance states 'It will be for primary schools to determine whether they need to cover any additional content on sex education to meet the needs of their pupils'. Therefore, as a Trust, and in response to student feedback, we believe an age-appropriate introduction to sex education should be delivered in Year 6, as part of the teaching of puberty and respectful relationships. Lesson outcomes will be shared with parents/carers in advance and they have the right to withdraw their children. A sequenced RSE curriculum map has been developed in consultation with wide stakeholder voice across the trust. Parents are informed of the learning the pupils will be engaged in, through annual letters from Years 6 – 11, which make the aspects of sex education covered therein clear.

d) Complaints procedures

Any complaints about the Relationships Education, RSE and Health Education curriculum are made to the Principal and PSHE/Science lead in the primary phase and the PSHE/citizenship coordinator in the secondary phase.

e) Parental partnership

Under the Education Act 1993, parents have the right to withdraw their children from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE. This does not include those parts of sex education included within the National Curriculum. Parents wishing to exercise this right need to discuss this with the Principal in the first instance. Up to three terms before a child turns 16, if they wish to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, the school will make arrangements to put this in place. There is no right to withdraw from Relationships Education or Health Education.

Parents are welcome to review any RSE resources the individual school uses.

f) Sexual culture and behaviours

THPT utilises the support of Brook sexual health and wellbeing experts, in providing training to all its staff regarding suitable sexual behaviours. All members of the Trust use the "traffic light tool" to identify and address unsuitable sexual behaviours, linked to developmental age. Staff receive regular, relevant training to support their delivery of RSE, which focuses on teaching and guiding students to understand and make appropriate choices.

Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

THPT schools ensure that all students have equal access to the RSE programme through a thorough process of monitoring, evaluation, and assessment, which takes into consideration students' needs, maturity, age, ability and personal circumstances.

In line with all THPT policies, the RSE policy will be reviewed on a yearly basis and also in the light of any related issue that may occur, such as any new findings arising from educational research, local or national guidance and interim government updates.

If parents have comments, compliments, or concerns that they would like to share, these should be addressed to the relevant senior leader in the first instance.

APPENDIX 1

DfE Guidance – Statutory from September 2026

Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education guidance

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 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.

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.

APPENDIX 2

HOW THE LAW DEFINES 'CONSENT'1

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 states that a person has consented 'if she or he agrees by choice, and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice'. There are three important parts to this. Firstly, there is the emphasis on choice – a deliberate, active decision; secondly, there is the question of capacity to consent: is the person old enough, are they capable of understanding what is happening, are they intoxicated by alcohol or affected by drugs, do they have a mental health problem or learning difficulties, and are they conscious?

Finally the law asks whether a person makes their choice freely, that is to say without manipulation, exploitation or duress. This may include the use or threat of force, or may be more subtle, to do with whether the person seeking consent is in a position of power or authority, or is significantly older than the other person.

The CPS states that the law does not allow a person's consent to sexual activity to have effect in the following situations:

- where the person giving consent did not understand what was happening and so could not give informed consent, for example in the case of a child or someone suffering from a severe mental disability;
- where the person giving consent was under the relevant age of consent

This reference to severe mental disability obviously has significant implications. These cannot be fully covered in this document; however, the Family Planning Association provide comprehensive advice and support in relation to sexual health services for people with learning disabilities and can provide more information if needed, see their website for further details.

In all cases, the law is clear that it is the responsibility of the person seeking consent who has the responsibility to ensure that the other person agrees by choice and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice. The CPS is clear that the seeker of consent must seek continuing consent, rather than treating it as a one off.

WHAT IS THE LEGAL AGE OF SEXUAL CONSENT?

Despite what young people may feel in a given situation, there are legal boundaries to their ability to give consent, so any voluntary agreement to sexual activity by someone under 16 cannot be defined as consent in law, according to the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (i.e. any sexual activity involving one or more person who is under the age of sixteen is illegal). However, in its sexual offences factsheet, the CPS states that "children of the same or similar age are highly unlikely to be prosecuted for engaging in sexual activity, where the activity is mutually agreed and there is no abuse or exploitation". This applies unless it involves one or more person who is under 13 and then it is an absolute offence and the issue of mutual agreement is irrelevant.
It is important for pupils to understand that in cases where a person over the age of 16 has sex with someone under 16, it is the person over 16 who commits the offence, not the younger person, assuming there is no other offence being committed by the younger person (i.e. in the case of a violent sexual attack on a 16-year-old by a 15-year-old, the 16-year-old would clearly be the victim).

Taken from the PSHE Association document 'A summary of the law on sexual consent – February 2015' THPT Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Policy 2025 APPROVED:

Person A does the relevant act
Person A acts intentionally
Person B does not consent
Person A does not reasonably believe that Person B consented.
Rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault of a child under 13
Inciting or causing a person to engage in sexual activity with a child under 13
Child sexual offences involving children under 16
Children under 18 having sexual relations with persons in a position of trust
Children under 18 involved with family members over 18
Persons with a mental disorder impeding choice, who are induced, threatened or deceived or who have sexual relations with care workers

ACCORDING TO THE LAW, WHEN HAS AN OFFENCE BEEN COMMITTED?
The Sexual Offences Act (2003) states that certain things must have happened to prove that an offence has taken place. Person A is seen to have committed an offence against Person B when:

Deciding on 'reasonable' belief means taking into consideration factors such as whether Person A has the capacity to determine consent and what steps they have taken to assure themselves that Person B consents and continues to consent.

In relation to many other offences, there is no requirement to prove an absence of consent. Only the act itself and the age of the victim or other criteria need to be proved. They include:

SHARING SEXUALLY EXPLICIT IMAGES WITHOUT CONSENT
It is both a gross violation and a very serious offence to take or share sexual images of another, without their consent. Depending on the circumstances, sharing such images can be an offence under various different pieces of legislation including the Sexual Offences Act (2003), Malicious Communications Act (1988), Obscene Publications Act (1959) and the Protection of Children Act (1978). Sharing sexual images without consent is a form of sexual assault and if the victim is under 18, could also be classed as sharing images of child sexual abuse and lead to the perpetrator being subject to the notification requirements under Part 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003, commonly referred to as the Sex Offender Register.

Pupils should also learn that it is illegal to produce, possess or distribute an indecent image of a person under the age of 18 – even if it is a picture of themselves. These laws have been created to protect children and young people. It is therefore unlikely that the police would prosecute a young person for taking or sharing pictures of themselves, unless they were concerned that images were being used to harass or coerce, or shared with intent to harm. For further information, see advice from the Association of Chief Police Officers.