Secondary Relationships and Sex Education Policy; incorporating PSHE

Relationships & Sex Education (Secondary)

Personal, Social, Health and Economic Policy

This policy is informed by DfE statutory guidance and advice: Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSHE) and Health Education Published July 2025

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The RSHE policy supports/complements the following policies	Anti-Bullying Policy CEIAG Policy E Safety Policy Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy Substances Misuse & Education Policy Mental Health & Well-Being Policy SMSC Policy: Collective Worship & British Values Guidance Diversity, Equity, Equality & Inclusion Policy *External documents that inform the school's RSHE policy include:* *Education Act (1996)* *Gender Questioning Guidance (2026)* *Learning and Skills Act (2000)* *Education and Inspections Act (2006, Equality Act (2010)* *Relationships & Sex Education (RSE)and Health Education (2025)* *Keeping children safe in education; Statutory safeguarding guidance;* *including guidance under consultation on children who are questioning their gender in 'Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE 2025 & 2026)* *Children and Social Work Act (2017)*

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Revisions

Version	Page/Para No.	Description of Change	Approved in
4	1 Throughout 3 3 5 5- 6 6 8 9 -10 17 11 – 19 19 – 26 27 - 31	• Policy updated to meet July 2025 statutory changes. • Changed RSE to RSHE • Appendix 3 reference update to include updated July 2025 DfE RSHE reference. • Thematic model changed to Curriculum Model • Aims amended and added to; 2025 DfE update refs added to Special Academies and amended definition. • Updated 2025 Guidance highlights (Statutory from Sept 2026) • Added Health and PSHE to bullet 4 definition. • Bullet 6: Delivery of RSE, added update to include updated July 2025 DfE RSHE reference. • P9: Secondary academies section, added 4 new sections p10 • Appendix2, added Health into the title. • PSHE Association Programme Builder removed and replaced with updated PSHE Association Curriculum Model, updated to July 2025 outlines all new statutory RSHE guidance requirements plus essential non-statutory content. • Appendix 3: completed removed and replaced with updated DfE July 2025 expectations of coverage: "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:" • Appendix 3: Added in the updated DfE July 2025 expectations of coverage for health education, as compulsory.	April 2026

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1. Aims

The aims of relationships and sex education (RSHE) in our secondary academies are to:

- Relationships Education: building healthy, respectful relationships.
- Sex Education: learning about sexual behaviour, consent, contraception, sexual health and wellbeing.
- Health Education: physical health and mental wellbeing, including online safety and personal safety.
- PSHE Association complete programme of study KS3 – 5.
- Support students to develop skills to manage their lives now and in the future.
- Promote respect, consent, equality and diversity.
- Prepare students for puberty and give them an understanding of sexual development and the importance of health and hygiene.
- Help students develop feelings of self-respect, confidence and empathy
- Create a positive culture around issues of sexuality and relationships.
- Teach students the correct vocabulary to describe themselves and their bodies.
- Empower pupils to navigate modern challenges, including online misogyny, harmful content, and peer pressure.
- Ensure transparency with parents, providing opportunities to view all curriculum materials.
- We support the DfE ambition for all young people to stay safe and prepared for life in modern Britain. This ambition is realised through the development of this policy, which extends our current statutory duty to provide age-appropriate Relationships Education for the primary phase (see separate primary policy) and Relationships & Sex Education for the secondary phase, delivered through Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE).
- Each academy has the freedom to deliver content appropriate to the age of the students and their religious backgrounds within the Meridian Trust framework for PSHE, which includes RSHE, (App1 and App 3 secondary academies).
- Build on primary knowledge, with a deeper focus on:
  Sexual Health: Including PrEP, menstrual health, menopause, puberty, reproduction, contraception and pregnancy.
  Consent: Understanding it within power dynamics, respect and boundaries
  Physical and mental well-being
  Online Safety and digital consent
  Modern Threats: Online grooming, extortion ("sextortion"), and pornography's impact.
  Law: Understanding the Equality Act, age of criminal responsibility, and the Online Safety Act.

2. Statutory requirements

All Meridian Trust secondary academies teach RSHE and Health Education, as set out in this policy.

Updated 2025 Guidance Highlights (Statutory from Sept 2026)

This policy incorporates the following key changes:

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- **Online Safety & Technology:** Coverage of AI-generated images, deepfakes, and artificial intimacy.
- **Safety Education:** Enhanced focus on road, rail, water, and personal safety in public spaces.
- **Physical Health:** Menstrual/gynaecological health: endometriosis, menopause and topics listed: vaping and personal safety
- **Misogyny and Violence:** Tackling misogyny, incel culture, and violence against women and girls.
- **Sexual Ethics and Consent:** Strengthened content on consent, including the ability to withdraw it, along with a wider exploration of ethical behaviours, challenging pornographic depictions of relationships.
- **Mental Health:** Enhanced focus on grief, loss, and loneliness.
- **Gender Identity:** Ensuring teaching aligns with the law (Equality Act 2010), recognizing this as a contested area without endorsing a particular view as fact.
- **Vaping:** Facts about vaping and nicotine addiction.
- **Vocabulary:** Using correct, anatomical terminology for body parts in primary education.

Secondary academies

All Meridian Trust secondary academies must provide RSHE to all students as per section 34 of the Children and Social work act 2017. Since September 2020, Relationship Education, Health Education and Relationship & Sex Education became compulsory in England. Since September 2021 it is mandatory for schools teach and deliver an RSHE Curriculum that meets DfE guidance. From September 2026 all secondary schools must meet the DfE RSHE Statutory Guidance (Update December 2025). In teaching RSHE, we are required by our funding agreements to have regard to guidance issued by the secretary of state as outlined in section 403 of the Education Act 1996.

As part of Meridian Trust, we teach RSHE as set out in this policy.

Our funding agreement and articles of association can be found on the Meridian Trust website: https://www.Meridian Trustrust.co.uk/legal-documents/

Special academies

All Meridian Trust special schools provide RSHE to all students as per section 34 of the Children and Social work act 2017. Since September 2020, Relationship Education, Health Education and Relationship & Sex Education became compulsory in England. Since September 2021 it is mandatory for schools teach and deliver an RSHE Curriculum that meets DfE guidance. From September 2026 all secondary schools must meet the DfE RSHE Statutory Guidance (Update December 2025).

In teaching RSHE, we are required by our funding agreements to have regard to guidance issued by the secretary of state as outlined in section 403 of the Education Act 1996.

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

In teaching RSHE, we are required by our funding agreements to have regard to guidance issued by the secretary of state as outlined in section 403 of the Education Act 1996.

As part of Meridian Trust, we teach RSHE as set out in this policy.

Our funding agreement and articles of association can be found on the Meridian website

Delivery of RSHE: Special academies
RSHE focuses on teaching the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships, giving pupils the information they need to help them develop nurturing relationships of all kinds through the 3 core strands and 3 further strands for our special schools including:

- Self-care, support and safety
- Managing feelings
- Changing and growing
- Self-Awareness
- The World I Live in
- Healthy Lifestyles

The RSHE SEND framework accompanies the PSHE Association Programme of Study which supports our curriculum delivery. Our curriculum is delivered by developmental stage and the specific need of the individual.

Parents' right to withdraw: Special Academies
Will follow the Meridian Trust Primary and Secondary academies processes.

3. Policy development

This policy has been developed in consultation with the Academy Council, Staff, Students and Families. The consultation and policy development process involved the following steps:

1. Review: the PSHE Leaders group gathered together all relevant information including relevant national and local guidance.
2. Staff consultation: all school staff were given the opportunity to look at the policy and make recommendations.
3. Family/stakeholder consultation: parents, families and any interested parties were invited to contribute to the policy.
4. Student consultation: we investigated what exactly students want from their RSHE through rigorous quality assurance.
5. Ratification: once amendments were made, the policy was shared with the academy council and the Executive Principals, before becoming ratified.

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4. Definition

RSHE is delivered in all Meridian Trust secondary academies and provides the statutory relationships and sex education defined. Health Education and PSHE are delivered alongside the RSE POS.

RSHE is about the emotional, social and cultural development of students, and involves learning about relationships, sexual health, sexuality, healthy lifestyles, diversity and personal identity. RSHE involves a combination of sharing information and exploring issues and values.

RSHE is not about the promotion of sexual activity.

5. Curriculum

Our secondary curriculum framework is set out as per Appendix 1 and 3, on occasion we may need to adapt it as and when necessary. The curriculum is additionally supplemented, where appropriate, with drop down days, assemblies, visitors and visits.

We have developed the curriculum in consultation with parents/carers, students and staff, considering the age, needs and feelings of students. If students ask questions outside the scope of this policy, teachers will respond in an appropriate manner, so they are fully informed and don't seek answers online.

For more information about our RSHE expected curriculum outcomes, see Appendix 3.

6. Delivery of RSHE

Relationship, Sex Education (RSE) related topics within the secondary curriculum are age appropriate and have considered the needs of all students, including those with special educational needs. Since September 2020, Relationship Education, Health Education and Relationship & Sex Education became compulsory in England. Since September 2021 it is mandatory for schools teach and deliver an RSE Curriculum that meets DfE guidance. From September 2026 all secondary schools must meet the DfE Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Statutory Guidance (Update December 2025).

In teaching RSHE, we are required by our funding agreements to have regard to guidance issued by the secretary of state as outlined in section 403 of the Education Act 1996.

RSHE is taught within the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. Biological aspects of RSHE are taught within the science curriculum and other aspects are included in philosophy and religious education (PRE).

The delivery of relationships education and RSHE is complemented in delivery through parents, families, health professionals, youth workers, peer educators, the police and the wider community. Students may receive stand-alone sex education sessions delivered by trained external professionals.

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The Lead Teacher will work closely with colleagues delivering RSHE sessions and ensure appropriate training, guidance and support.

PSHE, in the context of Relationships Education and RSHE, will reflect content appropriate to the age of the students and their religious backgrounds. This education will likely focus on:

Secondary academies

Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education focus on giving young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds including:

- Families
- Respectful relationships, including friendships
- Online and media
- Being safe
- Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health. For more information about our RSHE curriculum, see App3.

These areas of learning are taught within the context of family life taking care to ensure that there is no stigmatisation of children based on their home circumstances (families can include single parent families, LGBTQ+ parents and families headed by grandparents, adoptive parents, foster parents/carers amongst other structures) along with reflecting sensitively that some children may have a different structure of support around them (for example: looked after children or young carers).

Delivery and Pedagogy

- **Whole-School Approach:** RSHE is taught within a broader PSHE program, supported by assemblies and school culture.
- **Skilled Delivery:** Teachers will use safe, inclusive, and age-appropriate methods. RSHE is taught in an inclusive, non-judgemental, confidential environment.
- **Ground Rules:** Lessons will establish safe environments, using distancing techniques to prevent personal disclosures in the classroom.
- **Evidence-Based:** Materials used are, where possible, vetted and aligned with the updated statutory requirements.

Inclusion and SEND

The school complies with the Equality Act 2010. Teaching will be adapted for pupils with SEND, recognizing that they may be more vulnerable to online/offline harms.

- Teaching about different families will be inclusive.
- Content will avoid perpetuating gender stereotypes.

Safeguarding & Confidentiality

RSHE is essential for safeguarding. If a pupil discloses information, staff must follow the school's **Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy**.

- **Online Risks:** Pupils will be taught how to report concerns or abuse.

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7. Roles and responsibilities

The Meridian Trust Executive

The Meridian Trust Executive will approve the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education policy and be adopted by each secondary academy. The Academy Council will hold the Headteacher to account for its implementation.

The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that RSHE is taught consistently across the school, and for managing requests to withdraw students from components of RSHE (see section 8 and App4).

Staff

Staff are responsible for:

- Delivering Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education in a sensitive way
- Modelling positive attitudes to Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education
- Monitoring progress
- Responding to the needs of individual students
- Responding appropriately to students whose parents wish them to be withdrawn from the components of Sex Education only.

Staff do not have the right to opt out of teaching Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education. Staff who have concerns about teaching Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education are encouraged to discuss this with the headteacher.

Students

Students are expected to engage fully in Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education and, when discussing issues related to RSHE, treat others with respect and sensitivity.

8. Parents' right to withdraw

Meridian Trust Secondary Academies:

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

Requests for withdrawal should be put in writing using the form found in Appendix 4 of this policy and addressed to the Headteacher.

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A copy of withdrawal requests will be placed in the student's educational record. The Headteacher will discuss the request with parents and take appropriate action.

Alternative work will be given to students who are withdrawn from sex education, and they will be appropriately supervised for the duration of the specified time.

9. Training

Staff are trained on the delivery of Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education as part of their induction and it is included in our continuing professional development calendar.

The Headteacher will also invite visitors from outside the school, such as school nurses or sexual health professionals, to provide support and training to staff teaching Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education.

10. Monitoring arrangements

The delivery of Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education is monitored by Meridian Trust Curriculum Review & Quality Assurance processes.

Both trust quality assurance reviews and peer reviews support the quality of education, along with internal academy monitoring arrangements, such as planning scrutinies, learning walks, lesson observations, knowledge understanding checks, student voice, staff voice etc.

Students' development in Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education is monitored by class teachers as part of internal assessment systems.

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Appendix 1: Meridian Trust Secondary Curriculum Framework: KS3 &4 Curriculum Model and the KS5 POS adopted from the PSHE Association (Updated from the PSHE Association response to the DfE Statutory July 2025 updates)

Secondary Curriculum Model: KS3 & 4; KS5 POS

Meridan Trust has adopted the PSHE Association's Curriculum Model for key stages 3 and 4. It is designed to accompany the 2026 edition of the Programme of Study for PSHE education, which covers all of Relationships, Sex and Health education (RSHE), as well as essential learning on Economic Wellbeing and Careers Education. The Programme of Study sets out learning opportunities for each key stage. This Curriculum Model provides:

• a long-term plan for the academic year across all year groups and half terms

• medium-term plans for each year group with unit outlines

• links to suggested lesson plans (both PSHE Association resources and resources carrying the Association's Quality Mark) that could be used to deliver each half-term unit

• additional or alternative resources that could be used to enhance each half-term unit New PSHE Association and quality assured lesson plans will be added to the Curriculum Model as they are published.

Using and adapting the Curriculum Model

The Curriculum Model is colour-coded to make clear which content covers the Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance on Relationships, Sex and Health education, and which units cover other essential – but currently non-statutory – content such as Economic Wellbeing and Careers Education. Across the year groups, this Curriculum Model covers all of the Programme of Study learning opportunities for each key stage. It suggests how your school might deliver statutory and other content in PSHE education in an age and stage appropriate way, following a spiral approach that revisits and embeds learning.

PSHE education Curriculum Models

PSHE Association Programme of Study for PSHE Education (Key stages 1–5), 2026.pdf

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SECONDARY PSHE EDUCATION: KS3 & 4 Curriculum Model

Secondary PSHE education | Long-term overview

Statutory RSHE | Statutory RSHE | Economic Wellbeing & Careers | Economic Wellbeing & Careers

	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Year 7	Emotional wellbeing: managing change and transition	Friendship and bullying	Families and changing relationships	Puberty and keeping safe	Influences on relationships	Financial decisions
Year 8	Health and wellbeing	Personal safety and managing risk	Belonging and community	The online world	Healthy and unhealthy relationships	Managing money
Year 9	Mental health and wellbeing	Careers and future choices	Drug education	Managing risk in relation to the law	Intimate sexual relationships	Navigating online harms
Year 10	Independence, health choices and wellbeing	Navigating the online world	Friendship, diversity and challenging extremism	Managing influence	Exploring consent and recognising abuse	Study, work and careers
Year 11	Life-long wellbeing	Drugs and personal safety	Safe relationships and sexual health	Families, fertility and pregnancy	Online financial harms	

KS5 PSHE EDUCATION: LONG-TERM OVERVIEW

The Programme of Study for key stages 3 and 4 addresses all of the statutory RSHE content for the secondary phase. The DfE's statutory RSHE guidance does not include separate content for key stage 5. As a Trust, our SOW provides the following learning opportunities, that builds on statutory KS3 & 4 guidance. They are intended to extend and embed the statutory content where appropriate but not to cover the entire content again. We also have an identified plan for Economic Wellbeing and Careers Education. This area is a key element of PSHE education at key stage 5. Students are moving through a time of transition to adulthood, during which they become more economically active, perhaps with part-time employment. They may be making significant decisions around spending and saving, such as considering student finance options, learning to drive, or travelling abroad with friends. Learning at this key stage should build on students' Careers Education in earlier key stages but with greater focus on helping them to make critical real-world decisions about their immediate and longer-term future. This might include exploring higher or further education, apprenticeship options, employment, or perhaps gap year opportunities.

Key topic areas that KS5 students have learning opportunities include:

- Economic wellbeing
- Careers education: aspirations, learning and work
- Healthy, positive relationships
- Boundaries and Consent
- Harmful relationship behaviours
- Contraception and parenthood
- Sexual health
- Inclusion, bullying and discrimination
- Online life and online harms
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Healthy lifestyles
- Drug education
- Managing risk and personal safety

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	Autumn 1 Health & wellbeing	Autumn 2 Living in the wider world	Spring 1 Relationships	Spring 2 Living in the wider world	Summer 1 Relationships	Summer 2 Health & wellbeing
Year12	**Mental health and emotional wellbeing** • Mental health and emotional wellbeing • Managing stress • Body image • Healthy coping strategies	**Readiness for work** • Career opportunities • Preparing for the world of work	**Diversity and inclusion** • Living in a diverse society • Challenging prejudice and discrimination	**Planning for the future** • Exploring future opportunities • Post-18 options • The impact of financial decisions	**Respectful relationships** • Consent • Assertive communication • Positive relationships and recognising abuse • Strategies for managing dangerous situations or relationships	**Health choices and safety** • Independence and keeping safe • Travel • First aid • The impact of substance use

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Year13	**Independence** • Responsible health choices • Managing change • Health and wellbeing, including sexual health, into adulthood	**Next steps** • Application processes • Future opportunities and career development • Maintaining a positive professional identity	**Intimate relationships** • Personal values, including in relation to contraception and sexual health • Fertility • Pregnancy	**Financial choices** • Managing money • Financial contracts • Budgeting • Saving • Debt • Influences on financial choices	**Building and maintaining relationships** • New friendships and relationships, including in the workplace • Personal safety • Intimacy • Conflict resolution • Relationship changes	

Meridian Trust P16 Curriculum Leads flag these areas that are a key focus area for many Post 16 students and create additional opportunities for these areas.

• Study Skills & Revision	Emotional health and wellbeing
• Careers & UCAS	• Identity / respect, with a focus on sexual orientation
• Festivals, travelling, spiking, drug awareness	• Sexual health
• FGM and 'honour' based violence	• Consent
• Human Rights, Prejudice & Discrimination	• Risk & Safety
• Radicalisation & Hate Crime	• Economic well-being & finance, payslips, taxation, loans and credit
• Parliament & Democracy	• Money Mules & Scams
• Digital Literacy	• Independent living & budgeting
• Gambling	• Healthy & Abusive Relationships

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Appendix 2: Meridian Trust curriculum framework summary PSHE, Relationships and sex education, Health education, Careers, PRE, Values

1. We have adopted The PSHE Association KS3 & 4 Curriculum Model and KS5 PoS. The Curriculum Model meets the statutory guidance for Relationships Education, RSHE and Health Education for each phase. It considers progression and development of students' understanding of the overarching concepts and development of essential skills and attributes.

2. Topic areas are arranged into half term 'chunks', which can be adapted to suit each Meridian Trust Academy planning requirements: there is no 'correct order'. Each Academy should select the content that ensures opportunities to explore the overarching concepts and to develop knowledge, skills and attributes, through a programme that is relevant and appropriate to the ethos of their school and the needs of their students.

3. We support the Sex Education Forum 12-point statement which explains what is needed for good quality RSHE, based on research evidence. They are supported by a wide range of partners including NSPCC, Barnardo's, The Children's Society and NCB, and the following education unions: ASCL, NASUWT, NEU, NAHT, UNISON and Voice.

4. We are using the Gatsby 8 Pillars to inform our Careers Programmes, supported by the online platform UNIFROG, which will be woven into the secondary PSHE Programme of study:

- A stable careers programme
- Learning from career and labour market information
- Addressing the need of each student

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- Linking curriculum learning to careers
- Encounters with employers and employees
- Experiences of workplaces
- Encounters with further and higher education
- Personal guidance

5. We will incorporate the national requirements for religious education into the planning model, where PRE is not taught explicitly. As a MAT we do not have to follow the LA SACRE guidance, but we are choosing to use the guidance to support a comprehensive model. The recommended minimum time is set out in the Dearing Review (1996) as KS1: 36 hours per year, KS2&3: 45 hours per year, KS4: 5% of curriculum time or 70 hours across the key stage. The Primary Academies have a bespoke Meridian Trust Syllabus across all phases.

6. Meridian Trust values will be reflected throughout the plan and individual Academies values picked out accordingly.

The planning model can be taught in any order or style for each year group.

A careers overlay is matched over each year group, meeting the PSHE Association planned POS and meeting relevant Gatsby 8 markers.

PRE is taught either discretely as Ethics or through skills led topics in the secondary phase.

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Meridian Trust

Meridian Trust Secondary Academies RSHE curriculum

Appendix 3: DfE Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: by the end of secondary school students should know (DfE Statutory Guidance July 2025)

TOPIC	STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW: **Families**
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.

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TOPIC	STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW: Respectful relationships including friendships
Respectful relationships, including friendships 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.

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	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.

TOPIC	STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW: Online media
Online and media 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

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	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. 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.

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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. 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.

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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. 1
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.

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TOPIC	STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW: Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health
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.

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TOPIC	STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW: Secondary health and wellbeing curriculum content
Mental wellbeing	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	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

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	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	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	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	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

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	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	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.

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	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	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	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	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.

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	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.

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Appendix 4: Secondary Parent/Carer form: withdrawal from sex education within Relationships and Sex Education (RSE).

TO BE COMPLETED BY PARENT/CARER			
Name of child		Class	
Name of parent		Date	
Reason for withdrawing from sex education within relationships and sex education			
Any other information you would like the school to consider			

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Parent signature	

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE ACADEMY	
Agreed actions from discussion with parents	*Include notes from discussions with parents and agreed actions taken.* *E.g.: Joe Bloggs will be taking part in all relationships lessons and during the sex education lessons, he will be working independently on a PSHE project in the House Hub/R12 classroom*

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