

In a Nutshell: Updates to the Statutory RSHE Curriculum Guidance for Schools 2025



In July 2025, the DfE published the new, updated statutory guidance on RSHE [Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education guidance](#), replacing the original 2019 document. Schools will have until September 2026 to adapt their curriculum to reflect the updated requirements. They can start following the new guidance before Sept 2026 if they wish to and if they are properly prepared but, importantly, this new guidance does not become compulsory for schools to adopt until 1st September 2026. Until then schools are still legally bound by the 2019 statutory guidance. The structure of the guidance is similar to the 2019 document, and we are pleased to see there are no age-limits (as suggested in the draft document) so entrusting teachers to employ their expertise to deliver a bespoke, age/stage appropriate curriculum to their pupils, carefully sequenced in terms of skills and knowledge progression. Leaders should enable staff to make informed decisions through high-quality training, planning, and access to reliable resources.

Regarding content change, the headlines are:

- **Misogyny and violence against women and girls** are given a stronger focus. Under the five strands of the primary relationships curriculum there is a focus on children having the right to feel safe and happy, to be kind, and to understand that resorting to violence is never acceptable. This is continued into the secondary curriculum where there is a greater emphasis on misogyny, violence against women and girls and related factors, including the negative impact of pornography, in line with government priorities and widespread safeguarding concerns about these issues.
- **A new Personal Safety strand** has been added to the previous eight strands of the Health and Wellbeing curriculum (previously Health). This is new content and includes learning about managing risk around roads, railways, water and public spaces.
- Under the General Wellbeing (previously Mental Wellbeing) strand of the Health and Wellbeing curriculum, there is **additional emphasis on supporting mental health**, including specific mention of areas such as grief and loss.
- There is **more detail in the content to be delivered under the Wellbeing Online** strand (Health and Wellbeing curriculum), including pupils learning about risk relating to online gaming, video game monetisation, scams, fraud and other financial harms, as well as exploring the addictive element of gaming.
- **Safeguarding risks linked to technology** are addressed, with financial exploitation now considered in the guidance as a safeguarding issue, reinforcing the need to include finance education within schools' wider PSHE/RSHE provision. Whilst any statutory requirement to deliver economic education has not been introduced, there is hope it may be addressed when the DfE curriculum and assessment review recommendations are published in this next academic year. Furthermore, the document acknowledges online risks such as AI-generated deepfakes, harmful online influencers and toxic digital subcultures, whilst also giving a greater focus on the harmful nature of pornographic materials.
- **Diverse family structures** have been identified as something schools must be acknowledging and celebrating. Schools are advised to be inclusive and responsive to the full range of family contexts, including single-parent households, same-sex parents, kinship carers, foster and adoptive families
- **Vaping and other nicotine products** have been added to the drugs strand within Health and Wellbeing curriculum, with the strand now entitled Drugs, Alcohol, Tobacco and Vaping.
- **Specific guidance is set out around language** to be used, and taught, when delivering the strand on Developing Bodies (previously Changing Adolescent Bodies)

Other points to note:

- ❖ There is a very clear message about the importance of starting RSHE lessons early in primary schools.
- ❖ Schools must avoid language and activities which repeat or enforce gender stereotypes. A factual approach is stressed in relation to biological sex and gender reassignment. Teachers must not take a particular view.
- ❖ There is a new set of Guiding Principles (pg5) which puts pupil engagement top of the list, followed by parent engagement as well as other key principles for schools, including ensuring a Whole School Approach to RSHE.
- ❖ Transparency with parents/carers remains a key principle. Clear communication and engagement with parents/carers are essential, in order to update them on the shifts in RSHE provision which might not be obvious from school policy, and to support a partnership approach to RSHE. The DfE published an article for parents around the changes: [New RSHE guidance: what parents need to know - The Education Hub](#)
- ❖ The importance of establishing safe, supportive classroom environments in which to deliver RSHE topics and respond to sensitive questions safely is reaffirmed. The document includes guidance on best practice delivery, such as the use of distancing techniques and clearly advises against shock tactics and overly graphic content.
- ❖ Whilst there is very little detail in the document around adapting curriculum content to meet the needs of SEND learners, there is still a clear expectation that schools must do this.
- ❖ Some of the new requirements will naturally require curriculum content updates, and subject leaders in primary and secondary settings should review current provision to ensure coverage. Leaders should also consider how new themes are linked across the wider curriculum and ensure staff have access to appropriate teaching resources.
- ❖ Some of the terminology has changed, particularly within the subheading of the strands.
- ❖ The document recognises the need for staff training. The DfE have spoken of their intention to provide a ring-fenced training budget in the year ahead; watch this space. In the meantime, GHLL will support school within Gloucestershire and provide training for school leaders and PSHE leads.

Next Steps:

- ✓ Familiarise yourself, and all school leaders including Governors, with the new 2025 statutory RSHE Guidance
- ✓ Audit your setting's PSHE/RSHE curriculum to 'map and gap' your current provision against the new statutory guidance
- ✓ Update planning documents, lesson plans and resources in preparation for implementation from September 2026.
- ✓ Review and update your school RSE and PSHE policies, in order to ensure they meet the new curriculum requirements and policy guidance, as well as the specific needs of your school. Be very clear on where sex education begins for your pupils and what is covered, based on what is definitively required within both Health and Relationships Education. Ensure this review process involves staff, parent and pupil voice.
- ✓ Consider training needs to support staff confidence and ability to provide high quality, evidence-based teaching.

GHLL's first PSHE Network Meeting is being held on Thursday 20th November at Hatherley Manor. The session "**New Statutory RSHE Guidance 2025: What You Need to Know**" is being delivered by the PSHE Subject Expert, Jenny Fox, from the PSHE Association. This event is **FREE** for schools to attend- **[TO FIND OUT MORE & SIGN UP HERE.](#)**