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Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE)

A Guide for Parents and Carers – What's Changing from September 2026?

The Department for Education has updated the statutory guidance for Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE), with the new guidance taking effect from **September 2026**.

Many aspects of the curriculum remain the same, but the updated guidance strengthens several areas to better reflect the challenges young people face today, particularly in relation to online life, healthy relationships and safeguarding.

What hasn't changed?

Students will continue to learn about:

- Healthy and respectful relationships;
- Physical and mental wellbeing;
- Consent;
- Contraception and sexually transmitted infections (STIs);
- Keeping themselves safe, both online and offline;
- Equality, diversity and respect for others.

Parents continue to have the right to request that their child is withdrawn from the sex education elements of RSHE, although not from Relationships Education, Health Education or science lessons. Students can choose to receive sex education themselves from three terms before their 16th birthday.

What has changed?

A greater emphasis on healthy relationships

The updated guidance moves beyond teaching students about avoiding risks and instead places greater emphasis on developing the knowledge and skills needed to build positive relationships throughout life.

Students will learn more about:

- Kindness, empathy and mutual respect;
- Effective communication;
- Healthy boundaries;
- Managing conflict constructively;
- Self-esteem and self-respect;
- Recognising unhealthy or controlling relationships before harm occurs.

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A much stronger focus on online life

The biggest changes reflect the increasingly digital world in which young people live.

Teaching now includes:

- Fake social media accounts and online identities;
- AI-generated images and videos (deepfakes);
- AI chatbots and the risks of developing unhealthy online relationships;
- Sextortion and online scams;
- Misinformation and manipulated online content;
- Protecting personal information;
- Privacy settings and digital footprints;
- Recognising harmful online communities and content.

The aim is to equip students with the skills to navigate an online world safely and critically.

Consent, respect and ethical relationships

While consent remains a key part of the curriculum, the new guidance makes clear that healthy relationships involve more than simply obtaining consent.

Students will explore:

- Mutual respect and care;
- Recognising pressure and coercion;
- Understanding power imbalances within relationships;
- Respecting personal boundaries;
- Making ethical and responsible decisions in relationships.

Addressing harmful influences

The updated curriculum gives greater attention to the influences that can shape young people's attitudes towards relationships and sex.

Students will learn about:

- The unrealistic nature of pornography;
- Misogyny and harmful gender stereotypes;
- Coercive and controlling behaviour;
- Harmful online influencers;
- Extremist online communities, including so-called "incel" culture;
- Recognising unhealthy messages about relationships and masculinity.

Teaching encourages students to think critically about the content they encounter and its potential impact.

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Strengthened safeguarding education

The revised guidance places a greater emphasis on recognising abuse and knowing how to seek help.

Students will learn:

- How to recognise abusive or exploitative behaviour;
- How to respond safely to concerns;
- How to support friends appropriately;
- Where to access trusted sources of help;
- That abuse is never the victim's fault.

Increased transparency with parents

Schools are expected to work more closely with parents by:

- Clearly explaining the RSHE curriculum;
- Making curriculum materials available on request;
- Consulting parents when reviewing their RSHE policy;
- Informing parents of significant changes to planned content.

This is intended to strengthen the partnership between school and home.

New expectations for schools

The updated guidance also sets higher expectations for schools themselves.

Schools should:

- Teach content before young people are likely to encounter related risks;
- Ensure lessons are evidence-based and age-appropriate;
- Regularly review their curriculum with pupils and parents;
- Use well-trained staff and carefully selected external visitors;
- Ensure resources are accurate, balanced and suitable for all learners.

Why have these changes been made?

Young people are growing up in a rapidly changing world shaped by smartphones, social media, artificial intelligence and evolving online communities. The updated guidance reflects these changes and aims to ensure students are equipped with the knowledge, skills and confidence to:

- Build healthy and respectful relationships;
- Stay safe online and offline;
- Critically evaluate the information they encounter;
- Understand the law;
- Recognise harmful behaviours;
- Know where to seek help when needed.

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Working in partnership

Parents and carers remain the most important influence in a young person's understanding of relationships, values and wellbeing. Our RSHE curriculum is designed to complement these conversations by providing accurate, age-appropriate information in a safe and supportive environment.

How to have your say

A copy of the draft policy is available on the school's website on the homepage under 'Updates from the Academy'. If you are unable to access the internet, paper copies of the policy and the consultation feedback form will be available for collection from the school office. Please take a few minutes to complete the form, using the link below, with any feedback you may have.

https://forms.gle/vBCtFNxz6h9nkSSMA

The consultation period will open on **Monday, July 6, 2026** and will close on **Sunday 19th July 2026**.

What Happens Next?

Following the conclusion of the consultation, all feedback will be genuinely reviewed and considered, and amendments will be made to the policy where appropriate.

And finally, please do be reassured that we will continue to support our students in all aspects of their health and wellbeing through our existing systems in schools and are committed to working with parents to put their needs first.

Yours Sincerely,

Carolyn Blundell

Executive Principal

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