

Understanding Relationships, Sex and Education at your child's secondary school: a guide for parents

We want all children to grow up healthy, happy, safe, and able to manage the challenges and opportunities of life in modern Britain. From September 2020, the Department for Education made Relationships, Sex and Health Education compulsory for all students in Secondary schools. This guidance was revised and updated to reflect our increasingly complex world in July 2025. These changes will become statutory from September 2026.

These subjects are designed to equip your child with knowledge to make informed decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships as well as preparing them for a successful adult life. The world for all young people continues to evolve – the 2025 changes reflect the reality that young people's lives are lived across both offline and online worlds which are now deeply interconnected.

Your child's school will have flexibility to deliver the content in a way that is age and developmentally appropriate and sensitive to the needs and backgrounds of its pupils.

Relationships and Sex Education

Relationships and Sex Education will build on the teaching at primary. It aims to give young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds.

Your child's school will cover content on what healthy and unhealthy relationships look like and what makes a good friend, colleague and successful marriage or committed relationship. At the appropriate time, the focus will move to developing intimate relationships, to equip your child with knowledge they need to make safe, informed and healthy choices as they progress through adult life. The new guidance places a greater emphasis on helping pupils understand how digital experiences shape their attitudes, behaviour and wellbeing.

By the end of secondary school, pupils will have been taught content on:

- Families
- Respectful relationships (including friendships, consent, stereotypes, misogyny and pornography)
- Online safety and awareness (including online risks, AI and deepfakes)
- Being safe
- Intimate and sexual relationships (including sexual health)

You can find further details by searching '**relationships, sex and health education**' on GOV.UK.

Health Education

Health Education aims to give your child the information they need to make good decisions about their own health and wellbeing, to recognise issues in themselves and others, and to seek support as early as possible when issues arise.



Your rights as a parent

The important lessons you teach your child about healthy relationships, looking after themselves and staying safe, are respected and valued in this curriculum. Teaching at school will complement and reinforce the lessons you teach your child as they grow up.

Your child's school is required to consult with you when developing and renewing their policies on Relationships, Sex and Health Education. These policies must be published online and be available to anybody free of charge.

You can express your opinion, and this will help your child's school decide how and when to cover the content of the statutory guidance. It may also help them decide whether to teach additional non-statutory content. Schools are required to ensure their teaching reflects the age, needs and backgrounds of their pupils.

Schools will update their provision to include the revised content from September 2026 or before. If you'd like to know more, please speak to your child's school about planned teaching.

By the end of secondary school, pupils will have been taught content on:

- Mental wellbeing
- Wellbeing online (including excessive screen time)
- Physical health and fitness
- Healthy eating
- Drugs, alcohol, tobacco and vaping (including psychological impacts)
- Health, protection and prevention and understanding the health care system
- Personal safety (including peer influence online and social media)
- Basic first aid
- Developing bodies

You can find further details by searching '**relationships, sex and health education**' on GOV.UK.



Right to withdraw your child

You cannot withdraw your child from relationships or health education because it is important that all children receive this content to help them stay safe. This is aligned with schools statutory safeguarding commitments.

If you do not want your children to take part in some or all of the lessons the school defines as sex education delivered at secondary school, up until three school terms before they turn 16, you can request that they are withdrawn by following the procedures set out in the school's RSE policy.