



# King Edward's

## WITLEY

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### ***PSHE Policy September 2025***

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Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is an important and necessary part of all pupils' education.

PSHE can encompass many areas of study. Teachers here at King Edward's are best placed to understand the needs of their pupils through the use of evidence from our safeguarding team, pupil voice and staff surveys.

We use our PSHE education programme to equip pupils with a sound understanding of risk and with the knowledge and skills necessary to make safe and informed decisions.

We use PSHE education to build, where appropriate, on the statutory content already outlined in the national curriculum, the basic school curriculum and in statutory guidance on: drug education, financial education, sex and relationship education (SRE) and the importance of physical activity and diet for a healthy lifestyle.

At KS3 and KS4 pupils receive a minimum of one PSHE lesson per fortnight with most receiving two. At 6<sup>th</sup> Form pupils receive one PSHE lesson per fortnight. It is taught by a variety of staff including HSMs, Head of Safeguarding and other subject teachers who have a strong link to safeguarding and pastoral care. The Head of PSHE regularly receives PSHE training and disseminates the required information. Training is also offered to the rest of the department.

Our school ethos below is taken directly from our website as of September 2024. We are firmly committed to achieving and going over and beyond this throughout our PSHE teaching.

*King Edward's Witley is an educational establishment which holds strong Christian values. It continues the vision of its Founders - to provide a 'place to lodge Christ in', and deliver a holistic education to pupils in its care, that they may go out in the world as happy, confident adults ready to make a difference.*

PSHE assessment and evaluation is conducted throughout each lesson or series of lessons often through baseline activities, activities such as what I know at the start and end of each topic and well planned and structured lessons. Resources are age appropriate and we encourage pupil led initiatives. The Head of PSHE asks that PSHE teachers take in exercise books from KS3 and KS4 pupils regularly. At KS5 lessons are pupil led and focussed usually discussion/debate style lessons with a strong emphasis on careers in the autumn term for our L6th pupils. Ground rules are established and reinforced Help for any of the topics covered can be sought from a number of areas which are signposted in lessons including internally; HSMs. Counsellor, Health Centre Staff, Reverend.

## Health and wellbeing

The Health and Wellbeing core theme of PSHE education teaches knowledge and skills related to healthy lifestyles, including food choices, exercise, sleep and dental health, mental health, drugs and alcohol, first aid and emergency life-saving skills, sexual health and fertility, managing risk and personal safety. This education directly supports children to be mentally and physically healthy, which in turn supports their education outcomes (research evidence shows that educational outcomes and health are closely linked ([Public Health England, 2014](#))).

In 2020, the government introduced a statutory requirement for schools to teach this Health Education content alongside Relationships and Sex Education at key stages 3 and 4. This breaks down aspects of physical and mental health education covered in PSHE education, including what is set out in the statutory relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) guidance.

### What we cover & why we cover it

#### **Physical health (food choices, exercise, dental health, sleep)**

There are concerns about food related health issues, such as obesity in children and young people. Education gives young people an understanding of nutrition, influences on food choices, diet and exercise which can support healthier lifestyles. There are of course a number of contributory factors outside of individuals' control — not least the cost of living and easy access to cheap, unhealthy, fast and ultra-processed foods — so education can only do so much but still has a crucial part to play.

*How PSHE education can help:*

- PSHE education can help children to develop healthier food habits and make informed choices about what food they eat, for example in the school canteen or when choosing lunch box items.

*By the end of secondary school King Edward's pupils should know:*

- how to maintain healthy eating and the links between a poor diet and health risks, including tooth decay and cancer.
- **Physical exercise:**

*Young people are not sufficiently physically active:*

- Less than half (47%) of 5-16-year-olds in England participate in sport or physical activity for an average at least 60 minutes per day, as recommended by the Chief Medical Officer; approximately a third (30%) do less than an average of 30 minutes per day ([Sport England, 2022](#)).

*Benefits of physical exercise:*

- There is strong evidence to suggest that physical exercise is beneficial to the health and development of children, and that active children are less likely to become inactive adults ([Great Ormond Street Hospital \[GOSH\], 2023](#)).

*How PSHE education can help:*

- PSHE education can begin to tackle some of the barriers to physical exercise, including broadening young people's understanding of exercise and where/when it can take place, challenging stereotypes relating to exercise which may prevent some from participating, and promoting greater understanding of the associated benefits.

*By the end of secondary school King Edward's students should know:*

- the positive associations between physical activity and promotion of mental wellbeing, including as an approach to combat stress.
  - the characteristics and evidence of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, maintaining a healthy weight, including the links between an inactive lifestyle and ill health, including cancer and cardio-vascular ill-health.
  - about the science relating to blood, organ and stem cell donation.
- **Dental health:**

*Tooth decay is prevalent from an early age*

- In 2022, approximately a quarter (24%) of 5-year-old children in England had already experienced dentinal decay ([National Dental Epidemiology Programme \[NDEP\], 2023](#)).

*Poor oral health causes multiple harms*

- Poor oral health impacts children and families, affecting students' ability to eat, smile and it also causes pain, infection, school absences and expenses ([NDEP, 2023](#)).

*Poor oral health is largely preventable*

- Thankfully, poor oral health is largely preventable ([NDEP, 2023](#)). Students can be taught how to brush and floss their teeth effectively, as well how to avoid food and drinks that may adversely harm their teeth, during PSHE education.

*How PSHE education can help:*

Our resources help to teach pupils healthy dental hygiene routines and help them to understand what daily habits help or harm dental health.

*By the end of secondary school King Edward's students should know:*

- about dental health and the benefits of good oral hygiene and dental flossing, including healthy eating and regular check-ups at the dentist.

- **Sleep:**

*Sleep requirements for secondary aged children and young people*

- Children and early adolescents aged 6-12-years-old need 9-12 hours of sleep, and adolescents aged 13-18-years-old need 8-10 hours of sleep ([GOSH, 2023](#)).
- Lack of sleep has significant impact on physical and mental health, and the ability to learn.

*How PSHE education can help:*

- PSHE education can help communicate the importance of sleep to physical and mental health and promote healthy sleep habits and routines.

*By the end of secondary school King Edward's students should know:*

- about the importance of sufficient good quality sleep for good health and how a lack of sleep can affect weight, mood and ability to learn.

## **Drug Education**

### **Tobacco**

*Smoking is particularly detrimental to children and adolescents*

- The younger someone begins smoking, the more harm it is likely to cause to their health, 'because early uptake is associated with subsequent heavier smoking, higher levels of dependency, a lower chance of quitting, and higher mortality' ([Action on Smoking and Health \[ASH\], 2019](#)).

*Smoking has declined among children and adolescents, but remains a concern*

- In 2018, 16% of 11-15-year-olds reported smoking at least once; 3% reported smoking regularly. This highlights the need to continue efforts to prevent children and adolescents from smoking by raising awareness of its harmfulness ([ASH, 2019](#)).
- There is some recent research from [University College London](#) which suggests that the steady decline in young people taking up smoking has plateaued since the covid-19 pandemic.

### **Vaping**

*There has been a significant increase in vaping among children and young people in the past few years:*

- Ever Vaped: 20% of 11–17-year-olds in Great Britain have tried vaping, which is an estimated 1.1 million young people. This is unchanged since 2023.
- Current Vaping: 7% of 11–17-year-olds currently vape (around 400,000 children). This rate is significantly up from 4.4% in 2019.
- Disposable Vapes: The most frequently used device among 11-17 year olds remains the disposable vape (54%), although this is down from 69% in 2023.
- Smoking: Worryingly, the rate of young people who have ever smoked increased from 14% in 2023 to 21% in 2025 (a projected figure found in some recent ASH-related summaries) ([Action on Smoking and Health \[ASH\], 2025](#)).

### **Alcohol**

*Alcohol poses direct risks to physical health but also related dangers associated with an increase in risk taking behaviour and negative effects on mental health.*

The [NHS \(2022\)](#) states that:

- Drinking alcohol can damage a child's health, even if they're 15 or older. It can affect the normal development of vital organs and functions, including the brain, liver, bones and hormones.
- Beginning to drink before age 14 is associated with increased health risks, including alcohol-related injuries, involvement in violence, and suicidal thoughts and attempts.
- Drinking at an early age is also associated with risky behaviour, such as violence, having more sexual partners, pregnancy, using drugs, employment problems and drink driving.

## Drugs

*Statistics suggest that illicit drug use has generally declined over time among young people, but issues remain with some substances and behaviours, and how they link with other factors such as wellbeing:*

- The Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use among Young People in England survey is carried out every two years and provides a wealth of data on prevalence of drug use and key trends. [The 2021 survey results](#) for example showed that 18% of pupils reported they had ever taken drugs (down from 24% of those surveyed in 2018), 12% had taken drugs in the last year (down from 17% in 2018), and 6% in the last month (down from 9% in 2018).
- The same survey also found that pupils aged 11-15 were more likely to have smoked, drunk alcohol or taken drugs if they reported having low overall wellbeing, and if their social time regularly involved meeting up with friends outside their own home.

*How PSHE education can help:*

- PSHE education supports children and young people to recognise and assess risk in their health-related decisions as they grow.
- Teaching about health choices in the PSHE curriculum, as part of a whole school approach, can have a positive impact on child health outcomes, for example reducing the chances of engaging in cigarette use ([see 2014 evidence review of health promotion in schools](#)).
- Studies have found that teaching drug education (including teaching about alcohol and tobacco) can help children to make healthier choices in adolescence and into adulthood ([see Pro Bono Economics Literature Review Evaluating the Impact of PSHE on Students' Health, Wellbeing and Academic Attainment](#)).

*By the end of secondary school King Edward's students should know:*

- the facts about legal and illegal drugs and their associated risks, including the link between drug use, and the associated risks, including the link to serious mental health conditions.
- the law relating to the supply and possession of illegal substances.
- the physical and psychological risks associated with alcohol consumption and what constitutes low risk alcohol consumption in adulthood.
- the physical and psychological consequences of addiction, including alcohol dependency.
- awareness of the dangers of drugs which are prescribed but still present serious health risks.
- the facts about the harms from smoking tobacco (particularly the link to lung cancer), the benefits of quitting and how to access support to do so.

## **Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing**

*Mental ill-health is often first experienced during early- or mid-adolescence:*

- The majority of mental disorders begin during childhood or adolescence ([Solmi et al., 2022](#)).
- This highlights the importance of teaching students how to take care of their mental wellbeing, as this may help to prevent the onset, or lessen the severity, of mental ill-health during adolescence. It may also enable students to seek support at earlier stages that they otherwise would.

*Increase in mental ill-health among children and adolescents:*

- The percentage of 7-16-year-olds in England experiencing a probable mental disorder increased by 50% between 2017 and 2022 (from 12% to 18%), while the percentage of 17-19-year-olds in England experiencing a probable mental disorder more than doubled during this period (from 10% to 26%; [NHS Digital, 2022](#)).
- The percentage of 11-16-year-old girls in England who screened positive for possible eating problems also more than doubled during this period (from 8% to 18%; [NHS Digital, 2022](#))

*Decrease in happiness among children and adolescents:*

- The proportion of 10-15-year-olds in the UK who report feeling unhappy with their life doubled between 2009 and 2021 (from 4% to 8%), while the proportion who report feeling unhappy with their appearance increased by 36% during this period (from 11% to 15%; [The Children's Society, 2023](#)). Furthermore, research conducted by Girlguiding found that the percentage of 7-21-year-old girls who reported feeling 'very happy' declined dramatically over this period (from 40% to 17% ([Girlguiding, 2023](#))).

*Climate change-related anxiety is widespread among adolescents:*

- 82% of adolescents in the UK report that they are moderately, very or extremely worried about climate change, with 22% reporting that their concerns about climate change impair their ability to function ([Hickman et al., 2021](#)).

*Examination-related stress:*

- Many students experience examination-related stress ([Putwain, 2020](#)). This can be a major source of distress, with education-related difficulties consistently being among the most common reasons for 16-18-year-olds contacting the support line Childline ([Stubbs, 2022](#)).

*How PSHE education can help:*

- PSHE education makes an important contribution to a whole-school approach to mental health, including in relation to raising awareness and signposting to where children can get further help if required.
- There are effective, evidence-based and developmentally appropriate ways to support pupils' mental well-being during PSHE education ([Education Endowment Foundation, 2021](#)). These can support pupils' ability to self-regulate ([Pandey et al., 2018](#)), which is associated with a wide range of benefits for their health and development ([Robson et al., 2020](#)).
- There is widespread recognition of PSHE education's importance in supporting children and young people's mental health, including the Coalition on Youth Mental Health in Schools, made of up leading multi-academy trusts and independent schools, which stated in [its 2021 inquiry report](#) that '*PSHE education can improve a student's physical and psychosocial well-*

*being, in turn improving academic outcomes'* and called for weekly timetabled PSHE lessons taught by specialist teachers to support children and young people's mental health.

*By the end of secondary school King Edward's students should know:*

- how to talk about their emotions accurately and sensitively, using appropriate vocabulary.
- that happiness is linked to being connected to others.
- how to recognise the early signs of mental wellbeing concerns.
- common types of mental ill health (e.g. anxiety and depression).
- how to critically evaluate when something they do or are involved in has a positive or negative effect on their own or others' mental health.
- the benefits and importance of physical exercise, time outdoors, community participation and voluntary and service-based activities on mental wellbeing and happiness

### **Basic first aid and emergency life-saving skills**

*Improving basic first aid and emergency life-saving skills saves lives:*

- Survival rates for out of hospital cardiac arrests are low, with fewer than 1 in 10 surviving, but according to the [British Heart Foundation](#), nearly 1 in 4 could survive if all young people are trained with lifesaving CPR skills.
- Research shared by the [British Red Cross](#) shows just 5% of adults have the skills and confidence to provide first aid in emergency situations
- According to the [Every Child a Lifesaver](#) coalition, 95% of parents support first aid being taught in schools

*How PSHE education can help:*

- Covering this content will give all children knowledge and skills to carry out basic emergency life-saving (ELS) when required, therefore creating a safer environment for children, in and out of school
- We have a range of [health education resources](#) on covering first aid.

*By the end of secondary school King Edward's students should know:*

- basic treatment for common injuries.
- life-saving skills, including how to administer CPR.
- the purpose of defibrillators and when one might be needed.

### **Personal safety**

*Prevalence of accidents in the home:*

- According to [Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents \(RosPA\) data](#), each year in the UK, accidents in the home cause more than 6,000 deaths and 2.7 million trips to A and E, with heat- and fall-related hazards causing the most severe injuries. This could be applicable to young people themselves, or younger children — e.g. siblings or others — that they are responsible for looking after or babysitting.

- Accidents to children and young people are a major cause of preventable death, serious injury and long-term disability. They take place for many reasons, including taking things too far in front of friends, inquisitiveness and inexperience. ([ROSPA](#)).

*Prevalence of accidents on transport or when travelling:*

- Children and young people are one of the most vulnerable road user groups. During 2018-2020, 5,164 children were killed or seriously injured on England's roads. ([Office for Health Improvement and Disparities](#)).
- During 2020-21, there were 3,942 incidents on the railways involving children and young people, including trespassing on train lines. ([Network rail trespass toolkit](#)).

*How PSHE education can help:*

- PSHE education can play a key role in preventing accidents to children and young people by helping students to identify risks such as those within the home or that could occur while travelling and providing them with tools to assess and minimise these risks.
- At the same time, PSHE education should not paint a picture of the world being a place of endless risk, or that it is possible to avoid risk entirely. It should instead support children and young people to understand risk and make informed and educated decisions.
- While learning about personal safety is not currently included within statutory PSHE requirements, it is a crucial part of the PSHE education curriculum and links to various aspects of the statutory content.

### **Contraception and sexual health**

*There has been a recent increase in sexually transmitted infection diagnoses:*

- In June 2023, [the UK Health Security Agency](#) reported a 8% increase in sexually transmitted infection (STI) diagnoses in 2022 compared with 2021, including for chlamydia (24.3%), gonorrhoea (50.3%), and syphilis (15.2%).

*Teenage pregnancy rates have fallen since the 1990s:*

- In England, Wales and Scotland the under 18 conception rate fallen considerably since the 1990s ([ONS](#))
- In 1999, the government announced [a 10-year Teenage Pregnancy Strategy for England](#), which aimed to reduce the conception rate for women aged under 18 years. This was a complex, multi-disciplinary and multi-agency strategy, not just focused on education alone, though it did emphasise prevention through improved sex and relationships education. The ONS concludes that 'These initiatives may have contributed to the low teenage conception rates we see today when compared with the last two decades'.

*Age of first sexual intercourse:*

- Although data is limited, the average age of first sexual intercourse appears to be 16 for most young people in the UK, in line with the legal age of consent. Approximately 20% of young people reported their first sexual intercourse at age 15. ([Source: AYPH](#)).

*How PSHE education can help:*

- [The British National Surveys of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles \(Natsal-3\)](#) found that men and women who reported school lessons as their main source of sex education were more likely to have started having sex later and that their 'first sex' was more likely to be consensual.

- According to a 2021 [Department for Education research briefing](#) into young people's experiences of Relationships and Sex education, "Young people who did not receive any RSE were more likely to take sexual risks, such as unprotected sex, and were more likely to contract an STI".

By the end of secondary school King Edward's students should know:

- (late secondary) the benefits of regular self-examination and screening.
- the facts about reproductive health, including fertility, and the potential impact of lifestyle on fertility for men and women and menopause.
- the facts about the full range of contraceptive choices, efficacy and options available.
- the facts around pregnancy including miscarriage.
- that there are choices in relation to pregnancy (with medically and legally accurate, impartial information on all options, including keeping the baby, adoption, abortion and where to get further help).
- how the different sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDs, are transmitted, how risk can be reduced through safer sex (including through condom use) and the importance of and facts about testing.
- about the prevalence of some STIs, the impact they can have on those who contract them and key facts about treatment.
- how to get further advice, including how and where to access confidential sexual and reproductive health advice and treatment.

## Relationships

- The Relationships core theme of PSHE education includes learning about positive friendships; bullying and unsafe relationships; relationships values; marriage and parenting; consent; and how to safely engage in relationships online. This education supports young people to develop healthy relationships with others, and reduces a range of harms to children and young people, including: reducing sexual violence; making it more likely that first sex is delayed and consensual; increasing the likelihood of safe sexual health practices, and increasing the chances that young people seek help should they experience harm.
- In 2020, the government introduced a statutory requirement for schools to cover Relationships and Sex education content alongside Health Education at key stages 3 and 4. Here we break down aspects of relationships and sex education covered in PSHE education, including what is covered in the [statutory relationships, sex and health education \(RSHE\) guidance](#).

## What we cover & why we cover it

### Friendship and bullying

*Prevalence and impact of bullying:*

- 24% of pupils aged 4-18 said they had been bullied in recent weeks, according to [a 2022 survey of over 30,000 children and young people by the Anti-Bullying Alliance](#). This figure was even higher for pupils receiving free school meals (30%) and pupils with SEND (31%). 40% of surveyed young people reported being bullied in the previous 12

- Experiencing bullying is associated with both short- and long-term impacts on mental health, emotional wellbeing, and sense of belonging in school. The broader impacts upon school and life outcomes — for both those targeted and those who carry out bullying behaviour — are also well-documented. For example, the Anti-Bullying Alliance survey also found that 21% of children who had experienced bullying daily had truanted in the last 12 months.

*How PSHE education can help:*

- According to the [Youth Endowment Fund](#), there is strong evidence that anti-bullying programmes, which includes teaching PSHE education along with other whole-school approaches, can be effective at reducing bullying in Furthermore, bullying at school is associated with later involvement in violence, so early preventative education can have ongoing impacts in addressing antisocial behaviour in young people.
- 93% of parents want schools to teach about bullying behaviours, including online, according to an October 2023 YouGov survey of parents of 5-18 year olds.<sup>[1]</sup>
- A [range of studies](#) demonstrate that PSHE education can have a significant impact on reducing bullying behaviours. [A meta-analysis of these studies](#) also indicates that there is evidence to suggest that PSHE-type anti-bullying interventions can have a positive impact on the academic achievements of students.

*By the end of secondary school King Edward's students should know:*

- the characteristics of positive and healthy friendships (in all contexts, including online) including: trust, respect, honesty, kindness, generosity, boundaries, privacy, consent and the management of conflict, reconciliation and ending relationships. This includes different (non-sexual) types of relationship
- practical steps they can take in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful relationships.
- how stereotypes, in particular stereotypes based on sex, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability, can cause damage (e.g. how they might normalise non-consensual behaviour or encourage prejudice).
- that in school and in wider society they can expect to be treated with respect by others, and that in turn they should show due
- respect to others, including people in positions of authority and due tolerance of other people's beliefs.
- about different types of bullying (including cyberbullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders to report bullying
- and how and where to get help.
- that some types of behaviour within relationships are criminal, including violent behaviour and coercive control.

## Marriage and parenting

*Types of families*

- Families are more diverse than they have ever been before; in 2022, there were 19.4 million families in the UK. Married or civil-partnered couple families accounted for the majority of families (66%), while cohabiting-couple families accounted for almost 1 in 5 families (19%) and

lone-parent families accounted for the remaining 15% (ONS). But there are also significant minorities of blended, adopted and LGBT families in the UK which should also be reflected in the curriculum.

- According to the [Girls' Attitudes survey](#), girls' aspirations about family life are changing; in 2009, girls aged 7-21 were most likely to cite having a partner or being married as their main aspiration for the future (60% of respondents chose this), and having children was the third most popular aspiration, at 47%. However, in 2023, only 48% of girls aspired to having a partner/being married, and only 33% of girls cited having a baby as an aspiration for their future.

#### *Family life affects wellbeing*

- According to the [DfE's State of the Nation report 2022](#), children and young people's happiness with family has remained consistent in recent years, however, the percentage of those who reported low levels of happiness with their family has increased since the pandemic — from 3.7% in 2019 to 8.3% in 2022.
- Several [studies](#) suggest that good quality relationships and social connectedness are strongly associated with better wellbeing and health across the life course.

#### *How PSHE education can help:*

- Teaching young people about the features of positive, healthy, happy, committed relationships and family units will support them to thrive in their own relationships in the future, and in turn to benefit society.

#### *By the end of secondary school King Edward's students should know:*

- that there are different types of committed, stable
- how these relationships might contribute to human happiness and their importance for bringing up
- what marriage is, including their legal status g. that marriage carries legal rights and protections not available to couples who are cohabiting or who have married, for example, in an unregistered religious ceremony.
- why marriage is an important relationship choice for many couples and why it must be freely entered
- the characteristics and legal status of other types of long-term
- the roles and responsibilities of parents with respect to raising of children, including the characteristics of successful parenting.

### **Consent**

#### *Young people are struggling to navigate consent in their daily relationships*

- In its [review of sexual abuse in schools](#), Ofsted found that for many children and young people, incidents of sexual harassment and online sexual abuse were so commonplace they see no point in reporting
- In the [Girl's Attitudes survey](#), **33% of girls and young women** aged 13-21 say they often feel or experience sexual pressure, compared to 16% in 2016, demonstrating a growing need for

young people to be taught about seeking, giving and not giving consent, including the ethical and legal duty not to apply pressure to one another.

*Sex education is associated with later first sexual experiences and greater likelihood that these experiences are consensual*

- **The British National Surveys of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles (Natsal-3)** found that men and women who reported school lessons as their main source of sex education were more likely to have started having sex later and that their 'first sex' was more likely to be consensual.
- **Data from the Longitudinal Studies of Young People in England (LSYPE)** shows that those who reported that they had not received any RSE were more likely to take more sexual risks across a range of measures. They were 11 percentage points more likely than those who received RSE in both primary and secondary school to have said that they had had sex before the legal age of consent (35%, versus 24%); 13 percentage points more likely to have said that they had had unprotected sex (57%, versus 44%), and 6 percentage points more likely to have said that they had contracted an STI (10% versus 4%).
- **Evidence from the LSYPE2 study** also showed that the number of young people who reported having had their first sexual intercourse before 16 (the legal age of consent) was lower at LSYPE2 (2018 study) compared to the previous LSYPE1 study from 2009. In 2009, 34% of sexually active young people aged 18/19 said they had sex before age 16, versus 25% in 2018 — suggesting a significant improvement.

*How PSHE education can help:*

- Teaching about consent in secondary school is essential to helping young people navigate consent in intimate and sexual relationships as they move into adulthood. This is likely to include teaching about the legal age of consent; recognising and establishing personal boundaries; strategies to communicate consent; to ask for, give or not give consent in different contexts (including recognising the impact that pressure, coercion, drugs and alcohol and the sexualisation in the media can have someone's ability to give consent).
- Ofsted's **review of sexual abuse in schools** included a key recommendation that schools need a dedicated, carefully sequenced RSHE curriculum to help address issues related to sexual abuse and consent, which should include: "*time for open discussion of topics that children and young people tell us they find particularly difficult, such as consent and the sending of nudes.*"
- **The Rotherham CSE report** from Alexis Jay OBE stated that '*The young people we met in the course of the Inquiry were scathing about the sex education they received at school*' and recommended that '*Relationships and sex education must be provided by trained practitioners in every educational setting for all children*' and include '*internet safety and all forms of bullying and harassment and the getting and giving of consent.*'
- According to a 2021 **Department for Education research briefing** into young people's experiences of Relationships and Sex education, "*Young people who were taught about 'how to say no to sex', 'LGBT relationships', or 'relationships' were more likely to say that their RSE was 'very useful' three years later compared to those who had not.*"

*By the end of secondary school students should know:*

- the concepts of, and laws relating to, sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, forced marriage, honour-based violence and FGM, and how these can affect current and future relationships.

- how people can actively communicate and recognise consent from others, including sexual consent, and how and when consent can be withdrawn (in all contexts, including online).
- practical steps they can take in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful relationships
- how stereotypes, in particular stereotypes based on sex, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability, can cause damage (e.g. how they might normalise non-consensual behaviour or encourage prejudice).
- how to recognise the characteristics and positive aspects of healthy one-to-one intimate relationships, which include mutual respect, consent, loyalty, trust, shared interests and outlook, sex and friendship.
- that there are a range of strategies for identifying and managing sexual pressure, including understanding peer pressure, resisting pressure and not pressurising others.
- that they have a choice to delay sex or to enjoy intimacy without sex.
- Pupils should be made aware of the relevant legal provisions when relevant topics are being taught, including for example consent, including the age of consent.

### **Safe and unsafe relationships**

#### *Prevalence of harassment, abuse and exploitation:*

- In its [review of sexual abuse in schools](#), Ofsted found that for many children and young people, incidents of sexual harassment and online sexual abuse were so commonplace they see no point in reporting. For example, they found that 92% of girls, and 74% of boys, said sexist name-calling happens a lot or sometimes to them or their peers. The frequency of these harmful sexual behaviours means that some children and young people consider them normal.
- Further to this, [NSPCC research](#) estimates that approximately 1 in 20 children in the UK have been sexually abused, with 90% of this abuse being inflicted by someone they know. Approximately one-third of child sexual abuse is committed by under 18's. Children may be unaware they are being exposed to something that is wrong and lack the ability to understand and verbalise their experiences ([McElvaney, 2019](#)).
- October 2023 YouGov polling of just under 1000 parents [\[1\]](#) showed that nearly 9 out of 10 (88%) parents feel that schools and parents have a shared responsibility to teach children about digital safety issues including fake news, negative online influencers, sending/receiving sexual images (only 6% think it's parents' responsibility alone). 95% of parents polled by YouGov also felt schools had a responsibility to teach about grooming and abusive behaviour online.
- According to [2022 research by Safelives](#), 61% of LGBT+ students disagree that LGBT+ relationships are being threaded throughout RSE, as is legally required by the statutory RSHE guidance. As a result, they report feeling less comfortable, less confident about where to go for support if they or someone they know is experiencing a toxic relationship or sexual abuse, and a significantly smaller proportion have a strong understanding of toxic and healthy relationships.

#### *How PSHE education can help*

- PSHE education has the potential to help young people recognise safe and unsafe relationships, identify behaviours that are abusive, and build their confidence to seek support, should they experience or witness abuse. In this way, the PSHE education is a key safeguarding tool.

- Ofsted's [review of sexual abuse in schools](#) included a key recommendation that schools need a dedicated, carefully sequenced RSHE curriculum to help address issues related to sexual abuse and consent, which should include: "*time for open discussion of topics that children and young people tell us they find particularly difficult, such as consent and the sending of nudes.*"
- A [2017 Public Health England report on child sexual exploitation \(CSE\)](#) found that the existing body of evidence '*repeatedly highlights the critical role of Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) and Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) in addressing these issues*'.
- A [Cochrane review \(2015\)](#) found that '*children who are taught about preventing sexual abuse at school are more likely to tell an adult if they had, or were actually experiencing sexual abuse*'.
- [Youth Endowment Fund \(YEF\) Toolkit research](#) found that relationship violence prevention lessons and activities can reduce all types of dating and relationship violence, including emotional, physical and sexual violence, and violence that takes place online.
- A [systematic literature review of school-based RSE by Goldfarb and Lieberman \(2021\)](#) found strong evidence that it can reduce sexual violence and domestic violence.

*By the end of secondary school King Edward's students should know:*

- the concepts of, and laws relating to, sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, forced marriage, honour-based violence and FGM, and how these can affect current and future relationships.
- that some types of behaviour within relationships are criminal, including violent behaviour and coercive
- what constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why these are always
- the legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality (particularly with reference to the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010) and that everyone is unique and equal.
- how to: determine whether other children, adults or sources of information are trustworthy: judge when a family, friend, intimate or other relationship is unsafe (and to recognise this in others' relationships); and, how to seek help or advice, including reporting concerns about others, if needed.

### **The dangers of pornography and sending nude images**

#### *Prevalence of online pornography and image sharing*

- Research from [Revealing Reality](#) found that six in ten girls and three in ten boys said they'd been asked to share a nude by someone else. And more than half of girls and nearly a third of boys said they had been sent a nude or nearly nude image. 34% of girls and 9% of boys were first asked to share a nude aged 13 or
- This is also a gendered issue, affecting young women and girls significantly more than boys. According to the [Girl's Attitudes survey 2023](#), 73% of girls and young women aged 13-21 have received unwanted sexual photos
- A significant proportion of young people are regularly accessing pornography online, with first experiences of pornography getting younger. Research from the [Children's Commissioner](#) shows that the average age at which children first see pornography is just under 13. Whilst 38% of 16-21 year olds say they encountered pornography accidentally, 50% of the same age group said they intentionally sought pornography out online, with a fifth of males accessing porn at least once a day.

- The PSHE Association has long been concerned about the prevalence and nature of online pornography and its impact on children and young people. Our [impact briefing on this topic](#) collates research and statistics into how pornography access affects young people's attitudes and behaviours.
- We and other children's charities and child safety advocates [agree on the need for age verification and supported measures included in the Online Safety Act](#), whilst also being clear on the necessity for age-appropriate education that explores the risks and dangerous impacts of pornography access on children and young people.
- Our Fully Human research arm has also explored how the pornography industry shapes people's sexuality, self and values towards others' profit. Read the [Fully Human pornography report](#).

#### *Engaging in these behaviours can cause life-long harm*

- According to the [Revealing Reality](#) research, as well as encountering more requests for images and more consequences, girls also experience worse outcomes when engaging in image sharing, including more social shaming, teasing, and non-consensual sharing of their images.
- Research by the [Children's Commissioner](#) demonstrates that the majority (79%) of 18-21-year olds had seen pornographic content online involving sexual violence before turning 18. Early exposure to pornography and frequent consumption of pornography significantly increase the likelihood of encountering sexually violent content. In this research, 58% of young people aged 16-21 agreed that viewing pornography affects young people's behaviours towards one another. 47% of young people aged 16-21 stated that girls 'expect' sex to involve aggression, a further 42% stated that most girls 'enjoy' sexual aggression.
- Pornography has real, ongoing harms for all people around how they feel about themselves and the ways in which they develop and maintain intimate relationships. This is particularly acute when people are exposed to pornography during adolescence, as they are developing their understanding and expectations relating to sexuality and sexual relationships. The increase and nature of online pornography has also exposed young people to violent, obscene and graphic content, which in turn affects their own behaviours and expectations around nude image sharing.

#### *How PSHE education can help:*

- Research from the [NSPCC](#) indicates that young people who have had education about online pornography within school may be less negatively influenced by online pornography, or to believe the images they saw were representative of 'real-life sex', than young people who have not received lessons about online pornography.
- The [Children's commissioner](#) has highlighted RSE lessons as a key tool to protect children from the harms of pornography: *"These issues must be approached in an age-appropriate way, from the later years of primary school and throughout secondary school and college years, with an overarching objective to prevent harm and equip pupils to have healthy, safe and consenting relationships. Approaches to teaching children about pornography should sit within a broader RSE strategy."*
- Read the PSHE Association's [research briefing and teacher guidance](#) for detailed support in approaching this issue safely and effectively.

#### *By the end of secondary school King Edward's students should know:*

- the impact of viewing harmful
- that specifically sexually explicit material g. pornography presents a distorted picture of sexual behaviours, can damage the way people see themselves in relation to others and negatively affect how they behave towards sexual partners.
- that sharing and viewing indecent images of children (including those created by children) is a criminal offence which carries severe penalties including jail.
- about online risks, including that any material someone provides to another has the potential to be shared online and the difficulty of removing potentially compromising material placed online.
- not to provide material to others that they would not want shared further and not to share personal material which is sent to

## **Living in the wider world**

The Living in the wider world core theme of PSHE education prepares young people for adulthood, by covering learning about economic wellbeing; career pathways and choices, including GCSE options and work experience; digital and media literacy; young people's rights in the community; and social issues such as extremism and radicalisation. Although some teaching in this theme is non-statutory, there are significant overlaps with the relationships, sex and health education statutory guidance. The [Careers Strategy 2023](#) also places an expectation on secondary schools to 'have a stable, structured careers programme that has the explicit backing of the senior management team and has an identified and appropriately trained person responsible for it'. Many schools achieve this through including career-related learning in their PSHE curriculum.

## **What we cover & why we cover it**

### **Economic wellbeing**

*Disadvantaged young people are more likely to miss out:*

- There are disparities in the provision of financial education in schools and discussions around how money works at home across socio-economic backgrounds. Disadvantaged young people are less likely to be taught about finances in the late primary phase, affecting these skills into teenage years and perpetuating inequalities ([Anders, Jerrim & MacMillan](#)).

*Young people are exposed to increasing economic risk online:*

- Younger audiences tend to be targeted by advertising for schemes such as Buy Now, Pay Later — including through targeted advertising on social media ([MaPS, Buy Now Pay Later review](#)).
- A recent [ParentZone survey](#) found that almost all young people aged 13-18 (96%) buy things online, either physical goods or digital purchases, and many (68%) do so without any parent supervision, with over a third saying they spend more than £10 per week. However, 42% of these young people have lost money, typically through accidentally buying or subscribing to something, or being scammed.

*How PSHE education can help*

- PSHE education can support young people to recognise the emotional and behavioural aspects of their financial choices, for example, the influences on them to spend money on particular things (targeted advertising, in-app purchases, peer pressure and internal influences), and how to manage It can help them recognise the feelings, values and beliefs

associated with money and how this can affect both people's wellbeing and their spending decisions.

- Young people aged 7-17 who have meaningful financial education are more likely to: feel confident about managing money, actively save, have a positive (and less anxious) relationship with money, and demonstrate day-to-day financial skills such as comparing prices and planning ahead ([MaPS Financial Wellbeing survey](#)) ([MaPS Financial education secondary schools guidance](#)).
- The [Children's Commissioner survey](#) into young people's experiences of PSHE found that students identified economic wellbeing and budgeting to be the most helpful topics they had been taught (88% and 87% of students named these topics as helpful). However, these topics are currently underdelivered in the curriculum, with 32% of students saying they had not learned about any finance or career topics.

### **Careers education**

*Career ambitions are important to young people*

- [Nearly seven in ten 9-17 year olds](#) (69%) said that having a good job or career was one of their main priorities when they grow up — the most common answer for this age group. This was even more important for children from deprived backgrounds: 72% of children in the most deprived neighbourhoods said this, compared with 68% of children in the most affluent
- Many children and young people worry about whether they will end up in a good 37% of children aged 9-17 said that this was one of their main worries about the future.
- Research funded by The Health Foundation has suggested that strengthening careers education may also support the mental health and wellbeing of students, especially those who do not intend to go to university, because it may help them to feel more confident and optimistic about their future prospects ([McCurdy & Murphy, 2024](#)).

*How PSHE education can help*

- [A 2023 Ofsted review into careers guidance in schools](#) stated that "*the available evidence does suggest it can be more effective when it is specifically timetabled within the PSHE curriculum*" and signposts the PSHE Association Programme of study as something schools can draw upon to help plan their careers education content.
- [Careers Guidance – statutory guidance from DfE states that](#): High quality careers education and guidance in school or college is critical to young people's futures. It helps to prepare them for the workplace by providing a clear understanding of the world of work including the routes to jobs and careers that they might find engaging and rewarding. The first Gatsby benchmark states that: Every school and college should have a stable, structured careers programme that has the explicit backing of the senior management team and has an identified and appropriately trained person responsible for it.

### **Digital and media literacy**

*Children are actively online by the time they reach secondary school*

- Almost all children own a phone by age 13, and 93% of 12-15-year-olds use social media. Despite age restrictions of 13 for most social media platforms, by age 11, 59% of children have at least one social media profile. ([Ofcom, 2023](#))
- Further, young people are increasingly creators of their own online content, with 47% of 12-15-year-olds post their own content on video sharing ([Ofcom, 2023](#))

- Young people disproportionately turn to **social media and messaging services for news**, where journalistic standards are not required and disinformation and misinformation can be shared easily. Digital literacy is crucial for young people as it equips them to navigate the complex online landscape, for example helping them to discern real from fake information, support their safety and that of others, and prepare for future careers requiring digital skills (**Ilomäki et al, 2023**).

#### *Being online presents risks*

- It is **well evidenced** that online technologies can expose young people to a range of risks, including online grooming, online bullying, harmful content and misinformation, as well as risks related to privacy and commercial use of data. For example;
  - **60% of girls and young women aged 11-21** say they worry about the negative impact being online has on their mental
  - 76% of 12-15-year-olds play games online, and 42% have spoken to people they only know through the game, meaning young people are increasingly exposed to unknown people online. 35% of 12-15-year-olds experience a person being nasty or hurtful to them via communication technology (**Ofcom, 2023**).
  - **Ofcom's 2023 news consumption report** showed that while the BBC has the highest reach of any news organisation, with its content reaching 39% of this age group, after that, TikTok (28%), YouTube (25%) and Instagram (25%) are the three most used individual sources for news. One in ten teens cited TikTok as their main source of news, even though there have been concerns raised regarding the amount of misinformation on the platform, **including manipulated video and photos**.

#### *How PSHE education can help*

- The **Children's Commissioner survey** into young people's experiences of PSHE found that students were mostly likely to report having learned about how to stay safe online in PSHE education, (83% of children said this) and three-quarters of students (76%) think these lessons are very good or fairly good.
- The **UK Council for Internet Safety** has produced a framework outlining a range of learning opportunities that should be considered when developing the PSHE curriculum.
- Search the range of **media and digital literacy resources** highlighted on our site for lesson plans on covering many aspects of online safety, and media and digital literacy.

#### *By the end of secondary school King Edward's students should know:*

- their rights, responsibilities and opportunities online, including that the same expectations of behaviour apply in all contexts, including
- about online risks, including that any material someone provides to another has the potential to be shared online and the difficulty of removing potentially compromising material placed online
- how advertising and information is targeted at them and how to be a discerning consumer of information online.

#### **Fraud, scams and gambling**

*Fraud is an increasing risk for young people*

- Young people (especially young people in care) are targets of and have increased exposure to This includes, but is not limited to, recruiting young people as 'money mules'. Preventative education can help them to assess risk and identify when actions they're being asked to undertake in relation to finance are illegal ([APPG financial crime](#), [APPG financial education for children in care](#)).
- Victims of fraud are also becoming younger, with fraudsters targeting under 21 year olds; an age group which saw 2,788 individuals recorded to the Cifas National Fraud Database in 2021. Research conducted by Cifas also suggests that young people do not always identify acts such as lying on a CV, using their parents' details to get cheaper car insurance or taking out mobile phone insurance after breaking their phone as 'fraudulent conduct'. Rather, they see these types of behaviours as excusable, victimless and Education is therefore needed to prevent young people committing fraud unknowingly.
- In 2019, the [Gambling Commission's report](#) found that 11% of 11-to-16-year-olds had spent their own money on gambling in the previous week.
- Other financial harms are present in young people's lives including in-game chance-based mechanisms that borrow techniques from gambling such as 'loot boxes' and the presence of desirable 'collectibles', making it difficult for young people to track their spending. These are evidenced to cause financial and emotional harm ([Ash, Gordon & Mills](#)) and are prevalent in online games deemed suitable for children ([Zendle et al](#)).

#### *How PSHE education can help*

- Through PSHE education, young people can become more aware of what personal data they should and should not share online, the warning signs of scams or fraudulent activity, how to get help should they become a victim of fraud, and the risks associated with gambling.
- Read the PSHE Association's [teacher handbook](#) on how to effectively address gambling through PSHE education.

#### *By the end of secondary school King Edward's students should know:*

- their rights, responsibilities and opportunities online, including that the same expectations of behaviour apply in all contexts, including
- about online risks, including that any material someone provides to another has the potential to be shared online and the difficulty of removing potentially compromising material placed online.
- not to provide material to others that they would not want shared further and not to share personal material which is sent to
- what to do and where to get support to report material or manage issues
- how information and data is generated, collected, shared and used
- 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, over-reliance on online relationships including social media, the risks related to online gambling including the accumulation of debt, how advertising and information is targeted at them and how to be a discerning consumer of information online.

## **Prejudice, discrimination, extremism and radicalisation**

*Young people are exposed to violent and hateful content online*

- 37% of all mobile internet traffic globally is accounted for by people watching YouTube videos, and 70% of all YouTube videos watched are recommended by the platform's algorithm (not videos that have been deliberately chosen by the viewer), meaning that around 25% of all mobile internet traffic in the world is people watching videos that YouTube has selected for them (Laura [Bates, Men Who Hate Women, 2020](#)). This is relevant to the issue of extremism and radicalisation because the algorithms have been found to suggest more extreme content — potentially directing viewers to more radicalised content the longer they watch recommended videos.
- Violent content is often shared online, including on social media platforms, and can cause a high degree of distress ([NSPCC, 2022](#); [Revealing Reality, 2023](#); [Stubbs et al., 2022](#)). This highlights the need to support young people to both safely navigate, and behave respectfully in, online spaces. It also highlights the need to teach young people how to seek support if they do encounter online material that they find distressing — as the same research suggests that some young people experience such encounters as confusing and shameful, and therefore 'suffer in silence'.
- Extreme content encouraging prejudicial views and discrimination are shared in online spaces and has links to mainstream social media platforms. For example, content shared by some incel (involuntarily celebrate) groups online is racist, anti-semitic and misogynistic, in addition to encouraging self-harm and suicide ([CCDH, 2022](#)).
- The UK has seen rising reports of hate crimes. Though some of this can be accounted for by better police recording procedures, there have been spikes in hate crime. This especially during times such as referendums, after terrorist attacks, and during protests ([Zayed & Allen, House of Commons Library, 2024](#)).

*There are existing duties on schools to teach about community and responsibility*

- [DfE: Promoting British Values as part of SMSC in schools](#) states that pupils must be encouraged to regard people of all faiths, races and cultures with respect and Schools should promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- Through their SMSC provision, schools should further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling students to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures.

*How PSHE education can help*

- PSHE lessons can support young people to recognise and celebrate difference within their communities. Lessons can also teach young people to identify recruitment techniques used by extremist groups, and clarify which behaviours are against the law.

*By the end of secondary school students should know:*

- practical steps they can take in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful
- how stereotypes, in particular stereotypes based on sex, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability, can cause damage (e.g. how they might normalise non-consensual behaviour or encourage prejudice).

- that in school and in wider society they can expect to be treated with respect by others, and that in turn they should show due respect to others, including people in positions of authority and due tolerance of other people's beliefs.
- the legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality (particularly with reference to the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010) and that everyone is unique and equal.
- Pupils should be made aware of the relevant legal provisions when relevant topics are being taught, including for example: extremism/radicalisation, hate crime.

#### Extras

Appropriate sources of evidence used throughout teaching the 'Youth Health Data' tool from the Association for Young People's Health and the 'Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people' survey data for further research and statistics.