

**Healthy Relationships and
Sex Education (HRSE) Policy
Heathcote School and Science College**



Approved by the Governing Board: Autumn 2025

To be reviewed: Annually

Next review date: Autumn 2026

Other Documentation

This Policy should be used in reference with the following documents;

- Safeguarding Policy
- Learning and Teaching Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Equality Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy

The School HRSE Policy is written in line with the following areas of legislation and guidance.

- [Statutory Guidance on RSHE 2019](#) with the incoming
- [Further statutory guidance in place from Sept 2026](#)
- Equality Act 2010
- The Public Sector Equality Duty 2014

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Introduction and Policy Pledge

The DfE are introducing a [new RSE curriculum](#) in September 2026. In light of the guidance and expectations of content coverage and delivery we have decided to **begin** to implement aspects of the statutory guidance in advance to provide some lead in time and develop curriculum pathways early. There are defined areas of the new guidance that will not be taught until the new guidance has become statutory and not before any full consultation has taken place with all school partners. Therefore, there will be a full parent/carers and governor consultation during the academic year 2025/2026 before the statutory guidance is fully implemented.

At Heathcote School, we define the statutory RSHE guidance from the Department for Education as the Healthy Relationships and Sex Education (HRSE) curriculum. This policy outlines the implementation of this guidance across the Heathcote School community. At Heathcote School, we aim to ensure that academic achievement and personal development of all pupils is our utmost priority and therefore decisions regarding our curriculum and content must reflect this pledge. To achieve this, it is our intention to teach high quality, age appropriate, pupil-sensitive, evidence-based HRSE that demonstrates a respect for the law and all communities that call Waltham Forest their home. It is expected that HRSE at Heathcote School will help pupils to learn about themselves and the world they live in, giving them the skills, understanding and information they need for life. This will help them to stay safe and to flourish, not just in childhood, but into adulthood and for the rest of their lives. This is why HRSE is such an important part of the curriculum.

The aims of HRSE and this policy are to:

- Provide a framework in which sensitive discussions can take place
- To recognise that relationships and the understanding of diverse relationships, takes place throughout the curriculum
- Prepare pupils for puberty, and give them an understanding of sexual development and the importance of health and hygiene
- Help pupils develop feelings of self-respect, confidence and empathy, especially those who are LGBT+, Global Majority and those with SEND
- Create a positive culture around issues of sexuality and relationships
- Assist pupils with the emotional literacy in order to describe themselves, their bodies and their sexuality
- To recognise that HRSE is part of the wider development of a pupil's education.

The HRSE policy supports and complements the following Heathcote School policies:

- Heathcote School Child Protection and Safeguarding policy,
- Heathcote School ICT and Acceptable User policy
- Heathcote School Peer on Peer Abuse and Anti-bullying policy,
- SEND policy

Terminology

PIE – Philosophy Identity and Ethics

LGBTQ+- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual. Transgender +

RSE- Relationship and Sex Education
HRSE- Healthy Relationships and Sex Education
SEND- Special Educational Needs and Disability
PSHE- Personal, Social, Health education

Definition of HRSE

HRSE is about the emotional, social and cultural development of pupils, and involves learning about relationships, sexual health, sexuality, healthy lifestyles, diversity and personal identity. HRSE involves a combination of sharing information, and exploring issues and values. HRSE is not about the promotion of sexual activity, more, that it normalises sexual activity as part of healthy human relationships.

We believe HRSE is important for our pupils and our school because every pupil deserves as a basic human right to the entitlement to a fully inclusive education. The central role that relationships and sex education plays within a fully inclusive education helps to build on the ethos and values of the school. We believe that Healthy Relationships and Sex Education plays a key part in the broad and balanced curriculum and part of the wider development that is part of every child's learning experience at Heathcote School. We view the partnership of home and school as vital in providing the context in which pupils at Heathcote School are able to fully understand the way that healthy relationships develop. The support provided by parents and carers for young people to fully comprehend relationships and sex education is vital to a high-quality delivery of HRSE. Disabled and LGBTQ+ pupils can often be victimised both in and out of school and we believe that an inclusive HRSE approach can play an important role in the safeguarding of children's basic human rights and equally support parents and carers. HRSE helps the school fulfil its schools aims.

The aims are:

- all members of the school community feel safe
- there is mutual respect amongst all
- self-discipline is expected
- pupils are responsible for themselves and others
- self-confidence is nurtured
- the achievements of all are celebrated
- there is a positive attitude towards everyone regardless of their personal characteristics
- pupils are encouraged to achieve their very best and to become lifelong learners
- everyone is encouraged to become active global citizens who are responsible for their environment.

At Heathcote School, we ensure HRSE is inclusive and meets the needs of all our pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) by placing equalities at the heart of the delivery of HRSE. The delivery of HRSE is underpinned by the belief that pupils with recognised disabilities learn in a multitude of different ways and that HRSE lessons are opportunities for all pupils to thrive. It is also underpinned by the belief that every pupil may have an emerging educational need, possibly not recognised at that moment. In addition, pupils can become physically or mentally compromised at any stage throughout

their life, including at school. Therefore, an inclusive experience of education is the aim of HRSE and its delivery. We accept the neurodiversity of all children and adults along with the social model of disability at Heathcote School. We believe by teaching HRSE in this way we create an environment where all relationships, including sexual relationships, of disabled people are respected. Recognising that Black and those pupils with educational needs are more likely to be excluded than other pupils and that a fully inclusive HRSE is part of an equalities approach which seeks to address this issue. We ensure HRSE fosters race, gender and LGBTQIA+ equality by recognising that all relationships and sexual relationships are usual, common and part of everyday life experiences and that this is respected in the environment created in the classroom and in the school as a whole. Through the delivery, resources, content and teaching of HRSE race, gender and LGBTQIA+ equality is addressed. This is then extended further in recognising national and global events such as awareness days, Black History Month, International Women's Day and LGBTQIA+ History Month. Through a non-discriminatory approach to inequalities, we ensure that gender and LGBTQIA+ equality is promoted. We believe that a fully inclusive HRSE programme of study and a whole school approach helps foster good mental health and well-being and benefits all within our school community.

The intended outcomes of our programme are that pupils will:

- know and understand that healthy relationships, sex, sexual relationships, puberty, menopause and changes to the body and mind are part of life's experiences. That a healthy relationship is built on mutual trust and respect. That relationships, body parts and family life will be varied and is part of human Neurodiversity. That adults play an important role in a child's development during puberty and adolescence. How the law protects young people from exploitation and how the law impacts upon their life through choices they make. That consent is crucial to a healthy relationship.
- understand they have a right to be treated equally under the law and to be fully included in the HRSE programme of study. To be treated and educated in a non-discriminatory environment. To feel safe and able to express themselves in a respectful manner about themselves and others
- understand they have a responsibility to take their own health and well-being, including their relationships, seriously and are responsible for their choices and actions. To conduct themselves appropriately and treat others respectfully.

To comply with school rules and expectations including those in HRSE lessons.

Develop the skills of:

- recognising and assessing potential risks
- assertiveness
- seeking help and support when required
- informed decision-making
- self-respect and empathy for others
- recognising and maximising a healthy lifestyle
- managing conflict
- discussion and group work
- reflection and self-assessment
- emotional literacy and evaluative skills

- communication, including how to manage changing relationships and emotions

HRSE Roles and Responsibilities

The HRSE programme is led by the Head of RE and PIE (Philosophy, Identity and Ethics). This position is monitored and overseen by a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) who will ensure that this policy and its contents are implemented and followed. The implementation of this policy will be reviewed by the Behaviour, Attitudes and Personal Development group in the Heathcote SLT along with Governors carrying out specific roles relevant to the curriculum and safeguarding. These positions will be supported by the whole school community, including staff, pupils, governors and parents/carers. The Governing Body will hold the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy. The Assistant Headteacher overseeing HRSE will receive HRSE training on all aspects of equalities within HRSE and any National Curriculum updates in order to support pupils with their development and understanding of the relationships in their life, in particular those with protected characteristics. The wider HRSE curriculum will be distributed across the curriculum amongst departments where the subject content supports aspects of the HRSE curriculum, for example Science will cover key elements of sexual health and reproduction, Physical Education would be looking at aspects of physical wellbeing and healthy lifestyles, and Computer Science/IT will be covering elements regarding maintaining safety in the online space. Aspects of HRSE will also be delivered through our PIE curriculum which is delivered by form tutors on a biweekly basis. Form tutors were chosen to undertake this role as they have the most contact with their form tutees. It is hoped that these relationships will encourage pupils to be receptive to the topics taught and encourage questions and in more serious cases potential disclosures. Some topics will be delivered with input from the Waltham Forest Sexual Health Outreach Team.

All staff teaching PIE will have materials provided in advance and any subsequent training provided., this will be done through bespoke topic related sessions based upon the curriculum being taught that half term. PIE materials are shared with the SEN department for scrutiny and to enable them to interpret and adjust the content accordingly for those pupils requiring amended versions. This will also be distributed to any teaching assistants (TAs) who will be supporting our SEND pupils thus allowing for sessions to be differentiated and planned or in advance.

It is our aim at Heathcote to provide all our pupils with high quality, pupils sensitive, evidence based and age and developmentally appropriate HRSE that is sensitive to our pupil's background and needs. If there are any questions about what we teach and why then please contact the head of RE and PIE via email at:

skomba-kono@heathcote.waltham.sch.uk

HRSE Curriculum Structure

Our HRSE programme is an integral part of our whole school PIE education provision and will, as a minimum cover:

- puberty
- menstruation

- menopause
- body parts and body changes
- healthy and unhealthy relations
- consent
- conception and contraception
- sexually-transmitted infections
- anonymous questions
- signposting services such as local health centres and the school nurse.

Our HRSE programme is inclusive of all pupils and all abilities. We will ensure HRSE is matched to the needs of our pupils by understanding the complex needs of all pupils and using a variety of teaching strategies to meet those needs. Our HRSE programme will be planned and delivered through PIE lessons. Links will be made to other area such as CSE, FGM, healthy relationships, the online space and mental health and wellbeing.

Our HRSE programme will be taught through a range of teaching methods and interactive activities, including:

- group and paired work
- questioning
- extended reading or flipped learning
- workshops, seminars and drop-down days
- use of ICT/Online space
- use of film/photographic and media outlets.

From 2025-26, pupils in Year 7-13 will have a one-hour lesson every fortnight (week B). This will be supplemented with a tutorial programme, assemblies, guest speakers and various workshops or seminars.

Lessons will be differentiated by activities and a range of assessments methods. This will complement the belief that all pupils learn in a variety of ways and therefore will be assessed in a number of ways to ensure pupils have access and ownership over the HRSE learning process. High quality resources will support our HRSE provision and will be regularly reviewed by the Head of RE and PIE. Selected resources, such as use of ICT, books and film clips will be used which support and promote understanding within a values context and underpin the delivery of HRSE.

HRSE will link to and specifically compliment learning in many aspects of PIE, Religious Education and Citizenship. In addition, it will also compliment other aspects of the school curriculum for example looking at literacy and the media, which links with English and ICT. Pupils will be encouraged to reflect on their own learning and progress by reflecting upon what they have learned and how they have learned. Assessment in HRSE will take the approach that assessment is an ongoing process which requires both pupils and teachers to reflect upon the learning in lessons. An overview of the learning in each year group can be found in Appendix 2.

We will ensure a safe learning environment by establishing ground rules for lessons in HRSE. Teachers and pupils will agree ground rules by discussing and considering morals,

ethics and values. This will be done in the first lesson, exploring what rules and behaviours are required for a safe and mutually respectful learning environment. This will include the roles and responsibilities of the teacher. Distancing techniques such as giving advice to peers, magazine reviews, role play are used because they enable pupils to depersonalise themselves from the situation and remove the emotional attachment to an issue. Pupils' questions will be answered by the teacher. Sensitive issues will be handled by the teacher through a range of strategies which enable a safe and secure learning environment for example using the phrase 'someone I know' in order to avoid naming people. Any questions which are difficult to answer will be deferred. We recognise that HRSE will raise controversial issues. The aim of the safe practice is to enable an open, honest learning environment, in which discussion is not shut down, and is explored fully in a respectful manner. All staff teaching HRSE will be supported by regular training to keep up to date with knowledge and any changes.

Sex Education will be taught in the last term of the academic year for all year groups. Please see Appendix 2 for more details on the overview of PIE and also Appendix 4 for topic and lesson break down. Human reproduction will also be taught and this can be explained more using Appendix 1.

How will we ensure lessons are taught sensitively?

Puberty and menstruation, human reproduction and birth are seen as sensitive topics to teach in HRSE and this will be taught sensitively by trained staff. Staff will be expected to put in measures and strategies to make sure that pupils feel at ease when talking about these topics.

We will incorporate an Anonymous Question box to facilitate sensitive or difficult topics for pupils to discuss in lessons.

How will we ensure effective communication with parents/carers?

At Heathcote School, we aim to build strong relationships with parents and carers as we believe that reinforcing a positive relationship between both parties will promote the learning and personal development of our pupils. To keep parents informed Heathcote School will update parents via Arbour when sex education is due to be taught. In addition, parents will also be informed whenever the school plans to deliver additional seminars/workshops in relation to the PIE curriculum. At Heathcote we value educational exposure to a range of professional and vocational agencies whom are often specialists in their field and offer a different learning experience for our pupils, all of which enrich our curriculum topics.

Statutory Content in HRSE

We are required to teach HRSE as part of our school commitment to a broad and balanced curriculum and school aims and this informs the ethos and principles of this policy. Current regulations and guidance from the Department for Education state that all secondary schools must deliver [Relationships and Sex Education](#) in line with May 24 guidance. The Department for Education has produced further guidance for schools for implementation from September

2026 (see Appendix 2). We are beginning to build this into our current curriculum and embed aspects in advance of the guidance becoming statutory. We will not be implementing any of the more contentious or challenging topics before we have undergone a full consultation with parent/carers and governors. For example, content around pornography, female genital mutilation, bereavement, self-harm and suicide prevention, eating disorders and menstruation will not be covered until such time a policy review and consultation has taken place.

There are some areas in the new guidance which are very much built upon content which is already being addressed in the current guidance such as online safety, health lifestyles and relationships and mental health and wellbeing.

At Heathcote School we cover the following elements of the guidance in the following subject areas. These are statutory for all pupils. We are clear that our aim is to educate pupils about these important subjects not to in any way promote the act of sexual intercourse.

Human Reproduction in Science

This component of the HRSE curriculum is taught in science lessons at Key Stages 3 and 4. Within the national guidance, the Science curriculum must include a recap about menstruation and puberty, teaching about human reproduction and birth, includes drugs education and the study of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. There continues to be no parental right to withdraw from Science in the National Curriculum.

Health Education (Physical Health and Mental Wellbeing) in PIE

This element of the curriculum is taught in PIE.

The aim of Health Education is to give pupils the information that they need to make good decisions about their physical and mental health along with their wellbeing. Pupils' will recognise what is normal and what is an issue in themselves and others, and how to seek support at the earliest stage from appropriate sources.

At Heathcote School we work with the London Borough of Waltham Forest Sexual Health services. The school has opted into the C Card scheme which offers free contraception to our pupils in Year 10 and year 11. This is introduced and explained to pupils by a member of the Waltham Forest Sexual Health team.

There is no parental right to withdraw from Health Education.

Relationships Education in PIE

This element of the curriculum is taught in PIE.

In secondary school, relationships education builds on what has been learnt at primary school concerning positive relationships and progresses to talk about intimate relationships.

Lessons will be evidence based, age and culturally appropriate, based in the law and sensitive to the needs of pupils.

There is no parental right to withdraw from Relationships Education.

Non-statutory HRSE (Sex Education beyond National Curriculum Science)

All secondary schools must teach sex education that is outside of the National Curriculum science, but parents/carers can withdraw their children from this element of sex education.

Sex education at Heathcote School will be taught by trained staff in an age appropriate and sensitive way and give due regard to the law. We believe the teaching of sex education alongside relationship education will help to ready pupils for their life in 21st century Britain. This will include topics such as the act of sexual intercourse, the advantages of delaying sexual activity and the importance of consent.

Parents and carers have a right to withdraw their children from non-statutory HRSE, i.e. sex education, following a meeting with a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to discuss their concerns. A request can be made annually. The Head Teacher has the right to deny this request, but must have very strong reasons for doing so, e.g. safeguarding issues. Alternative arrangements will be made for pupils not attending sex education lessons. The school will document and record this process.

The right to withdraw a child from these lessons ceases 3 terms before a child's 16th birthday. After this point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than being withdrawn, the school will arrange this. See **Appendix 5** for our request to withdraw form

Safeguarding in HRSE

Safeguarding is an important aspect of all lessons taught as part of HRSE in our school. Our safeguarding policy will be applied to and supported by all aspects of HRSE and any disclosures or issues arising as part of HRSE will be dealt with according to our safeguarding policy.

Teachers are aware that effective HRSE, which brings an understanding of what is and what is not appropriate in a relationship, can lead to a disclosure of a child protection issue and teachers are expected to follow the school's safeguarding procedures to support both themselves and the pupils. Teachers will consult with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and in his absence the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) where they believe a child protection issue has arisen. Visitors and external agencies which support the delivery of HRSE will be required to follow the school safeguard protocols and procedures.

Inclusive Learning

Equality

The school will comply with the relevant requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (2014): schools must not unlawfully discriminate against pupils

or allow them to be bullied because of their age, sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership, or sexual orientation (Protected Characteristics).

The delivery of the content of HRSE will be made accessible to all pupils, including those with SEND. In these circumstances materials and content of the lessons would be shared with the SENCO department where decisions to differentiate or carry out preparatory lessons would be made.

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, 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).

Child on Child Abuse

Our school celebrates difference and diversity. The abuse of anyone for any reason is not acceptable. It is expected that our relationships education curriculum will lead to a stronger sense of community, mutual respect and give pupils a sense of responsibility, alongside the staff, to keep Heathcote School a safe, inclusive and caring place for all, upholding the core values and ethos of the school.

SEND

Reasonable adjustments will be made for all SEND pupils depending on their needs. This will be ensured through sharing resources with the SEN department in advance. Training for in class support will also be offered at the beginning of a new half term. This is to ensure that topics discussed are shared prior to teaching and learning in the classroom. This encourages collaboration between teachers and teaching assistants to ensure all diverse needs are met.

Small focus groups will also be available each week for an hour to support these pupils. These timetabled sessions will be held after or during school with any pupil who has been identified as needing extra support with subject content. This will be altered half termly so that pupils can attend sessions that may be helpful to their individual needs and experiences.

Managing Difficult Questions

Pupils may ask questions about topics which go beyond any sex education covered by the school or relate to sex education from which they have been withdrawn. In such circumstances the staff member will inform the PIE lead and the Head of Year. There will then be an opportunity for the pupil to be further informed in a separate, more bespoke educational setting or if deemed necessary communication between school and parent/guardian to discuss best next steps. On some occasions it may be prudent for the

pupil to be signposted to support services, if so this would be considered in collaboration with the safeguarding team.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Assessment

To ensure that the teaching and learning in RSHE in our school is of the highest standard, it will be monitored by our RSE curriculum leader and the Assistant Headteacher overseeing the subject area. In addition, the various year lead's and subsequent senior leadership team member linked to the year group will also quality assure and provide support in the delivery of the curriculum.

Although there is no formal assessment for RSE and PIE lessons, teachers are expected to use assessment for learning (AFL) tools throughout the lessons to check for understanding and to correct any misconceptions. At Heathcote, teachers use 'Fertile Questions' at the beginning of every lesson which is revisited at the end of every session. Pupils will write their second attempt at the same question in purple pen. This is a technique that has proven to be very successful as teachers are able to see at a glance how much the pupils have learnt by the amount written. Learning in class will be evidenced through discussions, debates presentations and work in exercise books. Calls home will be made to raise any concerns regarding attitude, effort or behaviour along with praise and positive feedback. Pupils who demonstrate the most progress/effort within their PIE lessons will be rewarded with termly certificates.

Resources

The school will draw from a number of educational resources, for example:

- PSHE Association – quality assured resources
- Medway Resources
<https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/case-study/improving-pshe-and-sre-medway-schools>
- Brook Website
- https://www.brook.org.uk/?gclid=CjwKCAiAt9z-BRBCEiwA_bWv-C9SiMZMvqTJj2SgRb_pYF-TAfrChc1vNvRwmLKJgafij-D1TtFcdBoCiukQAvD_BwE

Outside agencies and Visitors including:

- CGL – Drug Awareness
- Prevent – Violence Reduction Team
- Safer School Team
- Gamecare – Gambling Awareness
- Jacqui King Waltham Forest Sexual Health Lead
- Community Safety, Violence Reduction Team & Criminal Exploitation Team

7Bb REPRODUCTIVE ORGANS

WHAT ARE HUMAN REPRODUCTIVE ORGANS LIKE?

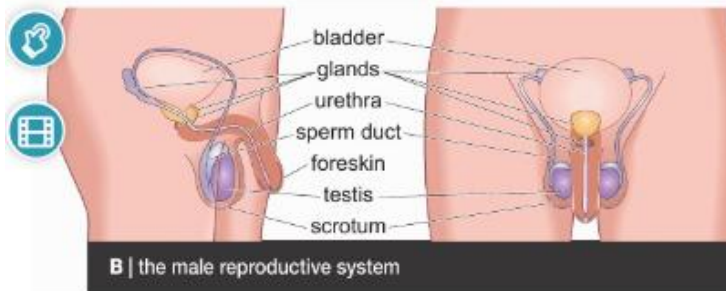
The **reproductive organs** produce gametes (sex cells). They form an organ system called the **reproductive system**.

In some countries, reproductive organs from certain animals are used in traditional **medicines**. The medicines are supposed to help humans have babies but there is no evidence that they work. Killing animals for medicines has helped to make some of them endangered.

Sperm cells are made in the **testes**. The testes hang outside the body in a bag of skin called the **scrotum**. Their position helps to keep the sperm cells at the correct temperature to develop properly. After **puberty**, males produce sperm cells for the rest of their lives.



A | Tigers are endangered. Tiger penis is used in some traditional medicines.

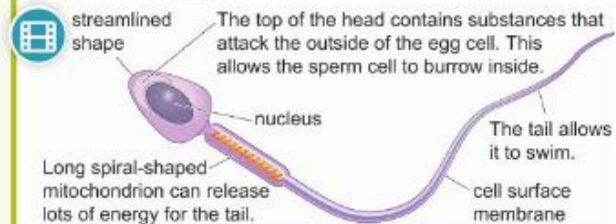


B | the male reproductive system

When sperm cells are released from the testes, they travel through **sperm ducts**, where fluids are added from **glands**. The fluids provide a source of **energy** for the sperm cells. The mixture of sperm cells and fluids is called **semen**, which leaves the body through the **urethra**. This tube also carries urine from the **bladder**, but never at the same time as semen.

- 1 Which organ in diagram B is in both the urinary *and* the reproductive systems?
- 2 a) Where are sperm cells made?
b) Do you think sperm cells need to be warmer or cooler than the body to develop? Explain your reasoning.
- 3 Explain how a sperm cell is adapted for swimming.
- 4 The prostate gland (in yellow on diagram B) can sometimes swell up. Suggest a problem that this might cause and explain your reasoning.

The head of the penis is sensitive and is protected by a covering of skin (the **foreskin**). This is sometimes removed, for religious reasons or because it is too tight, in a process called **circumcision**.



C | A sperm cell has certain features to help it do its job. It is **adapted to its function**. Adult men produce up to 100 million sperm cells every day.



D | the female reproductive system



In females, each **ovary** contains small, undeveloped egg cells. After puberty, egg cells start to develop and one is usually released from an ovary every 28–32 days. A woman's ovaries stop releasing egg cells at about the age of 45–55 years – a time known as the **menopause**.

After leaving an ovary, an egg cell enters an **oviduct** (or **Fallopian tube**). The oviducts are lined with hairs, called **cilia**, and these sweep egg cells towards the **uterus**. The uterus is where a baby will develop. It has strong, muscular walls and a soft lining.

The lower end of the uterus is made of a ring of muscle called the **cervix**. The cervix holds the baby in place during pregnancy. The cervix opens into the **vagina**.

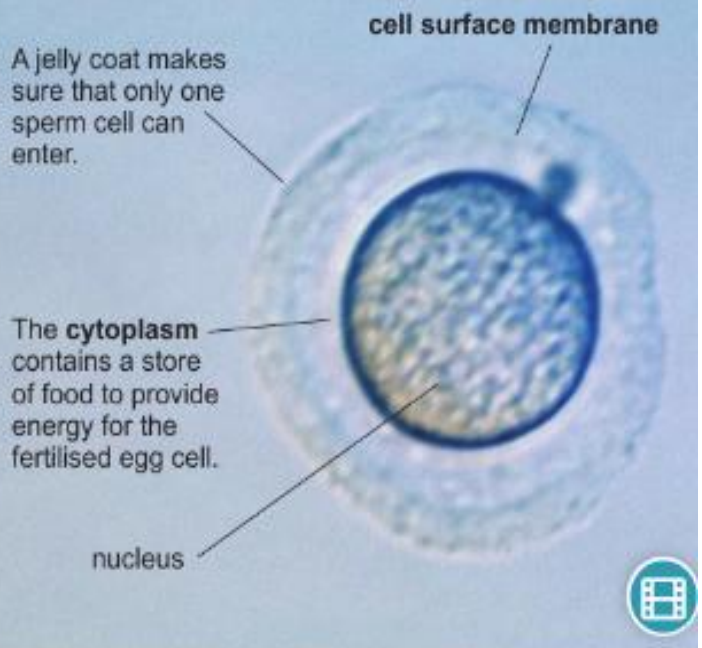
- 7 Which female reproductive organs contain muscles?
- 8 How does an egg cell reach the uterus?
- 9 Explain how a developing fertilised egg cell has a supply of energy.
- 10 Anne's ovaries are not releasing egg cells. Why not? Think of as many reasons as you can.

5 A woman releases an egg cell every 28 days for 35 years. How many egg cells does she release in total? Show your working.

6 Which organ makes and releases female gametes?

FACT

Girls are born with about 100 000 undeveloped egg cells in each ovary.



E | An egg cell is a specialised cell that is adapted to its function.

I can ...

- name the parts of the male and female reproductive systems, and their jobs
- explain how sperm and egg cells are adapted to their functions
- state what happens at the menopause.

Appendix 2 Statutory Requirements coming into guidance in Sept 2026 – the following to be completed by the end of Secondary School

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:

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.

Respectful relationships

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.
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.

Online safety and awareness

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 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.⁹
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.

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
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.
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.

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.

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.

Secondary health and wellbeing 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:

Mental wellbeing

Curriculum content:

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

Curriculum content:

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 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

Curriculum content:

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

Curriculum content:

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

Curriculum content:

1. 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 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

Curriculum content:

1. 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.
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

Curriculum content:

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

Curriculum content:

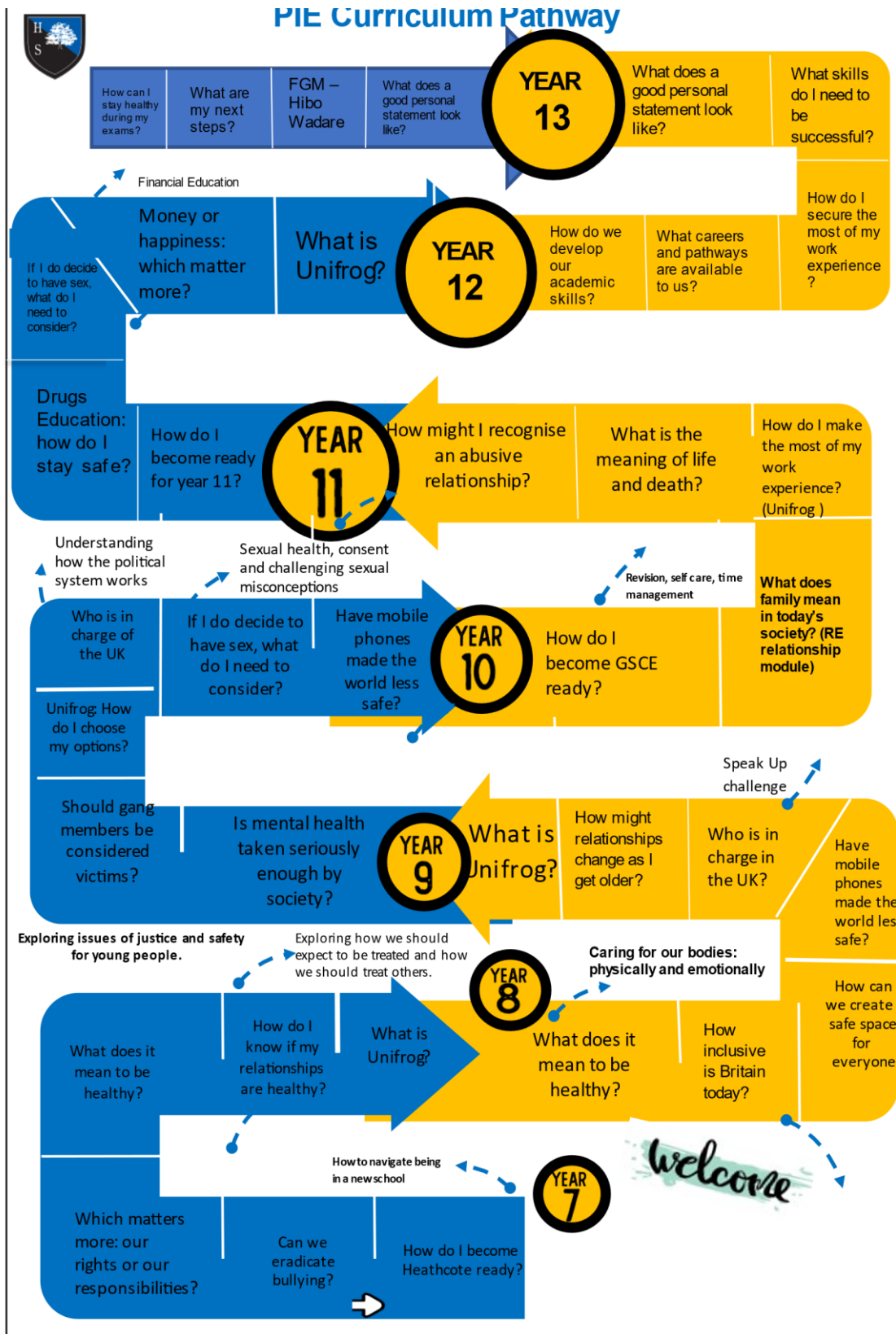
1. Basic treatment for common injuries and ailments.
2. Life-saving skills, including how to administer CPR.¹¹
3. The purpose of defibrillators, when one might be needed and who can use them.

Developing bodies

Curriculum content:

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.
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.

Appendix 3 - The Curriculum Pathway for PIE Years 7-13



Appendix 4 Parent form: withdrawal from sex education within RSE

TO BE COMPLETED BY PARENTS			
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			
Parent signature			

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE SCHOOL	
Agreed actions from discussion with parents	Include notes from discussions with parents and agreed actions taken.