



PSHE/RSE Education Policy

PSHE/RSE Education Policy

Mission Statement

‘To educate young people to meet the challenges of life courageously, to use their talents to the full and to live the values of Christ’s Gospel’

Policy Review: The College PSHE AND RSE EDUCATION Policy will be reviewed annually or as required in response to statutory requirements.

1.0 School Context

At Thornton we aim:

- To enable students to grow in the knowledge and love of God and to encourage them to serve Him in others and to spread the knowledge of the Gospel.
- To foster the students’ academic, physical and spiritual growth.
- To provide an environment where students will be happy and where they will strive for excellence.
- To enable our students to discover their true potential and to work towards their full development.
- To encourage students to respect and value others and respond to their needs.
- To encourage students to see themselves and what they have to offer in the context of the wider community.
- To ensure that our young people are well prepared for life in a rapidly changing world.

2.0 Legal and Educational Context

2.1 Department for Education Requirements:

‘All schools should make provision for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE Education), drawing on good practice.’

Along with the National Curriculum framework, the DfE has published a guidance document on PSHE Education, which states that the subject is:

‘An important and necessary part of all students’ education’ and that ‘Schools should seek to 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 (RSE) and the importance of physical activity and diet for a healthy lifestyle.’

2.2 Statutory Framework

Thornton College’s PSHE and RSE provision is designed to meet the statutory requirements and guidance applicable to independent schools. The programme is designed and delivered in line with:

The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019 and the DfE statutory guidance ‘Relationships Education,

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education’, revised in July 2025 for introduction on 1 September 2026.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (effective from 1 September 2026) and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.

- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, including the requirements to provide personal, social, health and economic education and to prepare students for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society. Equality Act 2010, ensuring that teaching reflects the need to foster respect for all protected characteristics and does not discriminate against any student.

This policy will be reviewed annually, and sooner where required, to reflect statutory guidance, the Independent School Standards and relevant safeguarding requirements.

2.3 Equality and Protected Characteristics

Our PSHE and RSE provision is underpinned by the *Equality Act 2010*, which requires schools not to discriminate against students and to foster respect for all people. We ensure that teaching is sensitive, inclusive, and age-appropriate, and that it reflects respect for the diversity of our school community.

Students are taught the importance of respecting others, with particular regard to the nine protected characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

Through PSHE and RSE, we actively promote tolerance, respect, and equality, equipping students to recognise and challenge prejudice and discrimination in all its forms. This commitment is reinforced across the wider curriculum, in pastoral care, and in the ethos of the school.

From 1 September 2026, the curriculum and safeguarding provision will reflect the revised RSE guidance and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, including:

RSE

- Preventing violence against women and girls (VAWG), including education on misogyny, positive masculinity, respect, and kindness.

Online safety education, including AI chatbots and fake intimacy, deepfakes and AI-

generated content, scams and sextortion, pornography, harmful online cultures, misinformation and disinformation. Secondary PSHE provision will also address suicide prevention safely, following suitable evidence-based staff training and safeguarding procedures.

KCSIE

Online misinformation, disinformation and conspiracy theories as safeguarding concerns.

- Appropriate filtering and monitoring in accordance with DfE standards.
- Preventative education which is age-appropriate, carefully sequenced and responsive to local and emerging risks.

2.4 PSHE Association

Thornton College has crafted a PSHE Education curriculum that is underpinned by the 'Ten Principles of Effective PSHE Education as recommended by both the DfE and Buckingham LA as a source of best practice. (Please see Appendix A)

3.0 Aims and Objectives

The following are the general objectives, which we aim to achieve through PSHE Education:

- To promote an understanding of society and the way in which it is governed and organised and to promote respect for the Rule of Law.
- To encourage a responsible attitude to money and personal possessions
- To promote a healthy lifestyle and an awareness of safe and responsible behaviour
- To encourage best use of time and abilities in relation to schoolwork and future career.
- To examine environmental and conservation issues and personal strategies for responsible involvement
- To help students develop meaningful relationships with others based on mutual respect and understanding
- To enable each student to achieve a greater understanding of self, personal strengths and weaknesses, issues involved in growing up and the importance of personal responsibility
- To introduce students to the responsibilities involved in family relationships, marriage and parenting
- To develop community links, where possible and to develop an interest in economic and industrial affairs
- To encourage the development of successful study skills.
- To promote British Values with a focus on moderation and understanding.

4.0 Rationale

Thornton College, as a Catholic school, places immense importance on PSHE Education. Our mission statement forms the basis for all that we seek to do. "Living the values of Christ's Gospel" involves our attitude to society and the world. It involves our treatment of others and self, our ethics, aspirations and view of ourselves as members, not just of a family or school community, but of a local, national and international family. In all these areas, we strive to understand what it means in practical terms to be part of the family of God. PSHE Education is essentially practical Christianity, thinking about and living out the ideas, which lie at the heart of our school and by which we wish to govern our lives.

It is also an opportunity for young people to examine issues of importance to their culture. In PSHE Education they learn about their rights, but also their responsibilities. In accordance with government requirements and best practice, it involves an emphasis on fundamental British Values, the Rule of Law and what it means to be part of a well-functioning global community, a multi-cultural society, a school and a family in which values of tolerance, respect and mutual understanding are central.

PSHE Education is not just restricted to the PSHE Education course. It is a school's overall provision for personal and social development (PSD) and includes not just work in lesson time, but also a range of experiences within school, which can promote student involvement. It must be cross-curricular and is therefore the responsibility of all teachers, not just those with named responsibility for the subject. PSD is therefore the outcome of PSHE EDUCATION.

5.0 Delivery

5.1 A Whole School Approach to PSHE Education

As stated earlier, PSHE EDUCATION is too broad to be covered solely through timetabled lessons. It is our belief that PSHE EDUCATION must be reflected in the life of the school as well as in the set lessons and in other subjects. Many areas of school life, over and above the curriculum have an influence on the student.

- School Council allows students the opportunity to participate in decisions about their schooling
- The school environment, care given to our surroundings, the safety of the premises, the homeliness of the boarding area
- Relationships with parents and the wider community through e.g. work experience
- The use of people and organisations within the community e.g. Health professionals, local employers and specialist organisations

Within the curriculum and outside it there are opportunities for personal development for example:

- Visits and trips to places of interest in this country and abroad
- Work experience
- Sports and team activities
- Residential weekends
- Helping with assemblies
- Concerts and plays
- School Council
- Thorn- Times editorial team
- Voluntary Service
- Fund-raising for charity
- The Activities Week at the end of Summer Term

5.2 Teaching and Learning in PSHE Education Lessons

To ensure that each student benefits as much as possible from the programme, a whole variety of teaching strategies are employed in discrete PSHE EDUCATION lessons for example:

- Class and small group discussions

- ICT Suites
- Role play
- Interviewing and questionnaires
- DVD and other audio-visual media
- Specialist outside speakers (Careers, Employability, British Values etc)

Within these lessons students are presented with opportunities to readily make links with other subjects and these links serve to strengthen and reinforce the knowledge already gained e.g. Drugs (Biology), Environmental Issues (Geography), prejudice, stereotyping, environmental responsibility and relationships in RE etc

5.3 PSHE EDUCATION through Cross Curricular Activities

At the end of the academic year, after the school exams, we aim to participate in an Activities' Week/a series of Activities Days. This is an opportunity for students to go out of school to visit places of significance to a range of subjects with links to PSHE Education. The week of activities has, in the past, included:

- Retreats
- Self-defence
- Sweet-making and cake-making for charity
- A Hobby Show
- A visit to London Zoo (organised by the Science Dept.)
- An Ecology Day (organised by the Science Dept.)
- A Sign Language Course
- A Welcome Book for Year 7
- A French morning
- A Police talk on Drugs
- Personal Safety
- First Aid Certificate
- An Industry Project
- A visit to the Palace of Westminster
- Over sea trips

A comprehensive overview of the delivery of PSHE Education in Thornton College is presented in the Department Handbook for the subject.

6.0 Assessment

PSHE is not assessed in the same way as a core subject but certain key topics are formally assessed, and the relevant paperwork is filed with those topics. Staff will note the students' involvement and responses in class, both orally and on paper. Staff will also observe students' ability to listen, question, respond, interact, understand and remember and will monitor progress in the important skills mentioned earlier. Folders will be reviewed regularly and advice given orally by the teacher. Attention will be given to depth of reasoning and quality of argument in written responses. Students will be encouraged to develop their ability for self-assessment, to reflect on what they have done and to look for progression in themselves, as well as in their work. In this way, PSHE Education is leading directly to PSD (Personal and Social Development). Achievement is also reflected in the achievement of certificates, such as the First Aid Certificate in Year 9.

Within the Prep school, ipsative assessment is used to monitor and support students.

In the senior schoolwork in this subject is assessed according to the requirements of the Key Skills Award Scheme, which is a cumulative award that is worked towards throughout the senior school years. It culminates in the Key Skills Award in Year10. Key Skills folders are separately monitored by Mrs Lewis and girls receive written feedback on their work.

Attitude to learning and participation is also reported home to parents as part of our reporting schedule each half term.

7.0 Roles and Responsibilities

Ultimate responsibility for the provision of PSHE Education within Thornton College remains with the School Leadership team, Board of Governors and Trustees but responsibility for the delivery of PSHE Education is the responsibility of Mrs Shauna Murphy the Head of RE along with the PSHE Education coordinator for the Senior School Mrs Marie-Louise Lewis and the PSHE Education coordinator and teacher for the Prep School Mrs Leiba Sablon.

8.0 Parents

Parents are proactively engaged and consulted when the RSE policy and programme are developed or reviewed. This policy is published on the school website and is provided free of charge on request. Parents may request to view all curriculum materials, including materials used by external providers, subject to copyright law. They will be informed in advance about sex education content and any material departure from the published programme, and may contact the school with questions or concerns.

9.0 Students

Student Voice and Curriculum Development

At Thornton College, we recognise the importance of listening to students' perspectives in shaping PSHE and RSE provision. Student voice is embedded into our monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure that the curriculum is both relevant and effective. This is achieved by:

- **Regular feedback opportunities** through surveys, questionnaires, focus groups, and informal discussions in lessons.
- **School Council input**, where representatives share views from their peers on the effectiveness of PSHE and RSE provision.
- **End-of-unit reflections**, allowing students to identify what they found most useful, where they need further support, and any topics they wish to explore in more depth.
- **Annual review meetings**, where feedback from students is collated.

Findings from student voice activities are reviewed by the PSHE/RSE coordinators and shared with the Senior Leadership Team and Governors. This ensures that student feedback is not only heard but also acted upon, leading to continuous improvement in our provision.

10.0 Other Relevant Policies

The framework of school policies which cover the health, well-being and development of students e.g. PSHE Education Sex Education, Child Protection Anti-bullying, Health and Safety.

11.0 Relationship and Sex Education

Our Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) programme has regard to the DfE statutory guidance revised in July 2025 for introduction on 1 September 2026, relevant diocesan guidance and the school's Catholic ethos.

RSE is planned, age- and developmentally appropriate teaching through which students learn about families and other relationships, respect, consent, sexual health, safety and the law. Relationships Education develops the knowledge and skills needed for safe, healthy and respectful relationships. Sex education within RSE includes teaching about human sexual development, sexual activity, sexual health and reproduction beyond content taught through Science.

Relationships Education is compulsory for students receiving primary education and RSE is compulsory for students receiving secondary education. Relationships content is distinguished from sex education so that students and parents understand what is taught and the limited scope of the parental right to request withdrawal.

We are involved in relationships and sex education precisely because of our Christian beliefs about God and about the human person. The belief in the unique dignity of the human person made in the image and likeness of God underpins the approach to all education in a Catholic school. Our approach to RSE therefore is rooted in the Catholic Church's teaching of the human person and presented in a positive framework of Christian ideals.

At the heart of the Christian life is the Trinity, Father, Son and Spirit in communion, united in loving relationship and embracing all people and all creation. As a consequence of the Christian belief that we are made in the image and likeness of God, gender and sexuality are seen as God's gift, reflect God's beauty, and share in the divine creativity. RSE, therefore, will be placed firmly within the context of relationship as it is there that sexuality grows and develops.

Following the guidance of the Bishops of England and Wales and as advocated by the DfE (2026), RSE will be firmly embedded in the PSHE framework and will consider the guiding principles for relationships, sex and health education as outlined by the DfE 2025 (appendix B) as it is concerned with nurturing human wholeness and integral to the physical, spiritual, emotional, moral, social and intellectual development of students. It is centred on Christ's vision of being human as good news and will be positive and prudent, showing the potential for development, while enabling the dangers and risks involved to be understood and appreciated for all students so they can make responsible and informed decisions about their lives.

Aims of Sex and Relationship Education:

To engender growth in self-respect and self-worth, recognising that each of us is created in the image of God. This is the foundation for responsible and caring relationships.

1. To explore attitudes and values stressing the importance of marriage and family life, promoting the general ethos of the school. Teachers will be aware that students come from a range of backgrounds and be sympathetic to their particular circumstances.
3. To develop a responsible attitude to human sexual behaviour, including some realisation of the Law of God as revealed in the Bible, namely that, sexual intercourse should be reserved for a relationship of total commitment.
4. To enable students to develop informed, reasoned, and responsible decisions and to be aware of the extent to which their choices and decision affect others.
5. To develop the knowledge to help girls protect themselves against illegal or unwanted experiences.
6. To encourage students to recognise the sanctity of human life, the responsibilities and the value of family life, the implications of parenthood and the needs of the very young.
7. To encourage due regard for correct behaviour in both public and private situations and to enable students to understand and enjoy relationships based on mutual respect, equality and understanding, realising that love is central and the basis of all meaningful relationships, which is to uphold Gospel values.
8. To counteract misleading myths and false assumptions and to encourage unembarrassed acceptance of sexuality by providing appropriate vocabulary for all parts of the body and encouraging a positive attitude to all bodily functions.
9. To prepare children for puberty.
10. To have an awareness of where students are in their own knowledge and understanding so that concerns can be identified.
11. To help students develop their critical faculties and be aware of and, where necessary, resist peer pressure together with social and media pressure.
12. To give equal access to all students by integrating sex and relationship education into the broader curriculum and to provide appropriate help and support in understanding the relevant information. In all these things, our primary concern is the safety and wellbeing of all our students and as staff, we endeavour to walk with them through these formative years, in a supportive role.
13. To equip students with the skills to critically engage with modern challenges, including online misogyny, harmful gender stereotypes, and violence against women and girls. Teaching will promote respect, dignity, and positive expressions of masculinity and femininity, ensuring students understand the importance of equality in all relationships. Students will also develop AI and digital literacy, learning to identify

misinformation, deepfakes, online manipulation, and harmful online subcultures, so they can make safe, informed, and responsible choices in their digital and personal lives.

Inclusion and Differentiated learning:

We will ensure RSE is sensitive to the different needs of individual students in respect to students' different abilities, levels of maturity, and personal circumstances; for example their own sexual orientation, faith or culture and is taught in a way that does not subject students to discrimination. Lessons will also help children to realise the nature and consequences of discrimination, teasing, bullying and aggressive behaviours (including cyber-bullying), use of prejudice-based language and how to respond and ask for help.

Parents and Carers:

We recognise that parents (and other carers who stand in their place) are the primary educators of their children. As a Catholic school, we provide the principal means by which the Church assists parents and carers in educating their children. Therefore, the school will support parents and carers by providing material (when relevant) to be shared with their children. Parents/carers will be informed by letter when the more sensitive aspects of RSE will be covered in order that they can be prepared to talk and answer questions about their children's learning.

Schools must consult parents in developing and reviewing their policy. They will be consulted at every stage of the development of the RSE programme, as well as during the process of monitoring, review and evaluation. They will be able to view the resources used by the school in the RSE programme. Our aim is that, every parent and carer will have full confidence in the school's RSE programme to meet their child's needs.

Parents do not have a right to withdraw their child from Relationships Education, health education or content taught as part of Science, including puberty or sexual reproduction. A parent may request that a student be withdrawn from some or all sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE. The request must be made to the Headteacher, who will discuss it with the parent and, where appropriate, the student; explain the nature, purpose and benefits of the curriculum and the possible effects of withdrawal; and keep a written record. In secondary education, the Headteacher will ordinarily grant the request but may refuse it in exceptional circumstances, for example where there are safeguarding concerns or a specific vulnerability. From three terms before the student turns 16, the student may choose to opt back into sex education. A student who is withdrawn will receive appropriate, purposeful education during that time. Where the primary school provides sex education beyond Science, a parental request for withdrawal will be granted. We believe that the controlled environment of the classroom is the safest place for this curriculum to be followed.

Reviewed and Modified August 2026

To be reviewed August 2027

Responsibility for teaching the programme:

Responsibility for the specific relationships and sex education programme lays with PSHE teachers, members of the science department and the RE Department.

However, all staff will be involved in developing the attitudes and values aspect of the RSE programme. They will be role models for students of good, healthy, wholesome relationships as between staff, other adults and students. They will also be contributing to the development of students' personal and social skills.

Supporting children and young people who are at risk:

Children at Thornton will feel safe and secure in the environment in which RSE takes place. Effective RSE will provide opportunities for discussion of what is and is not appropriate in relationships. Such discussion may well lead to disclosure of a safeguarding issue. All members of our community are aware of the needs of our students and as a result, would not let any fears and worries go unnoticed. Where a teacher suspects that a child or young person is a victim of or is at risk of abuse they are required to follow the school's safeguarding policy and immediately inform the designated senior member of staff responsible.

Staff will not promise confidentiality. Concerns and disclosures will be handled immediately under the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, with information shared only on a need-to-know basis. External visitors enhance rather than replace teaching by school staff; their suitability, content and resources are checked in advance, and arrangements for responding to safeguarding concerns are agreed before delivery.

SEND and Accessibility

Thornton College is committed to ensuring that PSHE and RSE are fully accessible to all students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In line with the *SEND Code of Practice (2015)* and the *Equality Act 2010*, lessons are planned and delivered to take account of individual needs, maturity, and levels of understanding.

Implementation includes:

- **Differentiation:** Materials and activities are adapted so that all students can engage meaningfully, including through simplified resources, visual supports, and additional scaffolding where required.
- **Multi-sensory approaches:** Teaching strategies may include visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic methods to support varied learning styles.
- **Paced delivery:** Lessons are broken down into manageable steps to allow time for processing and reflection.

- **Targeted support:** Where appropriate, students with SEND may receive additional support from learning assistants or small-group teaching to ensure they can access sensitive or complex content.
- **Collaboration with SEND staff:** The PSHE/RSE coordinator works closely with the SENDCo to ensure curriculum planning reflects the needs of individual students and that adjustments are reviewed regularly.

Through these measures, we ensure that all students, regardless of need or ability, receive their entitlement to high-quality, age-appropriate PSHE and RSE education.

Monitoring and evaluation:

The RSE Co-ordinator (Mrs Murphy) will monitor the provision of the various dimensions of the programme by examining plans, schemes of work and samples of students work at regular intervals. The programme will be evaluated annually by means of questionnaires / response sheets/needs assessment given to students, and / or by discussion with students, staff and parents. The results of the evaluation should be reported to these groups of interested parties and their suggestions sought for improvements. Governors will consider all such evaluations and suggestions before amending the policy. Governors remain ultimately responsible for the policy. At Thornton, we recognise that parents and carers are the primary educators of their children, especially in matters relating to relationships, personal development, and values. We aim to work in close partnership with families to ensure that our approach to Relationships Education is respectful, supportive, and consistent with the messages children receive at home.

To promote this partnership, we will:

- Inform parents and carers about what is taught in Relationships Education and how it is delivered.
- Welcome and respond to questions or concerns from parents regarding the content or approach of our Relationships Education programme.
- Provide reassurance and clarity about how teaching will be sensitive, age-appropriate, and rooted in kindness, respect, and responsibility.
- Share relevant guidance and resources, where helpful, so that parents feel confident in continuing these important conversations at home. We believe that by working together in mutual trust and openness, we can give children a clear and consistent foundation for understanding themselves, others, and the importance of respectful relationships—now and as they grow.

Introduction to Relationships Education in the Primary School and the Role of Parents and Carers

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To promote this partnership, we will:

Reviewed and Modified August 2026

To be reviewed August 2027

- Inform parents and carers about what is taught in Relationships Education and how it is delivered.
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- Provide reassurance and clarity about how teaching will be sensitive, age-appropriate, and rooted in kindness, respect, and responsibility.
- Share relevant guidance and resources, where helpful, so that parents feel confident in continuing these important conversations at home.
- We believe that by working together in mutual trust and openness, we can give children a clear and consistent foundation for understanding themselves, others, and the importance of respectful relationships—now and as they grow.

The Whole School Dimension

There are no areas of school life that potentially cannot contribute to sex and relationship education and be of benefit to the whole school and its wider communities. How our school community lives, the relationships which develop, the way in which issues are tackled in the classroom and students participate and feel a sense of belonging, underpins the ethos of our school.

Content of Programme

In Years 1-6-relationships education is integrated into the normal school curriculum as well as PSHE lessons and emphasises the family unit, family relationships, growing up, respect for others, and physical, emotional and spiritual needs. Basic information on parts of the body is included, and any specific questions are answered openly and honestly as they arise.

We believe that it is important to introduce the correct language for parts of the body from an early age and for the reproductive organs when appropriate. All staff are aware of this and attempt to introduce this in a consistent manner. The PSHE provision in the Prep-School at Thornton College is a 'spiral curriculum' meaning that the specific learning builds for students as they move through the school, gradually expanding and deepening their knowledge, skills, and attributes. The learning opportunities have been divided into three core themes: **Health & Wellbeing; Relationships; Living in the Wider World.**

In Year 5 talks are given on puberty, focusing mainly on body changes, feelings and 'growing up.' In Science, lessons are delivered on the human life cycle, which includes puberty. In Year 6, further talks are given on puberty and menstruation.

Through the school's compulsory PSHE provision and Science curriculum, students in Key Stage 2 are taught about the physical and emotional changes associated with puberty, including the key facts about menstruation and how to manage it. By the end of Year 6, most students will be able to name the main parts of the human body using correct terminology, describe the physical and emotional changes that occur during puberty, and understand that individuals experience these changes at different rates. Teaching is delivered in a sensitive, age-appropriate manner and aims to support students in developing confidence, reassurance, and the knowledge of where to seek further help if needed. This content helps prepare students for the next stage of their education and supports their overall wellbeing.

Reviewed and Modified August 2026

To be reviewed August 2027

Senior programme

Sex and Relationship Education is integrated throughout the RE, PSHEE and Science syllabus in the Senior School. While RE studies and teaches the 'Values of Christ's Gospel', PHSE seeks to examine the practice of these values in day-to-day life

One of the compulsory sections in PHSE is Social/Moral Education, which includes Citizenship and EPR (Education for Personal Relationships). Another is Health, which includes aspects of personal safety and Sex Education. In the context of these sections, the following topics are covered:-

	R E	PHSEE	Scien ce
Year 7	- Community - Marriage and family relationships	- Puberty and menstruation (Revision) - Consent - AI Literacy	Key Stage 3 - Male and female reproductive organs - Functions of organs - Fertilisation - Development of a baby in the womb and the function of the placenta - Birth - Feeding baby
Year 8	Importance of the Family	- Friendship issues - Family issues - Peer Pressure - Appropriate Behaviour - AI Literacy	..
Year 9	Marriage and family Relationships in Islam and Judaism	- Contraception - Risk Situations - Grooming - Inappropriate Sexual Behaviour - FGM - Drugs/Alcohol - Online safety – including AL literacy - Body Image	..

Years 10/11	• Right to Life • Sex and Relationships • Marriage and Family Life • Parenting • Contraception • Family Responsibilities • Personal Responsibility	• Parenting • Contraception (Revision) • STDs AIDS • Well-woman issues • Staying Safe • Child Exploitation/ Human Rights/ Grooming • Misogyny	• Co-ordination and control • Menstrual Cycle • Contraception
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Online and Digital Safety

In line with statutory requirements and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), our RSE and PSHE provision includes explicit teaching on online and digital safety. Students are taught how to recognise risks, make safe choices, develop an understanding of AL literacy and seek support when needed in relation to their online lives. This includes:

Understanding healthy and respectful online relationships, including the importance of consent and boundaries in digital communication.

Understanding the law and risks relating to sharing nude and semi-nude images, non-consensual intimate images, AI-generated sexual images, grooming and sextortion, together with the effects of pornography and other harmful online content. Developing strategies for managing screen time, digital wellbeing, and the impact of social media on self-esteem and body image.

Knowing how to report concerns, block or remove harmful content, and access appropriate support both within school and from external agencies.

- Developing AI literacy, including the ability to identify and critically assess deepfakes, AI-generated images, fake accounts, and manipulated information, so students can recognise the impact of artificial intelligence on relationships, self-image, and safety online.
- Educating students to recognise, challenge, and reject misogyny and harmful gender stereotypes, both online and offline. Students will be supported to develop positive and respectful attitudes towards gender and relationships, with a focus on dignity, equality, and the prevention of violence against women and girls.

This content is delivered in an age-appropriate and sensitive way, building progressively as students move through the school. It is reinforced through our wider ICT curriculum, assemblies, tutor time, and the school's safeguarding approach, ensuring students are equipped to navigate the online world safely and responsibly.

Years 12/13

The Year 12 Core RE is based on a variety of social and ethical themes and aspects of relationships are covered as part of this. The context, while encouraging and recognising a broad and inclusive approach, is rooted in Scripture and the teaching of the Catholic Church.

Well-Being Programme

During tutor time, on a Wednesday and Friday, tutors take part in a well-being activity, which acts to build on key topics and issues which have been addressed in PSHEE and RSE; which includes topics examining equality diversity and inclusion, anti-bullying, target setting and physical and emotional well-being. A tutor programme is in place, which can be accessed, by all form tutors and Heads of Year, on the one drive. There are also resources which complement each topic available on Firefly. Heads of Year will ensure that resources are sent through each week to cover any given topic and thought is given to ensuring these resources are age appropriate.

Disclosures

Teachers conduct RSE lessons sensitively within agreed classroom ground rules, but confidentiality cannot be promised. If a student makes a disclosure or indicates that they may be at risk of abuse, exploitation or harmful sexual behaviour, staff will listen, avoid investigating, record the concern and report it immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures.

Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of the Head of Thornton College and her Deputy Head to ensure that both staff and parents are informed about the Sex and Relationship Education Policy.

The Head of Thornton College and her Deputy Head monitor the programme, and report to governors, when requested, on the effectiveness of the policy.

The Curriculum Committee of the governing body monitors the impact of our Sex and Relationships Education Policy. The Curriculum Committee gives serious consideration to any comments from parents about the Sex Education programme and makes a record of all such comments. Governors require that a written record, giving details of the content and delivery of our Sex Education programme is available.

Staff Training and Professional Development

We recognise that high-quality delivery of PSHE and RSE depends on well-trained, confident, and supported staff. To ensure this:

- **Annual Training:** Staff involved in delivering PSHE and RSE receive regular, role-appropriate training on the statutory guidance effective from September 2026, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, safeguarding, SEND and equality, sensitive questions and emerging online risks. Staff addressing suicide prevention, self-harm or eating disorders receive suitable evidence-based training and follow safeguarding and mental-health procedures.

Safeguarding and Sensitive Issues: Training includes recognising and responding to safeguarding disclosures, teaching about consent, handling sensitive discussions, and ensuring lessons are inclusive and respectful of diversity and protected characteristics.

- **Specialist CPD:** Designated PSHE/RSE staff are supported to attend external CPD opportunities (e.g., PSHE Association, local authority, Diocese, or ISA training events) and cascade learning to colleagues.
- **SEND and Differentiation:** Staff receive guidance on adapting resources and approaches to meet the needs of students with SEND, working closely with the SENDCo to ensure accessibility.
- **Ongoing Support:** Opportunities are provided for peer observation, team planning, and sharing of good practice to build staff confidence and consistency across the school.

The Deputy Head, in partnership with the PSHE/RSE Coordinators and SENDCo, monitors staff training needs annually and ensures that professional development opportunities are aligned with school priorities and statutory updates.

Appendix A

Ten principles of effective PSHE Education – PSHE Association

Our ten principles underpin all of our work and guidance for teachers and schools.

The PSHE Association has developed the following evidence-based principles of good practice in PSHE Education:

- 1.** Start where children and young people are: find out what they already know, understand, are able to do and are able to say. For maximum impact involve them in the planning of your PSHE Education programme.
- 2.** Plan a 'spiral programme' which introduces new and more challenging learning, while building on what has gone before, which reflects and meets the personal developmental needs of the children and young people.
- 3.** Take a positive approach which does not attempt to induce shock or guilt but focuses on what children and young people can do to keep themselves and others healthy and safe and to lead happy and fulfilling lives.
- 4.** Offer a wide variety of teaching and learning styles within PSHE Education, with an emphasis on interactive learning and the teacher as facilitator.
- 5.** Provide information which is realistic and relevant and which reinforces positive social norms.
- 6.** Encourage young people to reflect on their learning and the progress they have made, and to transfer what they have learned to say and to do from one school subject to another, and from school to their lives in the wider community.
- 7.** Recognise that the PSHE Education programme is just one part of what a school can do to help a child to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and understanding they need to fulfil their potential. Link the PSHE Education programme to other whole school approaches, to pastoral support, and provide a setting where the responsible choice becomes the easy choice. Encourage staff, families and the wider community to get involved.
- 8.** Embed PSHE Education within other efforts to ensure children and young people have positive relationships with adults, feel valued and where those who are most vulnerable are identified and supported.

9. Provide opportunities for children and young people to make real decisions about their lives, to take part in activities which simulate adult choices and where they can demonstrate their ability to take responsibility for their decisions.

10. Provide a safe and supportive learning environment where children and young people can develop the confidence to ask questions, challenge the information they are offered, draw on their own experience, express their views and opinions and put what they have learned into practice in their own lives.

Appendix B

Guiding principles for relationships, sex and health education 15. Schools should develop a curriculum with the following key principles in mind:

a. Engagement with students. An inclusive and well-sequenced RSHE curriculum should be informed by meaningful engagement with students to ensure that the curriculum is relevant and engaging.

b. Engagement and transparency with parents. Schools should engage with parents on the content of RSHE and be transparent with parents about all materials used in RSHE. All materials should be available to parents, as described in the section on openness with parents on page 33. Parents have a right to request that their children are withdrawn from sex education (students can opt back in from three terms before they turn 16) and schools should ensure parents are aware of sex education content within lessons in advance.

c. Positivity. Schools should focus on building positive attitudes and skills, promoting healthy norms about relationships, including sexual relationships where relevant, and about health, including mental health. Schools should avoid language which might normalise harmful behaviour among young people – for example gendered language which might normalise male violence or stigmatise boys.

d. Careful sequencing. Schools should cover all statutory topics, recognising that young people can start developing healthy behaviour and relationship skills as soon as they start school. Schools should sequence teaching so that students are supported and equipped with the knowledge to navigate different experiences in a positive way before they occur, and to prevent harms.

e. Relevant and responsive. Schools should develop the curriculum to be relevant, age and stage appropriate and accessible to students in their area, where appropriate working with local partners and other bodies to understand specific local issues and ensure needs are met.

f. Skilled delivery of participative education. The curriculum should be delivered by school staff or, where schools choose to use them, external providers who have the knowledge, skills and confidence to create a safe and supportive environment and to facilitate participative and interactive education which aims to support and not to alarm students. Staff should be trained in safeguarding and offering support, recognising the increased possibility of disclosures.

g. Whole school approach. The curriculum is best delivered as part of a whole school approach to wellbeing and positive relationships, supported by other school policies, including behaviour and safeguarding policies.