



The way we teach RSHE (Relationship, Sex and Health Education) has changed

The guidance is based on the government's review of the previous 2019 guidance. It was designed to ensure the curriculum keeps pace with children's lives today – strengthening expectations around parental transparency, providing clearer boundaries for primary content, and updating areas such as online safety and personal safety.

What changed in the 2025 RSHE guidance?

The overall picture for primary schools hasn't shifted dramatically – relationships and health education remain compulsory, while sex education stays optional. But teachers need to be aware of some important clarifications and stronger expectations:

- **Greater transparency with parents**

Schools must be open with families about what is being taught and when. From September 2026:

- Parents should be able to view any RSE materials used in class.
- RSE policies should clearly explain how parents can access resources.

This isn't new, but the expectation for transparency is sharper.

- **Clearer boundaries for primary content**

The guidance emphasises teaching children how to:

- Set and respect personal boundaries.
- Recognise unsafe online or offline relationships.
- Seek help when something feels wrong.

This is about safeguarding children with age-appropriate skills and knowledge. By giving children the tools to recognise risk and manage safe decisions, both now and in the future, schools play an important role in helping them navigate a world where social norms, online behaviours and pressures are constantly shifting.

- **Specific vocabulary and puberty guidance**

Teachers have explicit direction on terminology:

- Pupils should learn the correct names for body parts (including penis, vulva, vagina, testicles, nipples, scrotum).
- These terms should be taught within the context of privacy, boundaries and respect.

Menstruation should be introduced *before* pupils are likely to experience it – the guidance suggests starting from Year 4 – and teachers are encouraged to use clear, accessible language such as “period pads” and “menstrual products” instead of outdated terms.

This greater clarity should give teachers confidence when planning and communicating with parents.

- **Online safety in today’s context**

Since the 2019 guidance, the online world has changed a lot, and the new guidance ensures that teaching keeps up with it. Updates include:

- Age limits for social media
- Risk around image-sharing and online pressure
- Privacy and location settings
- Online gaming safety
- Critical thinking about online wellbeing

- **Personal safety and first aid**

New content has been added to help children recognise and manage risk, including:

- Rail and water safety
- Peer influence and pressure
- Updated first aid guidance – with an emphasis on reporting incidents rather than filming them

- **Change and loss**

For the first time grief and bereavement are specifically mentioned. Children need to be taught:

- Grief is a natural response to bereavement
- Responses to grief look different for everyone
- Change and loss can provoke a wide range of feelings

Staff and children's personal experiences of bereavement make this a sensitive topic. It is important to consider this when planning how and when to cover this content.

- **Families and representations**

As before in the 2019 guidance, teaching should reflect the diversity of family life – from same-sex parents to kinship carers – so that all children feel recognised and respected. This means careful consideration in the use of content (images, videos, stories) to respect and represent diverse families.