

PSHE Policy

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Date created:	June 2024
Date of last review:	September 2026
Date of next review:	September 2027

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1. Policy statement and rationale

At Brunel School, we value and prioritise the personal, social, health and emotional wellbeing of all pupils. Our PSHE education programme builds on the school's existing commitment to equipping pupils with the knowledge, understanding, attitudes, values and practical skills needed to make informed decisions, build positive relationships and lead safe, fulfilling lives. The previous policy identified self-esteem, emotional resilience, respectful relationships, accurate health information, risk management, future aspirations and preparation for adulthood as core purposes; this policy retains those strengths while extending the framework to reflect current statutory and professional guidance.

PSHE education is a planned, sequenced curriculum subject which contributes to pupils' personal development, safeguarding, health and wellbeing, relationships, economic wellbeing and preparation for adult life. It is delivered through timetabled PSHE lessons and reinforced through the wider curriculum, pastoral provision, the school environment and opportunities for learning beyond the classroom.

This policy has been developed using the PSHE Association's 2025 guidance for writing a PSHE education policy and its 2026 Programme of Study. The PSHE Association describes the policy as a whole-school statement of intent which should guide practice, clarify intended outcomes, reflect curriculum content and teaching approaches, and communicate expectations to teachers, parents/carers and other professionals.

The policy is specifically designed for an 11–16 special school serving pupils with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. Teaching therefore places particular emphasis on relational safety, emotional regulation, trauma-informed practice, shame-sensitive language, communication, co-regulation, help-seeking, healthy relationships, risk management and preparation for adulthood.

This policy should be read alongside the school's RSHE Policy and curriculum map, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Policy, Equality Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Online Safety Policy, SEND Information Report, Careers/Provider Access arrangements, Drugs and Alcohol Policy and Complaints Policy.

2. Legal and statutory framework

PSHE education as a whole is not itself a single statutory subject in England. However, a comprehensive PSHE programme is the most effective framework through which the school can deliver statutory Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE), alongside essential Economic Wellbeing and Careers Education. The PSHE Association's guidance notes the statutory duties relating to a broad and balanced curriculum, pupil wellbeing, and secondary Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education.

- Education Act 2002 and Education and Inspections Act 2006, including duties relating to a broad and balanced curriculum, pupils' development and wellbeing.
- Children and Social Work Act 2017 and the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education statutory framework.
- DfE Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSHE) and Health Education statutory guidance, revised 2025 and in force from 1 September 2026. The guidance applies to non-maintained special schools and schools are required to have regard to it.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and the school's safeguarding arrangements. KCSIE 2026 came into force on 1 September 2026 and requires staff to act immediately on safeguarding concerns and report concerns to the DSL/deputy without delay.
- Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Children and Families Act 2014 and SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.
- Science National Curriculum statutory content where applicable.
- Relevant careers, provider access, financial education and online safety requirements and guidance.

3. Definition of PSHE education

PSHE education is learning which helps children and young people develop the knowledge, skills, attributes and understanding they need to manage their lives now and in the future. At Brunel School, PSHE encompasses statutory RSHE and wider learning in health and wellbeing, relationships, living in the wider world, economic wellbeing, careers and preparation for adulthood.

The PSHE Association's current Programme of Study integrates the 2025 statutory RSHE requirements with essential Economic Wellbeing and Careers Education content and provides suggested learning opportunities across key stages.

PSHE is taught as a subject in its own right, while also being reinforced through the whole-school approach. Equality, safeguarding, respectful relationships, emotional wellbeing and healthy choices are not treated as isolated topics but are reflected in school life.

4. Aims and intended outcomes

Our PSHE programme aims to enable pupils to:

- develop self-esteem, self-confidence, emotional literacy and resilience;
- understand and manage emotions, behaviour, relationships and personal wellbeing;
- develop healthy, respectful and safe relationships with peers, family, professionals and the wider community;
- understand consent, boundaries, privacy, bodily autonomy and respectful communication;

- recognise abuse, exploitation, coercive control, sexual harassment, sexual violence and harmful behaviours and know how to seek help;
- understand physical and mental health, including how to access appropriate support;
- develop strategies for managing stress, anxiety, conflict, setbacks, change and loss;
- recognise risk and make safer choices in relation to substances, online activity, relationships, sexual health and wider personal safety;
- develop digital literacy and understand online content, contact, conduct, commerce, misinformation, disinformation, algorithms, influencers and emerging digital harms;
- understand prejudice, discrimination, stereotypes, misogyny and harmful attitudes and develop respect for difference;
- understand money, financial choices, consumer awareness, saving, debt, fraud and economic wellbeing;
- develop careers knowledge, employability skills, aspirations and preparation for further education, employment and adult life;
- contribute, where appropriate, to EHCP outcomes, particularly in relation to emotional regulation, communication, self-advocacy, independence and personal safety;
- develop belonging, connectedness, self-efficacy and hope as protective factors for wellbeing and resilience;
- understand environmental responsibility, sustainability and their role as informed and active citizens.
- understand rights, responsibilities, the law, democracy, community participation and life in modern Britain;
- develop practical independence and preparation-for-adulthood skills;
- identify trusted adults, appropriate services and reliable sources of information;
- develop the confidence to make informed decisions while recognising when they need support from others.
- curiosity, compassion and high expectations. Language should reduce unnecessary shame and defensiveness while remaining clear about safety, responsibility and boundaries.
- Use language that describes what has happened rather than labelling the pupil: 'You have made an unsafe choice' rather than 'You are unsafe'.
- Use curious, non-judgemental language: 'Help me understand what happened' rather than 'Why did you do that?' when the latter may communicate blame.
- Use emotionally literate language: 'I can see this feels difficult' while maintaining the expectation that harmful behaviour must be addressed.
- Use restorative language: 'What happened? Who has been affected? What needs to happen now to make things safer?'
- Use specific, respectful language about bodies, relationships, sex, health, substances and risk.
- Avoid sarcasm, humiliation, public correction, threats and language that reinforces negative identity.
- Challenge discriminatory, abusive or harmful language clearly without shaming the individual; name the impact and teach an alternative.
- Use scripts consistently so pupils experience predictable adult responses.

Language that Cares is not permissive language. Staff remain clear about boundaries, consequences, safeguarding and responsibility while communicating that every pupil is capable of learning, repairing and making safer choices.

At Brunel School, PSHE is delivered through a trauma-informed, relational and psychologically safe approach which reflects the needs of pupils with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. We recognise that pupils may have experienced adversity, disrupted relationships, loss, bullying, exploitation, instability or other challenges that can affect their ability to engage in learning, form relationships and regulate emotions. Staff create calm, predictable and respectful learning environments where pupils feel safe, valued and able to participate.

Teaching promotes relational safety, emotional literacy, self-awareness, communication, resilience and help-seeking. Positive relationships, belonging, connectedness and hope are recognised as important protective factors that support wellbeing and long-term success. Staff maintain high expectations while providing appropriate support, reasonable adjustments and opportunities for reflection, repair and personal growth.

Language is an important part of this approach. Staff use "Language that Cares" to communicate dignity, compassion and accountability. Language should reduce unnecessary shame while remaining clear about safety, responsibility and boundaries. Staff describe behaviours rather than label individuals, use respectful and emotionally literate language, and support pupils to learn from mistakes, repair relationships and develop safer choices. This approach complements, but does not replace, the school's safeguarding, behaviour and risk-management procedures.

5. Curriculum design and sequencing

Curriculum planning is informed by pupil voice, safeguarding information, attendance and behaviour patterns, local and national data, emerging risks, SEND/SEMH needs, statutory requirements and preparation-for-adulthood priorities. Curriculum planning is also informed by the PSHE Association Planning Framework for Pupils with SEND to ensure learning is accessible, appropriately sequenced and responsive to individual needs. Brunel School aligns PSHE provision with the four recognised Preparation for Adulthood outcomes:

Good Health

Independent Living

Employment

Friends, Relationships and Community Inclusion

These outcomes are embedded throughout the curriculum and wider school experience and support successful transition into adulthood.

6. Statutory RSHE within PSHE

The statutory RSHE Policy sits alongside this PSHE Policy. The PSHE curriculum provides the wider context in which statutory Relationships, Sex and Health Education is taught. The revised DfE guidance is in force from 1 September 2026.

- Healthy relationships, consent, boundaries and personal safety.
- Family relationships and diversity.
- Puberty, reproduction and physical development.

- Sexual health, contraception, sexually transmitted infections and access to support at an appropriate stage.
- Sexual harassment, sexual violence, exploitation, grooming and abuse.
- Domestic abuse and coercive/controlling behaviour.
- Online sexual harms, pornography, image sharing and emerging digital risks.
- Equality, respect, prejudice, stereotyping, sex, sexual orientation and gender reassignment, taught factually and respectfully in accordance with statutory guidance and equality law.
- Prevention of violence against women and girls and challenging harmful attitudes, including misogyny, at an appropriate developmental level.
- Mental wellbeing and safe help-seeking, including age-appropriate suicide prevention education at secondary level.
- recognising signs of emotional crisis, self-harm risk and suicidal thoughts;
- understanding how to seek urgent support for themselves or others;
- knowing how to access appropriate school, health and emergency services when required.

Parents/carers have no right to withdraw pupils from PSHE generally. The statutory withdrawal arrangements apply specifically to sex education within RSHE; details are set out in the separate RSHE Policy. The PSHE Association explicitly advises schools to distinguish this from the wider PSHE programme.

7. Economic wellbeing, careers and preparation for adulthood

PSHE at Brunel School supports pupils to develop the knowledge and skills needed for increasing independence and adult life. Economic wellbeing and careers education form an essential part of the broader PSHE curriculum.

- Money management, budgeting, saving and spending.
- Understanding bank accounts, cards, digital payments and financial safety.
- Debt, scams, fraud and financial exploitation.
- Consumer choices, advertising and financial decision-making.
- Careers exploration, strengths, interests and aspirations.
- Employability, communication, teamwork, punctuality and workplace expectations.
- Applications, interviews and workplace behaviour.
- Further education, training, apprenticeships and employment pathways.
- Rights and responsibilities in the workplace.
- Preparation for adulthood, independence and transition.

PSHE contributes to the school's careers programme and supports achievement of the Gatsby Benchmarks through the development of personal effectiveness, employability skills, decision-making, self-awareness and preparation for post-16 transitions.

8. Teaching and learning

PSHE is taught through active, participative and experiential methods. The PSHE Association stresses that PSHE has its own pedagogy and that teaching should develop knowledge, skills and attributes while avoiding shock or shame.

- Discussion, structured debate and carefully framed scenarios.
- Role play and rehearsal of communication and help-seeking scripts.
- Case studies and distancing techniques.

- Visual, symbol-supported and multimedia resources.
- Stories, problem-solving and practical activities.
- Reflection and self-assessment.
- Anonymous question opportunities.
- Real-life preparation activities and community learning where safe and appropriate.
- Explicit modelling and guided practice.
- Opportunities to revisit and overlearn essential safety messages.

Lessons should be positive and strengths-based, including when addressing risky behaviours. Staff should avoid sensationalising harm or using fear, humiliation or graphic content to secure compliance.

9. Establishing a safe learning environment

Because PSHE topics may be close to pupils' lived experiences, lessons must protect emotional and psychological safety. The PSHE Association identifies safe learning environments, ground rules, accessibility and support for vulnerable pupils as central to effective PSHE.

- Ground rules are established and revisited.
- Pupils are not expected to disclose personal experiences.
- Personal questions are not invited or answered in a public classroom setting.
- Anonymous questions may be used.
- Teachers use distancing techniques and fictional scenarios.
- Sensitive content is introduced carefully and, where appropriate, pupils are given advance notice.
- Staff know which pupils may require additional support.
- Lessons are accessible through reasonable adjustments and communication support.
- Safeguarding reporting routes are clearly understood by staff.

10. Responding to questions and disclosures

Pupils should feel able to ask questions and know that their questions will be treated respectfully. However, staff must maintain professional boundaries. The PSHE Association states that personal questions should not be asked or answered and that teachers cannot offer complete confidentiality.

- Answer factual, age/stage-appropriate questions where appropriate.
- Use a question box or anonymous method for sensitive questions.
- Park questions when the answer is unclear or needs professional/safeguarding advice.
- Do not ask probing or investigative questions.
- Do not promise confidentiality.
- If a disclosure or safeguarding concern arises, report it to the DSL/deputy without delay and follow the school's safeguarding procedure.
- Record concerns accurately, including relevant information, actions, decisions and outcomes.
- Ensure external contributors understand and follow the school's safeguarding and confidentiality arrangements.

KCSIE 2026 reinforces that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, that staff should maintain a child-centered approach, and that concerns should be acted upon immediately.

11. Inclusion, equality and accessibility

The curriculum is inclusive and accessible to all pupils. Teaching takes account of age, maturity, SEND, SEMH needs, communication, culture, faith, family circumstances, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability and other relevant circumstances.

- Reasonable adjustments are made to support participation.
- Teaching materials are adapted for literacy, processing, communication and sensory needs.
- Correct and accessible language is used for safeguarding and health.
- Difference is represented respectfully.
- Discriminatory language and behaviour are challenged in line with school policy.
- Staff do not make assumptions about pupils' families, identity, experiences or beliefs.
- Equality is embedded across school life rather than treated only as a PSHE topic.

Teaching actively promotes understanding and respect for all protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act 2010.

PSHE contributes, where appropriate, to EHCP outcomes, annual review processes and wider preparation-for-adulthood planning.

12. Online safety and digital wellbeing

Digital wellbeing is embedded throughout PSHE. Pupils are taught to recognise online risks and develop practical strategies for managing content, contact, conduct and commerce.

- Privacy, passwords and personal information.
- Online relationships and communication.
- Cyberbullying and harmful communications.
- Image sharing and sexualised content.
- Pornography and unrealistic expectations.
- Misinformation and disinformation.
- Influencers, algorithms and persuasive content.
- AI-generated content and deepfakes.
- Online scams, fraud and financial exploitation.
- Reporting, blocking, evidence preservation and seeking adult help.
- Sextortion and online coercion.
- Harmful online communities and extremist influences.
- Online content promoting discrimination, self-harm or unsafe behaviours.
- Critical evaluation of persuasive technologies and digital influence.
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Teaching is coordinated with the school's Online Safety Policy and filtering and monitoring arrangements.

13. Contextual safeguarding

Brunel School recognises that safeguarding risks can occur beyond the family home and may arise within peer groups, community settings and online environments. PSHE supports pupils to recognise, understand and respond safely to contextual safeguarding concerns, including:

peer-on-peer abuse;
child criminal exploitation;
child sexual exploitation;

harmful sexual behaviour;
online exploitation and grooming;
community-based risks;
coercion and unhealthy power dynamics;
reporting concerns and accessing support.

Learning is informed by local and national safeguarding trends and supports pupils to develop practical safety strategies for real-life situations

14. Drugs, alcohol, tobacco, vaping and risk

The PSHE curriculum supports pupils to understand the physical, psychological, social and legal risks associated with substances and other harmful behaviours. Teaching is factual, non-stigmatising and focused on harm prevention, decision-making and help-seeking.

- Legal and illegal substances and age-related restrictions.
- Alcohol, tobacco, nicotine and vaping.
- Cannabis and other drugs.
- Medicines, safe use and misuse.
- Peer pressure and exploitation.
- Risk, decision-making and refusal skills.
- Recognising when someone may need urgent help.
- Routes to trusted adults and specialist services.

Where substance-related concerns arise in school, staff follow the safeguarding, first aid, behaviour and relevant incident procedures.

15. Staff roles, responsibilities and training

Role	Responsibility
Governing Body / Proprietor	Approve the policy; monitor statutory compliance, quality and impact.
Headteacher	Ensure implementation, staffing, resources, training and whole-school alignment.
PSHE Lead	Lead curriculum design, sequencing, resources, staff support, monitoring, evaluation and parent engagement.
DSL / Deputies	Provide safeguarding oversight, advise on sensitive content and manage concerns/disclosures.
Teachers and support staff	Deliver agreed learning safely, model respectful relationships, use Language that Cares and report safeguarding concerns.
All staff	Reinforce PSHE principles through daily interactions and the wider school culture.
Parents/carers	Engage with curriculum information, consultation and support for learning at home.
Pupils	Participate respectfully, contribute pupil voice and practise safe/help-seeking behaviours.

Teachers delivering PSHE should receive appropriate subject-specific CPD. The PSHE Association recommends that PSHE is led and taught by staff who have received relevant professional development.

Staff CPD will include, as appropriate, PSHE pedagogy, safeguarding, handling complex questions, trauma-informed practice, Language that Cares, shame-sensitive responses, SEND/SEMH adaptation, online harms, statutory RSHE updates and safe facilitation of participative learning.

16. External visitors and contributors

External visitors can enhance PSHE when their expertise adds value to the planned curriculum. They do not replace the school's responsibility for content, teaching quality or safeguarding.

- Visitors are selected for appropriate expertise and suitability.
- Materials are reviewed before use.
- Sessions are linked explicitly to planned curriculum learning.
- A member of school staff remains responsible for the session.
- Visitors are briefed on safeguarding, confidentiality and reporting procedures.
- Feedback and impact are evaluated.

These arrangements reflect PSHE Association guidance that schools remain responsible for content and teaching approaches and should carefully review external materials

17. Parents, carers and stakeholders

PSHE is strongest when school and home communicate openly. Parents/carers are informed about the PSHE curriculum and the values and learning it promotes. The policy and curriculum information are made accessible, and parents/carers can raise questions with the PSHE Lead or Headteacher.

- Parents/carers are consulted on the policy and significant curriculum changes.
- Curriculum information is communicated through appropriate school channels.
- Parents/carers are supported to discuss relevant topics at home.
- Where appropriate, curriculum materials are available for parents/carers to view.
- Parents/carers are directed to reliable sources of information and support.
- Stakeholder feedback informs review.

The PSHE Association recommends collaboration with parents/carers and pupil involvement so that teaching remains relevant to pupils' needs.

18. Pupil voice

Pupil voice is integral to PSHE. Pupils contribute to curriculum development through age- and maturity-appropriate surveys, discussions, class feedback, focus groups and other methods. This is particularly important in an SEMH setting where pupils' lived experience and sense of safety can affect access to learning.

Pupil voice is used alongside safeguarding information, staff expertise, curriculum evidence and statutory requirements. It does not determine whether statutory content is taught. Particular care is taken to ensure pupil voice activities are accessible for pupils with communication, literacy, emotional regulation or processing difficulties through adapted approaches, visual supports, structured discussion and relationship-based methods.

19. Assessment and progression

Assessment in PSHE is used to identify learning and progression rather than to pass or fail pupils or judge behaviour. The PSHE Association emphasises understanding pupils' starting points, assessing learning and adapting curriculum provision.

- Baseline activities identify prior knowledge, misconceptions and confidence.
- Teachers assess knowledge, understanding, skills and application.
- Assessment methods are accessible and adapted for SEND/SEMH needs.
- Teachers use observation, questioning, discussion, practical activities, reflection and endpoint checks.
- Pupil self-reflection is used where appropriate.
- Assessment information informs future teaching and intervention.
- Progress is evidenced through curriculum work, assessment records and pupil voice.

Contribution to EHCP outcomes.

- Contribution to Preparation for Adulthood outcomes.
- Attendance, engagement and belonging indicators.
- Identification of safeguarding themes and emerging pupil needs.
- Effectiveness of contextual safeguarding education.
- Effectiveness of careers and preparation-for-adulthood provision.
- Assessment may also be used to evidence progress towards EHCP outcomes, Preparation for Adulthood outcomes and wider personal development goals where appropriate.

PSHE assessment will not require pupils to disclose personal experiences or beliefs.

20. Monitoring and evaluation

The PSHE Lead and Senior Leadership Team monitor the quality, consistency and impact of PSHE. Monitoring includes curriculum review, lesson visits, work scrutiny, pupil voice, staff feedback, assessment information, safeguarding themes and parent/carers feedback.

- Coverage of statutory RSHE and wider PSHE content.
- Progression and spiral sequencing.
- Accessibility for pupils with SEND/SEMH needs.
- Quality and consistency of teaching.
- Use of Language that Cares and trauma-informed approaches.
- Evidence of pupils developing knowledge, skills and confidence.
- Impact of pupil voice.
- Relevance to safeguarding and emerging local/national risks.
- Quality and suitability of external contributions and resources.

21. Policy review and linked documents

The PSHE Association recommends that the policy is reviewed at least every 18–24 months and kept aligned with current DfE guidance.

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Relationships and Sex Education Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Equality Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy

- Drugs, Alcohol, Tobacco and Vaping Policy
- SEND Information Report / SEND Policy
- Careers Education / Provider Access arrangements
- Attendance Policy
- Confidentiality / Information Sharing arrangements
- Complaints Policy
- Curriculum Policy

22. Key guidance and professional sources

- DfE – Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSHE) and Health Education statutory guidance, revised 2025 and in force from 1 September 2026.
- DfE – Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.
- DfE – Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.
- PSHE Association – Writing your school's PSHE education policy.
- PSHE Association – 2026 Programme of Study for PSHE education.
- PSHE Association – Curriculum Models and planning guidance.