



ST BENEDICT'S SCHOOL  
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## PSHE and RSHE Policy

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## **1. Introduction and Ethos**

During their time at St Benedict's, we want our students to learn to be resilient individuals able to find happiness whatever life throws at them. We want them to be moral, caring, and thoughtful members of our Benedictine community and the wider world. We want them to have the information to help them stay healthy in both mind and body and to have the understanding and confidence to prosper when they leave us.

The PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic) Programme at St Benedict's supports the school's objective to help students learn and achieve to the best of their ability, and to prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of life. The programme provides students with the knowledge and skills they need to make positive decisions regarding their physical and mental wellbeing, and the relationships they form with other people.

The RSHE curriculum promotes positive personal characteristics including resilience, self-worth, self-respect, honesty, integrity, courage, kindness, and trustworthiness. It supports students in making ethical, informed decisions about their health, wellbeing, and relationships.

Lessons are carefully sequenced to build knowledge and skills over time, revisiting and reinforcing key learning so that students can apply it in different contexts as they mature. Provision is inclusive and accessible to all students, including those with special educational needs or disabilities, and is responsive to their backgrounds, experiences, and additional needs, in line with the Equality Act 2010.

The programme of study incorporates the themes and skills set out in the PSHE Association's guidance. The three core themes are Health and Wellbeing, Relationships, and Living in the Wider World. They are taught under the four PSHE headings of Personal, Social, Health, and Economic topics. The programme seeks to develop students' intrapersonal, interpersonal and enquiry skills. Fundamental British values are promoted, and students are encouraged to regard people of all faiths, races and cultures with respect and tolerance. While lessons are taught within the ethos of a tolerant Catholic and Benedictine school, staff must ensure that their personal beliefs do not prevent them from providing a balanced approach to the topics being taught.

The Head of PSHE works with colleagues across departments, for example Biology, to ensure that content is complementary and reinforced across subjects. Opportunities are sought in all curriculum areas to consolidate concepts introduced in PSHE.

## **2. Statutory Framework and Compliance**

PSHE at St Benedict's is closely linked to other cross-curricular policies which can be consulted on the school website including Anti-Bullying, Behaviour, and Child Protection and Safeguarding. A copy of the policy can also be requested directly from the school free of charge.

The school has regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance issued under Section 80A of the Education Act 2002 and Section 403 of the Education Act 1996 and complies with the Independent School Standards. In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025), all staff are aware of their Prevent duty and students are given opportunities to discuss sensitive issues, including terrorism, and how to challenge extremist ideas. The programme also incorporates the government's statutory guidance on RSHE (Relationships and Sex Education) of 2025.

Students are taught about the law in relation to a wide range of issues, ensuring they are equipped with both legal literacy and the ability to recognise when behaviour or situations are unsafe. These topics include:

- Marriage, including forced marriage and civil partnerships
- Consent
- Domestic abuse, stalking, rape, sexual offences, and female genital mutilation (FGM), including virginity testing and hymenoplasty
- Sexual abuse, harassment and exploitation, including harmful sexual behaviour and sexual harassment
- The Online Safety Act
- Online behaviours, including image and information sharing, online sexual harassment and abuse
- Pornography
- Abortion
- Protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex
- Alcohol, smoking, vaping, nicotine and drugs
- Gambling
- Carrying knives and weapons
- Extremism and radicalisation
- Grooming and child exploitation
- Hate crime
- The age of criminal responsibility

Teaching ensures that students understand the legal position on these issues, their responsibilities under the law, and the protections available to them. Students are also given the knowledge and skills to recognise and respond to unhealthy or unsafe relationships, including coercion, exploitation, violence, or abuse, and to seek help from trusted adults and support services.

### **3. Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **Governors and Senior Leaders**

The Governing Body ensures that students make progress, that RSHE is accessible to those with SEND, and that the programme is delivered in line with government guidance. Governors also ensure that clear information is provided to parents about the curriculum, the use of external providers, and parental rights of withdrawal.

The direction of the PSHE programme is delegated to the Head of PSHE and the Senior Deputy Head. They are responsible for ensuring that appropriate resources, support, and training are provided so that staff are familiar with current PSHE and RSHE guidance and feel confident in teaching lessons and answering student questions. PSHE classes are taught by form tutors, enabling students to be taught by teachers who know them best. For certain topics, experts are invited from within the school or from external agencies.

The PSHE programme is reviewed annually by the PSHE Coordinator, the Senior Deputy Head, and the Heads of Year to ensure that it remains relevant and effective. Consultation with staff, students,

parents, and governors informs this review to ensure that the programme remains faithful to the ethos of the school and also compliant with statutory guidelines.

### **Teaching Staff**

All teaching is delivered in a safe, supportive, and non-judgmental environment by staff trained in PSHE and RSHE, with input from external agencies where appropriate. Teachers are expected to deliver PSHE with an objective and balanced approach regardless of their own personal beliefs or attitudes. They attend training to stay up to date with school policy, statutory requirements, and effective approaches for handling difficult questions. Students are taught that all people are to be treated with equal dignity and respect, and that harassment, discrimination, or prejudice are never acceptable. Where challenging questions arise, staff may:

- Encourage students to raise the question with their parents or guardians.
- Offer to discuss the issue privately outside the lesson.
- Treat it as a safeguarding concern if appropriate.

Teachers are encouraged to seek advice and support from their Head of Year or the Head of PSHE if needed. As with other pastoral matters, staff encourage students to raise concerns that emerge in PSHE lessons and differentiate lesson planning to meet the needs of students with different abilities or special educational needs.

Teachers use medically accurate vocabulary in health and safeguarding contexts to ensure students can describe concerns clearly and confidently, and to support accurate understanding of their bodies and boundaries.

### **Students**

Students are expected to attend PSHE lessons as with any other timetabled subject. The only exceptions are when parents request withdrawal on pastoral grounds, for example, where a student with an eating disorder might miss a lesson on that topic or if a student is withdrawn from sex education lessons.

### **Parents**

Parents are given access to all PSHE lesson content through the Firefly portal and are encouraged to discuss topics with their children at home. Parents also have access to lesson materials and supplementary information through parent forums, including specific talks on issues such as online safety. Parents wishing to raise questions are asked to contact their child's form tutor in the first instance.

The school will not enter into any contractual arrangement that restricts parents' right to see RSHE materials; any such clauses are void. Parents must not copy or share materials beyond what copyright law allows. Where parents cannot access the portal or attend a meeting, the school will provide copies of the materials with the same copyright notice.

Consultation about the content of the programme takes place with students through the school council, with parents through surveys and direct consultations, and with staff through termly pastoral meetings of heads of year with their tutors. Parents are given clear advance notice of lessons covering sex education content and have the right to request withdrawal from these non-

statutory elements.

Parents are the primary educators of their children in matters of human relationships and sexuality, and the school works in partnership with them. Where parents exercise their right to withdraw from non-statutory sex education, the school will explain the implications of this and discuss alternative arrangements. Parents are notified in advance of sex education lessons, with a letter sent at the start of the year. They are advised to discuss withdrawal with the Head or Deputy Head before making a final decision. Any formal request for withdrawal should be directed to the Senior Deputy Head, Mr. Ramsden. Students withdrawn from these elements will be provided with purposeful and age-appropriate alternative learning.

The head may, in exceptional circumstances such as safeguarding concerns or a student's particular vulnerability, decline a withdrawal request. From three terms before a student turns sixteen, the student themselves may choose to opt back into sex education even if previously withdrawn, and they are informed of this right. All discussions with parents and, where appropriate, the child, will be documented.

#### **4. Organisation and Delivery**

The Head of PSHE, along with the Senior Deputy Head and Heads of Year, are responsible for writing the programme and for organising its delivery. PSHE is delivered by form tutors in a timetabled weekly session on Wednesday Period 4.

A number of these sessions are delivered by internal and external speakers or agencies to provide specialist input and to enhance students' experience. St Benedict's works in partnership with a variety of organisations including the Metropolitan Police, Ealing Magistrates, Childnet, Transport for London and the Ten Ten Company. Whilst ever mindful of safeguarding issues and the Prevent Duty, the school remains committed to inviting visitors into school and such planned learning experiences are designed to address specified learning objectives.

All delivery aims to be participative and interactive, supporting rather than alarming students, and ensuring that content is relevant, age-appropriate, and responsive to local and national issues.

Additionally, for all years, elements of PSHE are taught through other subjects. This is most easily seen for Citizenship within Geography and History and Health Education in Biology. However, opportunities exist in all subjects – through the subject itself, but also through the manner of the teaching and learning and the relationships and behaviour encouraged and indeed exemplified by the subject teacher.

PSHE is also addressed through assemblies, form periods, the behaviour policy, and day-to-day interaction among students and between students and staff.

A distinctive element of the PSHE curriculum at St Benedict's is the PSHE2 programme. Each week a new lesson is written in response to events in the community or the wider world. Examples have included the American election, the impact of Brexit, Children's Mental Health Week, and presentations by Sixth Formers on subjects such as animal welfare and the medical significance of microbiomes. Parents are able to access these lessons on the Firefly portal to continue conversations at home.

The PSHE programme plays an essential role in ensuring that students are prepared to play a full

part in society.

## Key Themes in PSHE

### PERSONAL

- Staying safe, including understanding safeguarding
- Relationships Education
- Resilience and growth mindset
- Citizenship/British values (democracy, the rule of law, mutual respect, and tolerance)/ anti-extremism. (The government document [Promoting fundamental British values is here](#))
- Positive approaches to schoolwork
- Avoiding alcohol and substance misuse
- Understanding the world around us (including 'fake news') and the environment

### SOCIAL

- Positive social relationships
- Positive personal relationships
- Anti-bullying, both physical and online
- E-safety, including use of social media
- Tolerance and social equality<sup>1</sup> ([advice from the Equality and Human Rights Commission is here](#))

### HEALTH

- Physical health and wellbeing including sleep
- Sex Education
- Mental health and wellbeing including addiction (for instance gaming, gambling as well as drugs, smoking etc.)
- Healthy eating and exercise

### ECONOMIC

- Personal finances
- Vocational guidance – subject and university choices
- Careers advice

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<sup>1</sup> Particular regard is given to the understanding of equal rights under the terms of the Equality Act (2010) and the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

## **5. Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation**

The Head of PSHE is responsible for monitoring and assessing the programme and identifying areas for development each year. Specific topics and timings of delivery are discussed with Heads of Division and Heads of Department where appropriate.

Individual sessions are evaluated through informal discussion with colleagues delivering or supervising them, and these conversations inform any necessary amendments or additions. There is also provision for discussion of the PSHE course with students through the school council and regular surveys of both students and parents so that there is always opportunity for feedback on the content, style, and quality of lessons.

Evaluation of external agencies is also undertaken, with feedback gathered from teachers, students, and parents.

Students' understanding of PSHE is assessed through a termly test and an optional piece of longer writing, which determines the winner of the PSHE prize in each year group.

## **6. Sensitive Issues and Safeguarding**

St Benedict's is aware of the sensitive nature of many of the topics covered within the PSHE and RSHE curriculum. These include relationships and sex education, terminal illness, bereavement, family breakdown, drug and alcohol misuse, financial hardship, and other safeguarding-related matters. Staff are asked to approach such topics with particular care, bearing in mind any relevant background information shared by colleagues or the School Nurse, and to ensure that lessons remain inclusive, age-appropriate, and non-judgmental. The school aims to provide a safe and supportive environment where students feel able to seek help and guidance about anything that may be concerning them, whether at home or at school.

Throughout the course, students are reminded regularly of the safeguarding systems in place, including what to do and who to speak to if they have a concern about themselves or someone else. They are also made aware of what will happen if they make a report, including the limits of confidentiality and the role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Students are signposted to external sources of help if they feel unable to raise a concern directly with school staff.

The PSHE curriculum reinforces strategies for keeping safe both online and offline. It addresses the influence of pornography, harmful online behaviours, and peer pressure, and promotes students' ability to identify and respond to grooming, exploitation, coercion, and abuse. These lessons create space for open, respectful discussion of different personal, social, and sexual preferences. Prejudiced views are challenged, equality is actively promoted, and any bullying related to sexual behaviour, perceived sexual orientation or gender identity is addressed promptly in line with the school's behaviour and safeguarding policies.

Staff are trained in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE). All staff know that any safeguarding concern must be acted on immediately, including those arising from disclosures in RSHE lessons or where there is evidence of domestic abuse, neglect, or harmful online content. Staff are reminded of mandatory reporting duties, including those relating to FGM, and of the legal changes that criminalised virginity testing and hymenoplasty in 2022. The government is likely to introduce a statutory duty on all those working in regulated activity to report known incidents of

child sexual abuse, which is entirely in keeping with the school's current expectation of staff.

Staff are trained to handle sensitive information with care, sharing details only with those who need to know, and never promising confidentiality where safeguarding may be at stake. Concerns must be referred to the DSL or their deputy. The DSL maintains links with local police and agencies, is alert to safeguarding issues specific to the local area, and ensures that students can be supported by appropriate external provision where needed.

PSHE is taught by trained staff with the knowledge and confidence to handle sensitive topics, answer questions factually, and provide support where needed. PSHE lessons, as with all lessons, are adapted for students with SEND, ensuring accessibility in line with the SEND Code of Practice. Teachers are aware that SEND students may be particularly vulnerable to bullying or abuse and that this makes these topics especially important for them.

Where external providers are used for specialist content the school requires all external providers to supply materials and a lesson plan in advance. Materials are reviewed for accuracy, impartiality, and absence of commercial or partisan interests, age-appropriateness, and alignment with the school ethos. A member of staff is always present. All guest speakers are registered on the Firefly portal and vetted for suitability. Safeguarding procedures are made clear to visitors, including the requirement not to promise confidentiality.

## **7. Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE)**

At St Benedict's, Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) is taught as part of the broader PSHE programme in a way that is age-appropriate, responsive to students' maturity and developmental stage, and rooted in the Catholic and Benedictine ethos of the school. RSHE is inclusive, accessible to all students, and sensitive to their backgrounds, experiences, and additional needs, in line with the Equality Act 2010. Lessons are sequenced to build knowledge and skills progressively, revisiting key concepts to secure understanding and preparing students for the opportunities, responsibilities, and challenges of adult life.

By providing comprehensive RSE we continue to promote Catholic teachings as a school and are not encouraging students to become sexually active at a young age. The aim of this policy is to ensure that the right provision is in place so that students may have all the background knowledge they need to make informed decisions and responsible choices as they grow up. All RSHE at St Benedict's is in accordance with the Church's moral teaching and the guidance of the national Catholic Education Service.

The approach is underpinned by the Catholic Church's teaching on the dignity of the human person, affirming the value of chastity and the moral responsibilities that accompany human sexuality. The importance of marriage as the foundation for family life and the raising of children is taught, while also acknowledging the contribution of other committed, stable relationships to the wellbeing of society. This is presented in a balanced way that reflects both the law and the school's ethos, enabling respectful discussion of differing beliefs and practices.

RSHE is taught in a factual and non-partisan way, including clear teaching about the law. This covers areas such as consent, FGM, extremism and online safety, and also medical consent, Gillick competence, and parental responsibility, to ensure students understand their rights and protections under the law.

RSHE is delivered through a planned programme covering three interconnected areas:

- Relationships Education: families, friendships, respectful relationships, online relationships and staying safe;
- Sex Education: intimate relationships, consent, fertility, pregnancy choices, contraception and STIs, taught at an age-appropriate stage;
- Health Education: mental wellbeing, physical health, puberty, menstruation, healthy lifestyles, and the prevention and management of risks such as substance misuse.

Core safeguarding themes are embedded throughout. Students are taught to recognise and respond to unsafe or unhealthy relationships, including those involving coercion, exploitation, grooming, violence, or abuse. This includes understanding the influence of pornography, body image pressures, and the role of online communities in shaping attitudes and behaviour. Online safety is explicitly addressed, including how algorithms and targeted advertising work, how to assess reliability of information, how personal data is used, and how to report harmful content or contact.

RSHE teaching promotes respect for self and others and does not encourage or normalise early sexual activity. Students are supported to make informed, confident decisions about whether and when to engage in sexual relationships once they reach the age of consent, and to resist any pressure to do so. Lessons aim to build self-esteem and foster a strong sense of personal autonomy.

Students are given opportunities to practise decision-making and communication skills, and to explore complex relationship scenarios in a safe and respectful environment. Teaching is participative and interactive, allowing students to reflect, ask questions and critically evaluate different viewpoints.

Students are taught that abuse, including online abuse and coercive behaviour, is never the victim's fault. Where students may have experienced harm or unhealthy relationships, the school provides a consistent, supportive environment in which they can seek help.

Staff use a range of techniques to ensure sensitive topics are taught safely, including clear ground rules, the use of distancing techniques (e.g., case studies or fictional scenarios), and opportunities for students to raise questions anonymously.

Legal literacy is integral to RSHE. Students learn the law on consent, the sharing of sexual images, safeguarding protections, and the age of consent, as well as how these apply both online and offline. They also explore the boundaries of lawful behaviour in relationships and the responsibilities these laws place on individuals.

The school actively teaches respect for diversity, including sexual orientation and gender identity, in a way that is consistent with the Catholic ethos and with the requirement to treat all people with equal dignity. Students are taught that harassment, discrimination, and prejudice are never acceptable, and stereotypes or language that normalise harmful behaviour or stigmatise groups are challenged. Healthy and stable same-sex relationships are explored alongside traditional Catholic teaching about marriage.

Students are taught the facts and law about biological sex and gender reassignment. They learn that people have legal rights according to their biological sex, which differ from the rights of those of the opposite sex, and that gender reassignment is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act. Respectful debate about gender identity is permitted, but the school avoids promoting social

transition as a simple solution to gender distress or discomfort. Language or behaviour that reinforces gender stereotypes is avoided.

RSHE includes sensitive safeguarding content related to gender-questioning students and the complex issues they may face, in line with current government guidance. Teaching recognises the need for sensitivity, balance, and accuracy, ensuring students are equipped to understand the relevant legal, pastoral, and safeguarding considerations.

Sequencing ensures that students acquire key knowledge and skills before they are likely to encounter related experiences, supporting early prevention of harm. RSHE develops students' communication and assertiveness skills so they can remain true to their values under peer or societal pressure. Explicit links are made between RSHE and mental health, resilience, and help-seeking behaviour, with clear signposting to internal and external sources of support.

## **8. Addressing Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence**

At St Benedict's, we recognise that preventing harmful behaviours such as sexual harassment and violence begins early, with the development of positive relationship skills and a school culture rooted in kindness and respect. From the earliest stages of education, students are supported to understand and navigate boundaries thoughtfully, behave with empathy, and identify prejudice when they see it. This forms part of a whole-school approach that extends beyond the classroom and is reflected in our behaviour and safeguarding policies, ensuring that respectful and inclusive relationships underpin all aspects of school life.

Students are taught that sexual violence can affect anyone, regardless of sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, or other protected characteristics, and that victims are never to blame. While acknowledging that sexual violence disproportionately affects girls and young women, the school takes care to avoid stigmatising boys or implying that they are inherently at fault. Instead, teaching promotes a balanced understanding of how power dynamics can shape relationships and how respectful behaviour must be modelled and upheld by everyone.

Staff are expected to challenge everyday sexism, homophobia, and harmful stereotypes wherever they arise, and to remain alert to the influence of misogynistic online figures or narratives that normalise sexual harassment. Students are encouraged to reflect critically on the media they encounter, including online influencers, and to consider the potential harm these messages may cause to both men and women. At the same time, students are taught to challenge ideas without targeting individuals, ensuring discussion remains respectful and constructive.

The RSHE programme includes opportunities for all students to consider positive conceptions of masculinity and femininity, to learn from healthy role models, and to understand the importance of kindness, attentiveness, and care in all relationships. Students are taught that ethical behaviour in intimate relationships goes beyond consent, requiring genuine concern for the wellbeing and vulnerability of the other person.

Students are also supported to develop communication skills that enable them to engage with experiences different from their own, including learning about menstruation and menopause. Where a particular topic is judged to be best explored in a single-sex setting, the school may provide a safe and supportive environment for discussion in separate groups, while ensuring this does not reinforce gender stereotypes or place undue responsibility on any group to prevent harm.

Our overarching aim is always to promote dignity, understanding and mutual respect in all relationships.

## **9. Health and Wellbeing**

St Benedict's recognises that sensitive mental health topics, including eating disorders, self-harm, and suicide prevention, require particularly careful handling. Where such topics are taught, this is done using evidence-based, high-quality resources, with input from trained staff or external professionals. Advice is sought from appropriate services, including the NHS or local mental health specialists, and staff are given appropriate CPD to ensure that teaching is safe, age-appropriate and supportive.

Where students are affected personally by a topic, either through experience or disclosure, safeguarding protocols are followed without delay. When teaching about these topics, staff avoid language or materials that could inadvertently normalise or promote harmful behaviours. For example, lessons do not refer to specific methods of self-harm or disordered eating, and content that might romanticise these behaviours is avoided. Students are reminded of the importance of seeking support for themselves or others and are signposted to trusted adults and external services.

The timing and maturity of students is carefully considered before delivering content on suicide prevention and other extremely sensitive topics, ensuring that teaching is delivered with care, balance, and appropriate professional input.

Students are supported to understand the links between their physical and mental health, to recognise when they or others may need help, and to seek timely support. The curriculum promotes emotional self-regulation, perseverance, and resilience, particularly in response to setbacks or distressing experiences. We aim to reduce stigma around physical and mental ill health, including challenging the use of negative or pejorative language, and encourage openness so that students feel confident in seeking advice and clarification.

Students are also prepared sensitively for the physical changes associated with puberty, including menstruation. The school ensures that menstrual products are readily available to those who need them and that appropriate language is used in lessons, such as "period pads" or "menstrual products."