



Department  
for Education

# **Curriculum planning for Relationships Education and Health Education in primary schools as part of education recovery**

**June 2021**

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## Summary

This publication provides non-statutory guidance from the Department for Education. It has been produced to support relationships education and health education curriculum planning in primary schools, as part of education recovery.

## Expiry or review date

This advice will be kept under review and updated as necessary.

## Who is this publication for?

This advice is intended to sit alongside the statutory guidance on Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education. It is therefore aimed at:

- governing bodies of maintained schools (including schools with a sixth form) and non-maintained special schools
- trustees or directors of academies and free schools
- proprietors of independent schools (including academies and free schools)
- management committees of pupil referral units (PRUs)
- teachers, other school staff and school nurses
- head teachers, principals and senior leadership teams
- Diocese and other faith representatives
- for reference for relevant local authority staff

## Introduction

All primary schools are required to provide relationships education and health education to all primary age pupils from September 2020.

We know that the covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. It is particularly important at this time for schools to listen to their pupils, to ensure they understand what their main concerns are, as this can play an important role in informing relationships education and health education curriculum planning as part of recovery.

To support this, the Mental Health in Education Action Group has provided guidance below on a range of issues that we know children and young people have been concerned about throughout the pandemic:

- Not being able to socialise with family and friends
- Sleep problems
- Bullying
- Friendships (including on transition to new education settings)
- Staying safe online

This advice includes information on which modules from the curriculum cover these issues and how to approach teaching this content, as well as providing links to additional resources and support.

It is not intended to replace the need to assess any gaps in pupils' knowledge, either due to pupils forgetting things they had previously been taught, or due to content that was not delivered because of the pandemic. It is also important to consider how this content can be complemented by other areas of the curriculum, assemblies, form-time and by extra-curricular activities.

Public Health England also provides general tips and guidance about supporting mental wellbeing for teachers:

- [Mental wellbeing | Top tips | PHE School Zone](#) advice for teachers on supporting parents and carers with the mental wellbeing of their children, including the importance of routine and normalising discussions around mental wellbeing.
- [Every Mind Matters Guidance on learning in a safe environment.pdf \(pshe-association.org.uk\)](#) useful guidance for teachers on delivering learning in a safe environment including protecting vulnerable students and providing effective responses to sensitive questions

# Concern: Not being able to socialise with family and friends

## Relevant curriculum modules

- [Families and people who care for me](#)
- [Caring friendships](#)
- [Mental wellbeing](#)

## Points to cover

- The **love and security** families provide can be particularly important when things **change** in our lives or we have **problems or worries**. Children themselves can also provide important love and support for other family members.
- A healthy and caring family life includes time spent together; **respect and support** for each other, including in difficult times; and **dealing with problems** in a caring and supportive way.
- Friendships also make us feel **happy and secure**. Like all **respectful relationships** friendships are based on certain characteristics, for example: **kindness**, e.g. caring about each other, our feelings, and putting others' needs above our own; and **supporting our friends** when they have problems or difficulties, e.g. when they are upset.
- Anyone (including adults) can experience feelings of **boredom, isolation and loneliness** – whether or not they have people with them. Children should seek out a trusted adult or friend when they feel lonely, so it is important that they recognise who they can trust and where to seek further advice if needed.
- The internet can give us the opportunity to be friends with people all over the world.
- Screen time can be valuable – **during the covid-19 pandemic in particular, it has given us the opportunity to stay in contact with families and friends**. However, it is important to **maintain a balance with other activities**.
- It is also important to remember that online friendships should have the **same characteristics** as friendships in real life; and that **being safe is paramount** in any online relationship.
- It may be helpful to reflect on how spending time with others online, including sharing hobbies and interests, helped to maintain and increase wellbeing during lockdown restrictions; and to look to the future and think about how to balance online friendships with spending time with others in person.

## Supporting lesson plans from Public Health England

- [Physical and mental wellbeing Year 6 lesson plan | PHE School Zone](#)
- [Building connections – Year 6 lesson plan pack | PHE School Zone](#)
- [Social media – Year 6 lesson plan pack | PHE School Zone](#)

## Additional information and resources

- [Support for young people \(annafreud.org\)](#)
- [Self-care tips videos for young people - Every Mind Matters - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

## Concern: Sleep problems

### Relevant curriculum modules

- [Health and prevention](#)
- [Mental wellbeing](#)
- [Internet safety and harms](#)

### Points to cover

- Sleep is important for many different reasons, for example it helps us to remember and sort what we learn during the day; enables the body to heal and grow; and helps to regulate emotions. Good mental wellbeing also depends on getting the right amount of sleep every day.
- Good quality sleep can be achieved more easily by:
  - having a **routine** of getting up and going to bed at the same time (including weekends);
  - **going to bed** in time to get enough sleep;
  - having **regular exercise** to make the body tired; and
  - **going outside** during the day, as daylight makes us feel alert during the day and tired at night.
- It is also important to consider rationing time spent online and using electronic devices, especially in the evening. The benefits of managing time online can include helping you to get enough sleep at night.
- You can develop a routine to reduce screen time and prioritise sleep, by limiting screen time in the evening and switching off your phone 2 hours before bed.

### Supporting lesson plans from Public Health England

- [Physical and mental wellbeing Year 6 lesson plan | PHE School Zone](#) – this lesson plan explores the connection between physical and mental wellbeing and asks students to think about how eating well, moving more, and sleep can affect mental wellbeing
- [Sleep – Year 6 lesson plan | PHE School Zone](#)

### Additional information and resources

- [Self-care tips videos for young people - Every Mind Matters - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)
- [Sleep problems \(youngminds.org.uk\)](#)

# Concern: Bullying

## Relevant curriculum modules

- [Caring friendships](#)
- [Respectful relationships](#)
- [online relationships](#)
- [mental wellbeing](#)
- [Internet safety and harms](#)

## Points to cover

- Everyone needs to show the same respect to others, regardless of how different they are to them. However, while we should be friendly and welcoming to everyone, we do not have to be close friends with everyone.
- Most friendships have their ups and downs. When there is conflict in a friendship, there are things you can do to help, such as apologising if you are in the wrong, and discussing the problem on both sides honestly to resolve issues. Resolving a conflict can help to make your friendship stronger, as it helps you to understand more about each other and yourself. It is important to understand that bullying is not the same as arguing with your friends.
- Bullying can take many forms. This can include targeting someone simply because you disagree with them, or regularly excluding others to hurt them. It is not always possible to tell if someone is hurt by bullying, for example, they may laugh or smile, but bullying is always harmful. Bullying can make people feel bad and it can negatively affect mental wellbeing. Bullying can make people:
  - feel humiliated and ashamed
  - feel scared, sad and alone
  - feel like they want to hurt themselves or other people
  - lose confidence in themselves
  - miss school and other opportunities
  - feel bad long after the bullying happens
- If you witness bullying but are not involved, you can safely be an 'active bystander'. This could include privately asking the victim if they're okay; reporting it to a teacher or trusted adult; or encouraging the victim to contact an organisation like [Childline](#).
- You should make sure you know about our school's anti-bullying policy, and that you know where to go if you need support.

### Online bullying

- Sometimes people might behave in ways online that might be harmful to us or other people. This can include bullying us by saying mean things or making us feel bad about ourselves, or sending mean online posts and comments or messages. It is always wrong for someone to behave like this, including friends and people we have not met.
- You should behave in the same ways online as you would offline, including when you are anonymous. This means having respect for others, valuing differences and being kind and caring. Online bullying by a pupil at the same school can be reported to the school. Other methods for preventing and tackling bullying can include **digital reporting tools** to remove content; **blocking** certain users; **taking a break** from online platforms; and **taking evidence**, for example, screenshots.
- It is important to seek support if something you have done, seen, or experienced online is:
  - making you anxious, sleepless, or concerned for your own or someone else's safety or wellbeing;
  - encouraging you or others to form more extreme views and isolate from close friends and/or family; or
  - possibly illegal, wrong, or harmful to yourself or others.

### Supporting lesson plans from Public Health England

- [Physical and mental wellbeing Year 6 lesson plan | PHE School Zone](#)
- [Building connections – Year 6 lesson plan pack | PHE School Zone](#)
- [Social media – Year 6 lesson plan pack | PHE School Zone](#)

### Additional information and resources

- [Anti-Bullying Alliance](#)
- [Kidscape - advice for young people](#)
- [Bullying \(youngminds.org.uk\)](#)



# Concern: Friendships (including on transitions to new education settings)

## Relevant curriculum modules

- [Caring friendships](#)
- [Respectful relationships](#)
- [Mental wellbeing](#)

## Points to cover

- Many different factors can affect our moods. Big life events, like moving from primary school to secondary school, can have an impact. It's normal to have a range of feelings about big events, both positive and negative.
- Friendships can make us feel happy and secure by giving us a feeling of belonging, company so that we are not alone, and support when we need it. We can be friends with anyone, not just those who look like us or come from the same backgrounds.
- Being unwelcoming to others (e.g. ignoring them, or not involving them in a group or game) can make them feel lonely and excluded. Even if we do not want to be friends with someone, we should still treat them with respect.
- Anyone (including adults) can experience feelings of boredom, isolation and loneliness – whether or not they have people with them. Children should seek out a trusted adult or friend when they feel lonely, so it is important that they recognise who they can trust and where to seek further advice if needed.
- Sometimes it can be difficult, but there are lots of different ways to make new friends, like:
  - saying hello to someone and talking to them;
  - showing an interest in what someone is doing and asking them about it; or
  - inviting them to join a group.
- There are lots of ways to build friendships, including being kind, considerate and respectful; listening to each other; and accepting each other's differences.
- There are also lots of different places you can make friends, for example joining clubs where you can make friends with people who have similar interests or hobbies.

## Supporting lesson plans from Public Health England

- [Forming positive relationships lesson plan pack | PHE School Zone](#)
- [Mental wellbeing | Overview | PHE School Zone](#)
- [Building connections – Year 6 lesson plan pack | PHE School Zone](#)
- [Transition to secondary school | PHE School Zone](#)

## Additional information and resources

- [Starting secondary school - BBC Bitesize](#)
- [Self-care tips videos for young people - Every Mind Matters - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)
- [Life & wellbeing - BBC Bitesize](#)

# Concern: Staying safe online

## Relevant curriculum modules

- [Online relationships](#)
- [Being safe](#)
- [Internet safety and harms](#)

## Points to cover

- For most people, the internet is a central part of life and it has many benefits, like enabling us to socialise with friends and family. However it is important to keep a balance with other activities, and there are risks in having too much screen time.
- Online content can have a negative impact on wellbeing in a number of ways. This can include if you:
  - feel reliant on it – for example constantly checking for ‘likes’;
  - see something that isn’t age appropriate, for example something scary or violent; or
  - see misleading information, for example about looking after your health.
- The way we act online can also have a negative impact on the wellbeing of others. Sometimes people might behave in ways online that might be harmful to us or other people. This can include bullying us by saying mean things or making us feel bad about ourselves, or sending mean online posts and comments or messages. It is always wrong for someone to behave like this, including friends and people we have not met. You should behave in the same ways online as you would offline, including when you are anonymous. This means having respect for others, valuing differences and being kind and caring.
- Whilst online relationships and content do have some potential risks, there are a number of things we can do to keep ourselves safe. Paying attention to how you are feeling when you spend time online – for example if something upsets you or you feel like we are spending too much time thinking about things you have seen online; will help you to make sure you know when to talk to a trusted adult about any concerns.
- It is also important to remember that while many social media sites and games encourage you to add ‘friends’, you need to be careful about adding a ‘friend’ you have never met in person. You do not have to reply to contact from people you have not met, and it is not rude to stop talking to someone if they make you feel uncomfortable.
- You should also be aware of you boundaries, including in friendships, and that these will be different at different times – for example when you are at school or online. This includes boundaries around your personal information – what you share about yourself and what you keep private. We all have a right to maintain our boundaries, online and offline. You have a right to feel safe, and you should seek help if you are worried about how someone treats you, including when you are online. There are lots of places you can go for advice, including speaking to a trusted adult in your family or school, or national/local support services.

- You should tell a trusted adult if you feel unsure about someone you have met online, especially if they are pressuring you to share information about yourself or to meet in person. Many websites, apps and games also have reporting tools and ways for people to block users and content.
- You should also be aware that not all the information you find online is reliable. For example:
  - Some content is designed to get you to do things, like spend money or share personal information.
  - Influencers are often paid to promote products – the things they say might not always reflect what they really think.

If you need help to manage the amount of time you are spending online; see content that is not appropriate for your age; are concerned about abuse or harassment online; or need help to report content in the appropriate way, you should always seek help from a trusted adult.

## Supporting lesson plans from Public Health England

- [Mental wellbeing | Overview | PHE School Zone](#)
- [Social media – Year 6 lesson plan pack | PHE School Zone](#)

## Additional information and resources

- [Self-care tips videos for young people - Every Mind Matters - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)



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