



Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (RSHE) Policy

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		Statutory guidance updated July 2025 for implementation September 2026.	D Lowbridge-Ellis MBE

To be read alongside all relevant Matrix Academy Trust policies and procedures

RSHE is delivered through PSHE lessons, form time, assemblies as well as additional workshops/performances by external agencies. Our form time sessions also include Careers, Citizenship, Read to Succeed and VotesforSchools (Active Citizenship). Parents have the right to request to withdraw their child from the sex education component of RSE.

1. AIMS

- 1.1 The aims of this policy is to provide a working document of clear guidance to Trustees, staff, parents/carers and pupils on the delivery of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education at Trust Schools.
- 1.2 The content will be taught in an age appropriate and developmentally appropriate way. Topics will be taught sensitively and inclusively, with respect to the backgrounds and beliefs of pupils and parents while always with the aim of providing pupils with the knowledge they need of the law.
- 1.3 The content will support the wider work of school in helping to foster pupil well-being and develop resilience and character that we know are fundamental to pupils thriving as successful and productive members of society

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Today's children and young people are growing up in an increasingly complex world and living their lives seamlessly on and offline. This presents many positive and exciting opportunities, but also challenges and risks. In this environment, children and young people need to know how to be safe and healthy, and how to manage their academic, personal and social lives in a positive way.

3. STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Primary academies must provide relationships education to all pupils under section 34 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

We don't have to follow the National Curriculum, but we are expected to offer all pupils a curriculum that is similar to the National Curriculum including requirements to teach science. This would include the elements of sex education contained in the science curriculum.

In teaching RSE, we are required by our funding agreements to have regard to guidance issued by the secretary of state, as outlined in section 403 of the Education Act 1996.

We also have regard to legal duties set out in:

- Sections 404 to 407 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 6, chapter 1 of the Equality Act 2010
- The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). This duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

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Secondary academies must provide RSE to all pupils under section 34 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

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We also have regard to legal duties set out in:

- Sections 404 to 407 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 6, chapter 1 of the Equality Act 2010
- The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). This duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

Teaching on biological sex and gender reassignment focuses on facts and the law.

4. DEFINITION

4.1 Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education is about the emotional, social and cultural development of pupils, and involves learning about relationships, sexual health, sexuality, healthy lifestyles, diversity and personal identity. It is not about the promotion of sexual activity.

5. DELIVERY OF THE PROGRAMME

5.1 At Matrix Academy Trust we acknowledge that high-quality, evidence-based and age-appropriate teaching can help pupils prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life as well as promoting the spiritual, moral, social, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils both at school and in society.

5.2 Staff are trained on the delivery of RSHE as part of their induction and it is included in our continuing professional development calendar. The headteacher will also invite visitors from outside the school, such as school nurses or sexual health professionals, to provide support and training to staff teaching RSHE.

5.3 RSE will be set in the context of a wider whole-school approach to supporting pupils to be safe, happy and prepared for life beyond school. The curriculum on relationships and sex will complement, and be supported by, the school's wider policies on behaviour, inclusion, respect for equality and diversity, SEND, e-safety, anti-bullying and safeguarding.

5.4 RSE is taught within the school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. Biological aspects of RSE are taught within the science curriculum.

5.5 Science, computing and physical education will complement some of the topics covered in Relationships and Sex and Health Education.

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- 5.6 Teachers will make sure that all pupils' views are listened to and will encourage them to ask questions and engage in discussion. Teachers will answer questions sensitively, honestly and appropriately for the age of the pupils.
- 5.7 If pupils ask questions outside the scope of this policy, teachers will respond in an appropriate manner so that pupils are fully informed and don't seek answers online. This may involve asking the pupil to speak to parents or a trusted adult and/or signposting to support services. Where questions arise specifically around sex education which are outside of the remit of our delivery, we will thank pupils for their question and encourage them to have a conversation at home. We will also ensure pupils are aware that some sex education content will be covered at a more appropriate time in secondary provision.
- 5.8 Our whole school oracy protocols support pupils to speak clearly and confidently, expressing and valuing their own voices as well as those of others. Reading materials will also be used to deepen discussion and understanding of issue raised in the teaching of RSHE.

6. PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND)

- 6.1 RSHE will be accessible for all pupils.
- 6.2 High quality teaching is differentiated and personalised. This is the starting point to ensure accessibility for all pupils.
- 6.3 The school will also be mindful of the preparing for adulthood outcomes as set out in the SEND code of practice, when preparing these subjects for pupils with SEND.
- 6.4 The school is aware that some pupils are more vulnerable to exploitation, bullying and other issues due to the nature of their SEND. Relationships Education can also be a priority for some pupils. For example pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs or learning disabilities. For some pupils there may be a need to tailor content and teaching to meeting the specific needs of children at different developmental stages.

7. PARENTS' RIGHT TO WITHDRAW

- 7.1 Parents have the right to withdraw their children from the non-statutory components of RSHE (intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health), up to and until three terms before the child turns 16. After that point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, the school should make arrangements to provide the child with sex education during one of those terms. Parents cannot withdraw their child from Relationships or Health Education.

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7.2 Parents can identify when RSE is being covered by referring to the overviews on the school's website. (Found in appendix 3 of this document).

7.3 Requests for withdrawal should be made in writing and addressed to the Headteacher. A copy of withdrawal requests will be placed in the pupil's file. The Headteacher will discuss the request with parents. Appropriate alternative work will be given to pupils who are withdrawn from Sex Education. There is no right to withdraw from Relationships Education or Health Education.

8. WORKING WITH EXTERNAL AGENCIES

8.1 To support and enhance the delivery of RSHE, Trust Schools works with external partners to draw on specialist knowledge and implement different ways of engaging with young people.

8.2 Where external agencies are used, the school will ensure that all the necessary checks are completed of the visiting organisation and any visitors linked to the agency.

8.3 The schools will work with external agencies to ensure that the content delivered is age-appropriate and accessible for all pupils. Any materials that are used as part of the delivery must be approved by the school in advance of the session.

8.4 The schools will ensure that the visitor is aware of aspects of confidentiality and understands how safeguarding reports should be dealt with in line with the school's Safeguarding Policy.

9. SAFEGUARDING, REPORTS OF ABUSE AND CONFIDENTIALITY

10.1 The schools recognise that at the heart of RSHE, the focus is on keeping children safe, and acknowledges the significant role schools have in preventative education. Our RSHE and PSHE provision takes account of our local context and is responsive to the needs our pupils within the context of our community.

10.2 We will allow children an open forum to discuss potentially sensitive issues. Such discussions can lead to increased safeguarding reports. Children will be made aware of the processes to enable them to raise their concerns or make a report and how any report will be handled. This will also include processes when they have a concern about a peer or friend.

10.3 In line with the document Keeping Children Safe in Education, all staff are aware of what to do if a pupil tells them that they are being abused or neglected. Staff are also aware of the need to manage the requirement to maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality. This

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means only involving those that need to be involved, such as the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Children's Services.

10.4 We ensure children are aware of where they can report any concerns to external services if they do not feel comfortable talking to school staff.

10.5 A member of staff will never promise a child that they will not tell anyone about a report of abuse, as this is not in the best interests of the child.

10. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

11.1 The delivery of RSHE is monitored by the school's Leadership team, Heads of House and the school's PSHE Lead through the school's monitoring programme of curriculum reviews, learning walks, PSHE working walls, lesson observation and pupil voice.

11.2 Pupils' development in RSHE is monitored by pupil surveys, self-evaluations, pop quizzes, written work and discussions.

12 INFORMING AND INVOLVING PARENTS, STAFF AND PUPILS

12.1 Parents are the primary educators of their children and their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality is seen by the school as very important. Relevant sections of this RSHE policy will be included in the school's *Prospectus* booklet, published annually in August.

12.2 This policy has been designed in consultation with Parent Advisory Groups and via a parental questionnaire to representatives and the views expressed by parents will be taken into account when reviewing the policy. A copy of this policy will be made available on the school's website as well as an overview of topics covered by each year group.

12.3 Pupils' views are gathered through school surveys and the various committees, for example School Council, Mental Health Ambassadors, Digital Leaders and the Anti-bullying Champions that the school operates, identifying needs.

12.4 Staff feedback plays an important role in supporting the delivery and review of RSHE.

13. CURRICULUM CONTENT

Our RSE curriculum is set out as per Appendices 1 2 and 3.

We have developed the curriculum in consultation with parents and carers, pupils and staff, and taking into account the age, developmental stage, needs (such as cultural and religious needs) and feelings of our pupils.

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We may amend our curriculum content to respond to the needs and context of our pupils, to discuss issues affecting them in an age-appropriate manner. We will inform parents and carers of any deviation from our published policy in advance, and share any relevant materials on request.

These areas of learning are taught within the context of family life, taking care to make sure that there is no stigmatisation of children based on their home circumstances (i.e. families can include single-parent families, same-sex parents, families headed by grandparents, adoptive parents and foster parents among other structures), along with reflecting sensitively that some children may have a different structure of support around them (for example, looked-after children, young carers or kinship carers).

Across our school, we will also be mindful of the law and legal requirements, taking care not to condone or encourage illegal activity, such as violent action against people, criminal damage to property or hate crime.

We will share all curriculum materials with parents and carers on request.

As a minimum, the statutory curriculum content will be taught, as listed in the [statutory guidance](#) and reproduced in Appendices 1 and 2. Appendix 3 shows how each school's specific curriculum.

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Appendix 1 Primary

Primary health and wellbeing: content to be covered by the end of primary

General wellbeing

Curriculum content:

1. The benefits of physical activity, time outdoors, and helping others for health, wellbeing and happiness. Simple self-care techniques, including the importance of rest, time spent with friends and family, as well as hobbies, interests and community participation.
2. The importance of promoting general wellbeing and physical health.
3. The range and scale of emotions (e.g. happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, nervousness) that they might experience in different situations. Pupils should understand that worrying and feeling down are normal, affect everyone at different times, and are not in themselves a sign of a mental health condition.
4. How to recognise feelings and use varied vocabulary to talk about their own and others' feelings.
5. How to judge whether what they are feeling and how they are behaving is appropriate and proportionate.
6. That isolation and loneliness can affect children, and the benefits of seeking support.
7. That bullying (including cyberbullying) has a negative and often lasting impact on mental wellbeing and how to seek help for themselves or others.
8. That change and loss, including bereavement, can provoke a range of feelings, that grief is a natural response to bereavement, and that everyone grieves differently.
9. Where and how to seek support (including recognising the triggers for seeking support), including who in school they should speak to if they are worried about their own or someone else's mental wellbeing or ability to control their emotions (including issues arising online).
10. That it is common to experience mental health problems, and early support can help.

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Wellbeing online

Curriculum content:

1. That for almost everyone the internet is an integral part of life. Pupils should be supported to think about positive and negative aspects of the internet.
2. Pupils should be supported to discuss how online relationships can complement and support meaningful in-person relationships, but also how they might be in tension, and the reasons why online relationships are unlikely to be a good substitute for high quality in-person relationships, looking at the pros and cons of different ways of using online connection.
3. The benefits of limiting time spent online, the risks of excessive time spent on electronic devices and the impact of positive and negative content online on their own and others' mental and physical wellbeing.
4. How to consider the impact of their online behaviour on others, and how to recognise and display respectful behaviour online.
5. Why social media, some apps, computer games and online gaming, including gambling sites, are age restricted.
6. The risks relating to online gaming, video game monetisation, scams, fraud and other financial harms, and that gaming can become addictive.
7. How to take a critical approach to what they see and read online and make responsible decisions about which content, including content on social media and apps, is appropriate for them.
8. That abuse, bullying and harassment can take place online and that this can impact wellbeing. How to seek support from trusted adults.
9. How to understand the information they find online, including from search engines, and know how information is selected and targeted.
10. That they have rights in relation to sharing personal data, privacy and consent.
11. Where and how to report concerns and get support with issues online.

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Physical health and fitness

Curriculum content:

1. The characteristics and mental and physical benefits of an active lifestyle.
2. The importance of building regular physical activity into daily and weekly routines and how to achieve this; for example, walking or cycling to school, a daily active mile or other forms of regular, moderate and/or vigorous physical activity.
3. The risks associated with an inactive lifestyle, including obesity.
4. How and when to seek support including which adults to speak to in school if they are worried about their health.

Healthy eating

Curriculum content:

1. What constitutes a healthy diet (including understanding calories and other nutritional content).
2. Understanding the importance of a healthy relationship with food.
3. The principles of planning and preparing a range of healthy meals.
4. The characteristics of a poor diet and risks associated with unhealthy eating (including, for example, obesity and tooth decay) and other behaviours (e.g. the impact of alcohol on diet or health).

Drugs, alcohol, tobacco and vaping

Curriculum content:

1. The facts about legal and illegal harmful substances and associated risks, including smoking, vaping, alcohol use and drug-taking. This should include the risks of nicotine addiction, which are also caused by other nicotine products such as nicotine pouches.

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Health protection and prevention

Curriculum content:

1. How to recognise early signs of physical illness, such as weight loss, or unexplained changes to the body.
2. About safe and unsafe exposure to the sun, and how to reduce the risk of sun damage, including skin cancer.
3. The importance of sufficient good quality sleep for health, the amount of sleep recommended for their age, and practical steps for improving sleep, such as not using screens in the bedroom. The impact of poor sleep on weight, mood and ability to learn.
4. About dental health and the benefits of good oral hygiene, including brushing teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, cleaning between teeth, and regular checkups at the dentist.
5. About personal hygiene and germs including bacteria, viruses, how they are spread and treated, and the importance of handwashing.
6. The facts and scientific evidence relating to vaccination and immunisation. The introduction of topics relating to vaccination and immunisation should be aligned with when vaccinations are offered to pupils.

Personal safety

Curriculum content:

1. About hazards (including fire risks) that may cause harm, injury or risk and ways to reduce risks.
2. How to recognise risk and keep safe around roads, railways, including level crossings, and water, including the water safety code.

Basic first aid

Curriculum content:

1. How to make a clear and efficient call to emergency services if necessary, including the importance of reporting incidents rather than filming them.
2. Concepts of basic first aid, for example dealing with common injuries and ailments, including head injuries.

Developing bodies

Curriculum content:

1. About growth and other ways the body can change and develop, particularly during adolescence. This topic should include the human lifecycle, and puberty should be discussed as a stage in this process.

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2. The correct names of body parts, including the penis, vulva, vagina, testicles, scrotum, nipples. Pupils should understand that all of these parts of the body are private and have skills to understand and express their own boundaries around these body parts.
3. The facts about the menstrual cycle, including physical and emotional changes, whilst the average age of the onset of menstruation is twelve, periods can start at eight, so covering this topic before girls' periods start will help them understand what to expect and avoid distress.

Appendix 2 Secondary

RSHE is delivered through PSHE lessons, form time, assemblies as well as additional workshops/performances by external agencies. Our form time sessions also include Careers, Citizenship, Read to Succeed and VotesforSchools (Active Citizenship). Parents have the right to request to withdraw their child from the sex education component of RSE.

Secondary health and wellbeing curriculum content

Schools should continue to develop knowledge of topics specified for primary as required and in addition cover the following content by the end of secondary:

Mental wellbeing

Curriculum content:

1. How to talk about their emotions accurately and sensitively, using appropriate vocabulary.
2. The benefits and importance of physical activity, sleep, time outdoors, community participation and volunteering or acts of kindness for mental wellbeing and happiness.
3. That happiness is linked to being connected to others. Pupils should be supported to understand what makes them feel happy and what makes them feel unhappy, while recognising that loneliness can be for most people an inevitable part of life at times and is not something of which to be ashamed.
4. That worrying and feeling down are normal, can affect everyone at different times and are not in themselves a sign of a mental health condition, and that managing those feelings can be helped by seeing them as normal.
5. Characteristics of common types of mental ill health (e.g. anxiety and depression), including carefully-presented factual information about the prevalence and characteristics of more serious mental health conditions. This should not be discussed in a way that encourages normal feelings to be labelled as mental health conditions.
6. How to critically evaluate which activities will contribute to their overall wellbeing.
7. Understanding how to overcome anxiety or other barriers to participating in fun, enjoyable or rewarding activities – that it's possible to overcome those barriers using coping strategies, and that finding the courage to participate in activities which initially feel challenging may decrease anxiety over time rather than increasing it.
8. That gambling can lead to serious mental health harms, including anxiety, depression, and suicide, and that some gambling products are more likely to cause these harms than others.
9. That the co-occurrence of alcohol/drug use and poor mental health is common and that the relationship is bi-directional: mental health problems can increase the risk of alcohol/drug use, and alcohol/drug use can trigger mental health problems or exacerbate existing ones. That stopping smoking can improve people's mental health and decrease anxiety.

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Wellbeing online

Curriculum content:

1. About the benefits of limiting time spent online, the risks of excessive time spent on electronic devices and the impact of positive and negative content online on their own and others' mental and physical wellbeing.
2. The similarities and differences between the online world and the physical world, including: the impact of unhealthy or obsessive comparison with others online (including through setting unrealistic expectations for body image); how people may curate a specific image of their life online; the impact that an over-reliance on online relationships, including relationships formed through social media, can have.
3. How to identify harmful behaviours online (including bullying, abuse or harassment) and how to report, or find support, if they have been affected by those behaviours.
4. The risks related to online gambling and gambling-like content within gaming, including the accumulation of debt.
5. How advertising and information is targeted at them and how to be a discerning consumer of information online, understanding the prevalence of misinformation and disinformation online, including conspiracy theories.
6. The risks of illegal behaviours online, including drug and knife supply or the sale or purchasing of illicit drugs online.
7. The serious risks of viewing online content that promotes self-harm, suicide or violence, including how to safely report this material and how to access support after viewing it.

Physical health and fitness

Curriculum content:

1. The characteristics of a healthy lifestyle, including physical activity and maintaining a healthy weight, including the links between an inactive lifestyle and ill-health, including cardiovascular ill-health.
2. Factual information about the prevalence and characteristics of more serious health conditions.
3. That physical activity can promote wellbeing and combat stress.
4. The science relating to blood, organ and stem cell donation.

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Healthy eating

Curriculum content:

1. How to maintain healthy eating and the links between a poor diet and health risks, including tooth decay, unhealthy weight gain, and cardiovascular disease.
2. The risks of unhealthy weight gain, including increased risks of cancer, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.
3. The impacts of alcohol on diet and unhealthy weight gain.

Drugs, alcohol, tobacco and vaping

Curriculum content:

1. The facts about which drugs are illegal, the risks of taking illegal drugs, including the increased risk of potent synthetic drugs being added to illegal drugs, the risks of illicit vapes containing drugs, illicit drugs and counterfeit medicines, and the potential health harms, including the link to poor mental health.
2. The law relating to the supply and possession of illegal substances.
3. The physical and psychological risks associated with alcohol consumption. What constitutes low risk alcohol consumption in adulthood, and the legal age of sale for alcohol in England. Understanding how to increase personal safety while drinking alcohol, including how to decrease the risks of having a drink spiked or of poisoning from potentially fatal substances such as methanol.
4. The physical and psychological consequences of problem-use of alcohol, including alcohol dependency.
5. The dangers of the misuse of prescribed and over-the-counter medicines.
6. The facts about the multiple serious harms from smoking tobacco (particularly the link to lung cancer and cardiovascular disease), the benefits of quitting and how to access support to do so.
7. The facts about vaping, including the harms posed to young people, and the role that vapes can play in helping adult smokers to quit.

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Health protection and prevention, and understanding the healthcare system Curriculum

content:

1. Personal hygiene, germs and how they are spread, including bacteria and viruses, treatment and prevention of infection, and about antibiotics.
2. Dental health and the benefits of good oral hygiene, including brushing teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and cleaning between teeth, reducing consumption of sugar-containing food and drinks, and regular check-ups at the dentist.
3. How and when to self-care for minor ailments, and the role of pharmacists as knowledgeable healthcare professionals.
4. The importance of taking responsibility for their own health, and the benefits of regular self-examination and screening.
5. The facts and scientific evidence relating to vaccination, immunisation and antimicrobial resistance. The introduction of topics relating to vaccination and immunisation should be aligned with when vaccinations are offered to pupils.
6. The importance of sufficient good-quality sleep for good health, the importance of screen-free time before bed and removing phones from the bedroom, and how a lack of sleep can affect weight, mood and ability to learn.
7. The importance of healthy behaviours before and during pregnancy, including the importance of pre-conception health, including taking folic acid. The importance of pelvic floor health. Information on miscarriage and pregnancy loss, and how to access care and support.
8. How to navigate their local healthcare system: what a GP is; when to use A&E / minor injuries; accessing sexual health and family planning clinics; the role of local pharmacies; and how to seek help via local third sector partners which may have specialist services.
9. The concept of Gillick competence. That the legal age of medical consent is 16. That before this, a child's parents will have responsibility for consenting to medical treatment on their behalf unless they are Gillick competent to take this decision for themselves. Pupils should understand the circumstances in which someone over 16 may not be deemed to have capacity to make decisions about medical treatment.

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Personal safety

Curriculum content:

1. How to identify risk and manage personal safety in increasingly independent situations, including around roads, railways – including level crossings - and water (including the water safety code), and in unfamiliar social or work settings (for example the first time a young person goes on holiday without their parents).
2. How to recognise and manage peer influence in relation to risk-taking behaviour and personal safety, including peer influence online and on social media.
3. How to develop key social and emotional skills that will increase pupils' safety from involvement in conflict and violence. These include skills to support self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making, as well as skills to recognise and manage peer pressure.
4. Understanding which trusted adults they can talk to if pupils are worried about violence and/or knife crime.
5. The law as it relates to knives and violence. Content and examples should relate to the local context and avoid using fear as an educational tool. Children should be taught that carrying weapons is uncommon, and should not be scared into the perception that many young people are carrying knives (which can lead to the misconception that they need to carry a knife too).
6. The risks and signs that they may be at risk of grooming or exploitation, and how to seek help where there is a concern.

Basic first aid

Curriculum content:

1. Basic treatment for common injuries and ailments.
2. Life-saving skills, including how to administer CPR.¹
3. The purpose of defibrillators, when one might be needed and who can use them.

¹ Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation is usually best taught after 12 years old.

Developing bodies

Curriculum content:

1. The main changes which take place in males and females, and the implications for emotional and physical health.
2. The facts about puberty, the changing adolescent body, including brain development.
3. About menstrual and gynaecological health, including: what is an average period; period problems such as premenstrual syndrome; heavy menstrual bleeding; endometriosis; and polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). When to seek help from healthcare professionals.
4. The facts about reproductive health, including fertility and menopause, and the potential impact of lifestyle on fertility for men and women.

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