

Dear Parents and Carers,

As part of our commitment to supporting the personal development, wellbeing and safety of all students, we will be delivering our Relationships, Social, Health and Economic Education (RSHE) programme throughout Key Stage 3.

The teenage years bring significant physical, emotional and social changes. Our RSHE curriculum aims to provide students with accurate information, practical skills and opportunities to discuss important issues in a safe and respectful environment. Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is compulsory in secondary schools in England. Parents may request withdrawal from certain sex education elements delivered outside the science curriculum, but not from relationships education, health education or the science curriculum.

What Will Be Covered Across Key Stage 3

Relationships, Respect & Personal Identity

- **School Community & Values:** Durham Academy expectations, ground rules, community role, and managing transition points in life.
- **Financial Education:** Saving, budgeting, managing money, and exploring careers and labour market information.
- **Celebrating Diversity:** Exploring identity, multicultural Britain, breaking down stereotypes, learning disabilities, and challenging prejudice, discrimination, and Islamophobia.
- **Equality & Rights:** Understanding the Equality Act 2010, international LGBTQ+ rights, gender equality, ableism, and removing barriers to equality.
- **Respectful Friendships:** Developing assertiveness, managing peer influence, and building healthy, respectful relationships.

Health, Mental Wellbeing & Personal Safety

- **Mental Health & Emotional Support:** Understanding mental health, managing stress, anxiety, anger, and promoting happiness.
- **Healthy Lifestyles:** Sleep, relaxation, positive body image, self-esteem, dental health, and essential first aid skills.
- **Substance Awareness:** Risks associated with nicotine, smoking, vaping, e-cigarettes, shisha, alcohol safety, caffeine, and energy drinks.
- **Staying Safe Offline:** County lines exploitation, avoiding gangs, knife crime awareness, child abuse, and child exploitation.
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- **Staying Safe Online:** Cyberbullying, online gaming, grooming, addiction, social media stress, and Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP).
- **Combatting Extremism:** Critical evaluation of conspiracy theories, forms of extremism, terrorism, the radicalisation process, counter-terrorism, and antisemitism.

Growing Up, RSE & Life Skills

- **Puberty & Body Development:** Understanding physical changes, male and female puberty, periods, and personal hygiene.
- **Consent & Boundaries:** Understanding sexual consent, personal boundaries, and delaying sexual activity.
- **Safety in Relationships:** Learning about FGM and the law, domestic abuse and violence awareness, sexual harassment, and stalking.
- **Sexual Health & Contraception:** Understanding STIs, STI testing and clinic treatments, and exploring options for contraception.
- **Body Confidence & Choices:** Managing media influences and airbrushing, cancer prevention awareness, and making healthy lifestyle choices.

Frequently Asked Questions from Parents

- **Why teach RSE in Key Stage 3?:** Young people are navigating increasingly complex social situations both online and offline. RSHE helps them develop the knowledge and confidence required to stay safe, build healthy relationships and make informed choices.
- **Will students be encouraged to become sexually active?:** No. The purpose of RSE is to help young people understand relationships, respect, consent, personal responsibility and safety. It is not designed to encourage sexual activity.
- **How are sensitive topics taught?:** All topics are delivered in an age-appropriate and factual manner by trained staff. Students are encouraged to ask questions and discuss topics respectfully.
- **Can I withdraw my child?:** Parents may request withdrawal from some or all sex education delivered outside the national science curriculum. Students cannot be withdrawn from relationships education, health education or science.

Questions Your Child May Ask and Possible Responses

- **"What is consent?"** — You could say: "Consent means that everyone involved freely agrees to something. It should always be given willingly and can be changed at any time."
- **"Why do people feel pressure from friends?"** — You could say: "Most people want to fit in. Learning how to make decisions based on your own values rather than peer pressure is an important life skill."
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- **"Why are relationships sometimes difficult?"** — You could say: "Relationships involve different people, emotions and expectations. Good communication, honesty and respect help relationships stay healthy."
- **"What should I do if someone sends me inappropriate messages online?"** — You could say: "Do not reply, save evidence if appropriate and tell a trusted adult immediately. You should never feel responsible for someone else's behaviour."
- **"How do I know if a relationship is healthy?"** — You could say: "A healthy relationship makes you feel respected, safe, valued and able to be yourself. Nobody should pressure or control you."
- **"What if my friends are doing things that make me uncomfortable?"** — You could say: "It's okay to make different choices. Good friends will respect your decisions even if they choose something different."

How Parents Can Support Learning at Home

- Keep communication open and non-judgemental.
- Encourage questions and discussion.
- Ask about lessons and what students have learned.
- Reinforce messages about respect, safety and responsibility.
- Discuss online safety regularly.
- Remind your child that they can always seek support from trusted adults.

Yours sincerely,

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