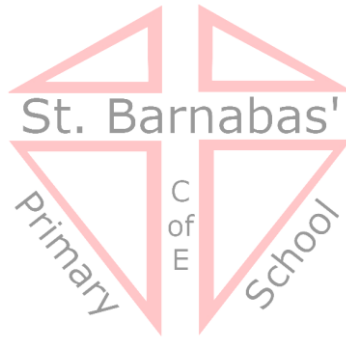




PSHE & RSE Updates September 2026

At a glance: what's new for primary schools?

Most of the existing Relationships Education and Health Education content remains, but there are several important additions and changes in emphasis.

1. Greater focus on kindness, boundaries and communication

Relationships education now places more emphasis on:

- Developing the skills needed for healthy friendships
- Understanding and respecting personal boundaries
- Recognising the needs and wishes of others
- Different communication styles
- Kindness and respectful behaviour in relationships

These topics move beyond simply knowing what a healthy relationship is and place more emphasis on practising relationship skills.

2. Updated teaching about families

When learning about families, children should continue to understand that families come in different forms, with clearer expectations that teaching reflects the diversity of modern family life, including families with same-sex parents. There is also increased emphasis on safety within family relationships.

3. Significant updates to online safety

One of the biggest changes is the expansion of online safety content.

Primary pupils will now learn more about:

- What personal information should and should not be shared online
- Privacy and consent online
- The minimum age requirements for social media platforms
- Online scams and fraud
- Risks linked to online gaming
- In-game purchases and monetisation
- Digital wellbeing and healthy screen use

The topic has shifted from simply "online relationships" to broader "online safety and awareness" and "wellbeing online".

4. New approach to mental wellbeing

The guidance reframes "mental wellbeing" as "general wellbeing".

New content includes:

- Understanding that worries, sadness and difficult emotions are a normal part of life
- Recognising the difference between normal emotions and mental health difficulties
- Learning about bereavement and grief
- Developing emotional regulation skills

The aim is to help children understand everyday emotional experiences while building resilience.

5. New "Personal Safety" strand

A completely new topic area has been added.

Children will learn about:

- Road safety
- Water safety
- Railway safety
- Physical hazards and risk assessment
- Keeping themselves safe in everyday environments

This separates physical safety education from relationship safety and safeguarding content.

6. Changes to first aid teaching

Basic first aid remains part of the curriculum, but there is a new emphasis on:

- Reporting emergencies and incidents appropriately
- Understanding that helping or seeking help is more important than filming incidents on phones or devices

7. Stronger parental engagement requirements

Schools will be expected to:

- Maintain an up-to-date RSHE policy
- Be transparent about curriculum content
- Make teaching materials available to parents where appropriate
- Consult parents on RSHE provision

Parental engagement is highlighted as a core principle of the new guidance.

8. Greater emphasis on skills, not just knowledge

The new guidance repeatedly stresses teaching practical life skills alongside factual content, including:

- Communication
- Decision-making
- Emotional regulation
- Seeking help

- Managing friendships
- Respectful disagreement
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What has *not* changed?

For primary schools:

- Relationships Education remains compulsory.
- Health Education remains compulsory.
- Sex Education beyond the National Curriculum science content is still **not compulsory** in primary schools.
- Teaching about puberty remains expected.
- Parents can still request withdrawal from any non-statutory primary sex education a school chooses to provide.

Key takeaway for primary teachers

The September 2026 changes are more of an **evolution than a complete overhaul**. The biggest practical differences are:

1. More explicit teaching of boundaries, consent and relationship skills.
2. Much broader online safety and digital wellbeing education.
3. New content on bereavement and emotional wellbeing.
4. A new personal safety strand (roads, water, rail, hazards).
5. Stronger expectations around parent engagement and curriculum transparency.