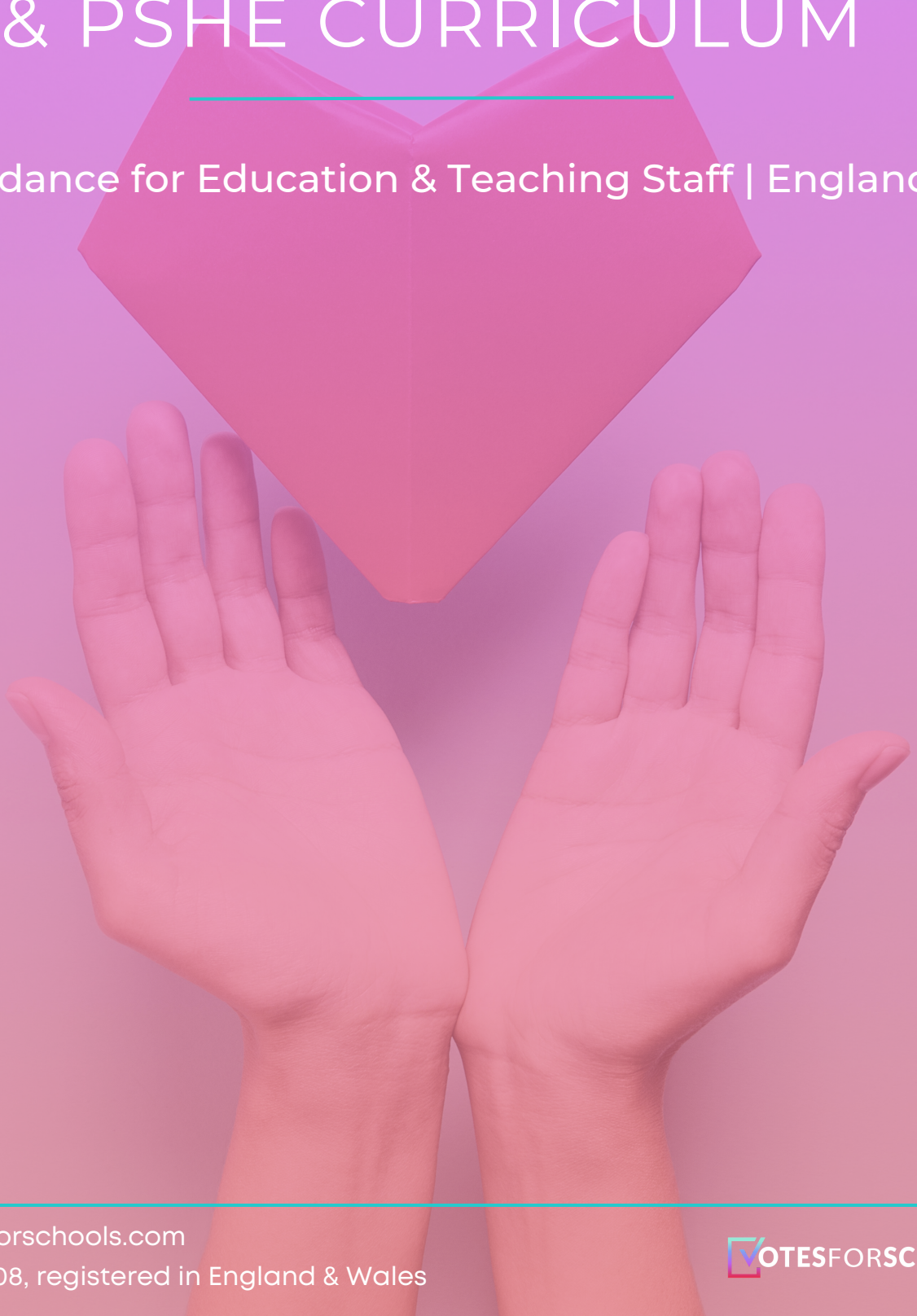


VOTESFORSCHOOLS & THE SECONDARY RSHE & PSHE CURRICULUM

Guidance for Education & Teaching Staff | England



CONTENTS

This document outlines how VotesforSchools supports schools in delivering statutory RSHE provision and wider PSHE objectives for students aged 11-16 (**Secondary schools**). Use the contents below to find the information you need.

For the purposes of this document, “students” is used as a catch-all term for pupils/learners/children/young people; “staff” is used to denote any group of educational professionals (e.g. teachers, tutors etc), and “schools” is used to refer to any type of educational setting.

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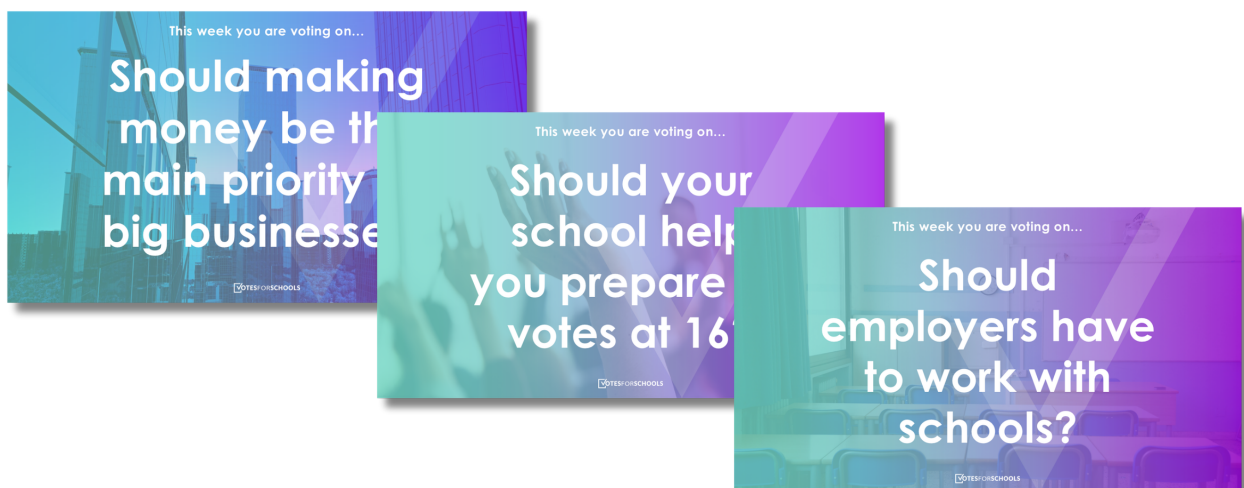
For information on other areas of the curriculum that VotesforSchools supports, including SMSC, British Values, the UNCRC and the UN SDGs, check out the guidance documents on the Teacher Dashboard.

WHAT IS STATUTORY?

The PSHE curriculum as a whole is split into two sections. Section 1 is Relationships, Sex & Health Education (RSHE). The objectives in this section are statutory, meaning schools are legally compelled to teach them. **VotesforSchools** offers substantial - but not comprehensive - coverage of Section 1 for Secondary schools.



Section 2 relates to Economic Wellbeing and Careers Education. All schools are still expected to cover these objectives as part of an effective and comprehensive PSHE curriculum. **VotesforSchools** primarily supports Section 2 through weekly VoteTopics delivered across the academic year. Find out more [here](#).



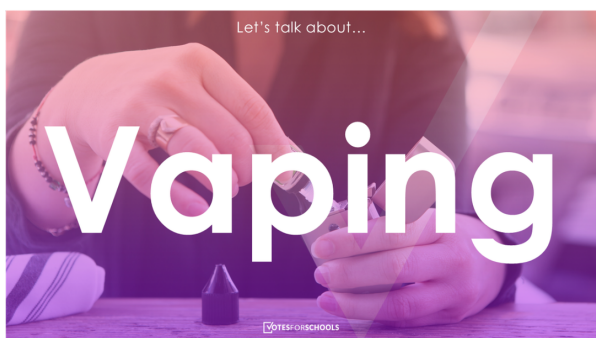
HOW DOES IT WORK?

From September 2026, VotesforSchools' weekly resources will be mapped to the updated **statutory RSHE curriculum objectives**, as per the Government guidance issued in July 2025. In developing our mapping, we used the PSHE Association's Programme of Study.

11-16 weekly VoteTopic



11-16 weekly VoteTopic



11-16 additional RSHE resource

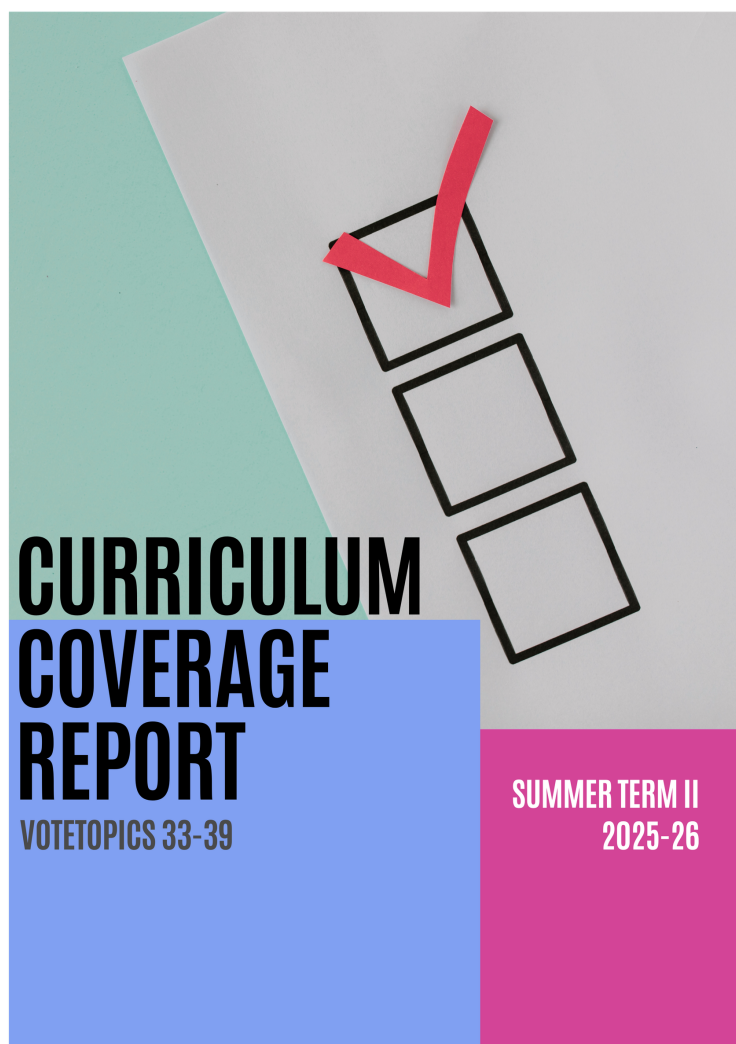


11-16 additional RSHE resource

Our RSHE & PSHE coverage is achieved through a combination of [weekly VoteTopics](#) and additional [RSHE materials](#), all of which are available to download on the VfS platform. But the coverage doesn't stop there. Week by week and term by term, we continue to support and reinforce the wider [PSHE curriculum](#).

HOW IT WORKS | WEEKLY RSHE TRACKING

All of our weekly VoteTopics are mapped to specific statutory RSHE criteria. This is displayed in the VotePacks on the platform - simply click “View VotePack” and scroll down to see the extent of coverage for that week. You can use these weekly guides to refer to during inspections or to help you plan future provision. Our VoteTopic archive is also searchable by RSHE theme, if you are looking for something more general.



Plus, every half term, we issue **Curriculum Coverage Reports** that collate all criteria into one document. This includes the RSHE objectives covered by each weekly VoteTopic.

The overviews are added to the platform and sent to all members of staff subscribed to our weekly mailing list. Staff can then tick off the topics covered knowing the relevant objectives were met.

HOW IT WORKS | ADDITIONAL RSHE RESOURCES

We know our schools use VotesforSchools in a **variety of ways**, from current affairs education to enhancing their weekly PSHE provision. Our weekly VoteTopics are centered around **real-life issues** and will inherently meet many areas of the PSHE curriculum.

But, that's **not all we offer** to reinforce your RSHE curriculum coverage. We have also created **additional resources** to help staff deliver lessons on tough-to-teach areas in an age-appropriate way at a time that suits you and your students.



All schools are different, and all classes will have different needs throughout the academic year. We **recommend using the additional resources as and when timely for your students**, rather than in a prescribed order. However, we still **suggest reviewing the resources ahead of teaching** to ensure they are suitable for your classes.

EMBEDDING RSHE

Whether you are using our weekly VoteTopics or our additional RSHE resources, the RSHE objectives are revisited and embedded consistently and effectively across themes and age groups.

VotesforSchools does this in three key ways. Click on each key word in bold to read a definition of what we mean.

- **In-built skills development:** The programme as a whole helps students to develop skills, attitudes, and approaches relevant to RSHE education;
- **Putting real-life issues in context:** Weekly materials (VoteTopics) support students to situate topics such as mental wellbeing, online safety and the law in a real-world context;
- **In-depth RSHE coverage:** Additional, specially-designed RSHE materials provide staff with the opportunity to explore curriculum themes in greater depth with students.

IN-BUILT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

VotesforSchools supports personal development across all its resources, and this includes its coverage of RSHE objectives. While some objectives are more specific, there are many that are built into all VotesforSchools resources.

A prime example is: “the skills of active listening, clear communication, negotiation, compromise, and how to reconcile after disagreements,” (KS3, Healthy, positive relationships).

Each of the 39 VoteTopics covered during the academic year, as well as the additional resources, will help build a deeper understanding of how to discuss and debate real-life issues respectfully, and empower students to have courage in their convictions, even if these are different to their peers’.

VotesforSchools’ **in-built** RSHE objectives for KS3 are as follows:

KS3 | Healthy, positive relationships

1. to develop a healthy relationship with themselves; ways to develop self-worth, self-respect, personal interests and independence; to clarify personal values in relation to friendships and intimate relationships
6. that ethical behaviours in relationships include care, attention and respect for the other person; about behaviours online and offline, that build or undermine trust; the effect of power imbalances on relationship behaviours
9. the skills of active listening, clear communication, negotiation, compromise, and how to reconcile after disagreements, including within families

KS3 | Inclusion, bullying and discrimination

1. that people have different values and perspectives, and how to manage differences constructively and respectfully
2. that on any issue there will be a range of viewpoints; that people may say things on social media in more extreme or exaggerated ways than they would offline, and the impact this can have on themselves and others; how and why conflicts can escalate when communicating on social media
3. the legal rights and responsibilities everyone has as a unique and equal member of an inclusive, diverse community; the laws that protect people with protected characteristics from discrimination

KS3 | Online life

2. how to safely and responsibly form, maintain and manage positive, respectful and safe relationships online
6. how to approach online and social media content critically, including identifying bias, mis- and disinformation, and assessing the likelihood that content is untrue, manipulated or created by AI; the importance of seeking a variety of perspectives on issues and strategies for fact-checking online information
7. how information and data is generated, collected, shared and used online, including for commercial purposes; choices people can make about how their data is kept private or used

KS3 | Online harms

7. when, why and how to report concerns to trusted adults and relevant platforms and organisations, such as Childline, CEOP, NSPCC's Report Remove tool or the police, and how this can help

KS3 | Mental health and wellbeing

- 1. how to identify and articulate a range of emotions accurately and sensitively, using appropriate vocabulary
- 4. how friendships, community participation and doing things for others can contribute to belonging, happiness and wellbeing; that most people will feel lonely at times and ways to manage feelings of loneliness
- 8. how to manage emotions and promote a sense of individual agency when they may feel powerless or overwhelmed, e.g. in response to the climate crisis or distressing events

KS3 | Personal safety, risk and influence

- 3. how risk taking behaviour is influenced by peers, including through social media, and the need for peer approval; strategies to manage peer influence in offline and online contexts
- 6. skills to de-escalate arguments and reduce conflict in communication with others; recognising when and how to use strategies to exit situations that have become dangerous

VotesforSchools' **in-built** RSHE objectives for KS4 are as follows:

KS4 | Healthy, positive relationships

- 11. that characteristics such as self-worth, independence and having a positive relationship with oneself support personal wellbeing; building and maintaining healthy, equal relationships with others
- 12. the characteristics and benefits of healthy, positive relationships of all kinds, and the impact of ethical principles and values on relationships; how to assert and respect personal values and boundaries in relationships, including online
- 17. strategies to access reliable, accurate and appropriate services, advice and support with relationships, and how to help others access these when needed

KS4 | Inclusion, bullying and discrimination

- 6. about everyone's right to be treated with respect, and how the Equality Act applies in different contexts, including schools, workplaces, public spaces and online
- 7. that a tolerant community requires building mutual respect and understanding for others' beliefs, perspectives and cultures
- 8. how online content, including the more extreme expression of views and curated, fake and idealised profiles, can present a distorted picture of people and the world; the influence of extreme views on people's attitudes, beliefs and behaviours, and the shared responsibility to challenge extreme viewpoints that incite violence or hate
- 15. to recognise and challenge bullying, harassment or abusive behaviour in a range of contexts, including online; the moral and legal responsibilities and protections everyone has in relation to bullying and harassment; how to report and seek support for self or others

KS4 | Inclusion, bullying and discrimination (cont'd)

16. strategies to avoid or deescalate conflict and challenge bullying behaviour online, including on social media, and how to report when needed

KS4 | Online life

12. how media and social media can portray idealised and artificial versions of life; how this can influence how people think about and express themselves, their life satisfaction, relationship expectations, personal aspirations, body satisfaction and body modification

13. strategies to critically assess bias, reliability and accuracy in online content, including how to analyse and fact check content produced by generative AI

KS4 | Online harms

10. to recognise when they have encountered or are engaging with content that is potentially harmful to their physical or mental wellbeing; the risks of engaging with violent or harmful content; how and why to report the content and seek appropriate support

KS4 | Mental health and wellbeing

12. strategies for building connectedness with others, including making the most of opportunities for community participation and volunteering, and the importance of doing so for happiness and wellbeing

19. why, when and how to access emotional support that may be needed during life changes and/or difficult experiences; how to critically assess different sources of information, advice and support for mental health and wellbeing, including identifying inappropriate or unreliable sources

KS4 | Personal safety, risk and influence

12. to evaluate ways in which their behaviours may influence their peers both positively and negatively; the role peers can play in supporting one another to resist pressure, to challenge harmful social norms, and to minimise risk or harm, especially on social media

PUTTING REAL-LIFE ISSUES IN CONTEXT

Through the weekly VoteTopics, students have **regular opportunities to explore sensitive and personal issues** from across the RSHE (and wider PSHE) curriculum through a real-life lens. This supports them in having open and honest discussions about their experiences while simultaneously making the PSHE curriculum relevant and engaging.

For example, our VoteTopic on “Would you trust emotional advice from AI?” gave real-life context to many of the objectives outlined in the Mental health and wellbeing, Online life and Online harms themes in the RSHE curriculum. Similarly, our VoteTopic on “Should we talk more about the risks of gambling?” aligned with the themes of Online harms and Personal safety, risk and influence .

In recognition of each VoteTopic’s links with the RSHE curriculum, all previous VoteTopics are searchable by theme to support staff in finding appropriate resources for their school.

Reminder: *You can search weekly resources by RSHE theme on the VotesforSchools platform by visiting Previous VoteTopics and using the theme dropdown menu.*

IN-DEPTH RSHE COVERAGE

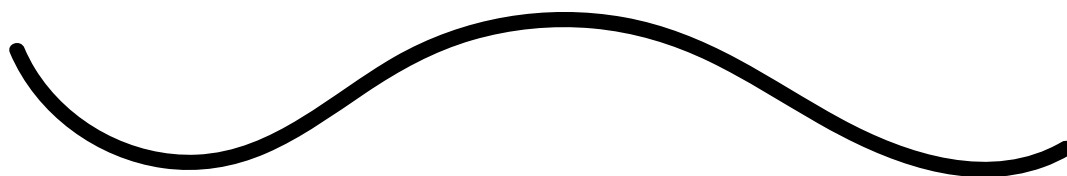
While our weekly VoteTopics look at a current issue in detail, our additional resources offer **in-depth RSHE coverage** for key areas of the curriculum and the specific issues that constitute these. This allows staff to pre-plan when they deliver a lesson on a sensitive topic according to their school's needs.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a topic that schools will deliver lessons on according to the makeup of their community. The additional RSHE lesson on FGM directly addresses the KS3 objective around “the facts, laws, risks and harms associated with female genital mutilation (FGM); strategies to safely access support for themselves or others who may be at risk, or who have already been subject to FGM”, while also linking to other areas of the Harmful relationship behaviours theme.

The RSHE lessons are planned specifically with the in-depth coverage of this topic in mind, supporting holistic understanding from students and helping staff to feel confident that this objective is being met. The lesson outline below shows how this works:

1. Introduction to the idea of culture and cultural practices

3. Cultural practice examples and those at risk of FGM



2. Exploration of British multiculturalism, British law, and FGM

4. Guidance on telltale signs, those most at risk and signposting

SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE RSHE DELIVERY

Anxiety around delivering effective, age-appropriate RSHE provision while not causing issues for students or parents & carers in the school community is at an all-time high.

However, VotesforSchools is committed to helping students and staff understand the most pressing issues of the day in a way that is **accessible, non-judgmental and inclusive**.

All **resources are developed by former teachers** with extensive classroom experience and in-depth understanding of the RSHE curriculum. They are **aware of the limitations posed by a range of different pedagogical and social factors**, and ensure these are acknowledged and accommodated as much as possible in the resources.

As with any resources, their **use is entirely at staff & schools' discretion**, and there is no obligation to deliver lessons that are not appropriate for your setting for any reason. The VotesforSchools archive provides **access to over 200 previous resources** should you need to revisit a specific topic or hit pause on a more challenging current one.

When the more challenging issues embedded in the RSHE curriculum - bereavement, county lines, discrimination - are covered, **students and staff are provided with signposting about who to speak to if they have any concerns**. This helps to build a culture of open conversation between students, staff and the wider school community.

BEYOND RSHE | THE PSHE CURRICULUM

As mentioned, VotesforSchools is used by many schools to not only support statutory RSHE objectives, but the wider PSHE curriculum. Our VoteTopics regularly explore topics relating to economic wellbeing and careers education.

The weekly resources inherently support students in considering - and honing - their strengths, achievements, interests and skills. The discussion-based nature of the lessons also gives them access to opinions and experiences outside of their own. Both of these elements help to create well-rounded, thoughtful and articulate students who feel confident in their abilities and strive towards more ambitious aspirations as they go through school; the desired outcomes of any robust and effective PSHE curriculum.

***Reminder:** If you or your students would like to submit a topic on these themes - or on any of the others addressed in this document - please email secondary@votesforschools.com.*