

Preparing for Life: The Secondary PSHE & Life Skills Journey

A Guide for Parents & Carers
at Brakenhale School



The Core Purpose of PSHE & Life Skills



Empowerment

Equipping students to make informed, ethical decisions regarding their physical health, mental wellbeing, and relationships.



Safety

Helping young people understand boundaries and identify when things are not right, navigating both physical environments and the digital world.



Character

Cultivating resilience, self-respect, kindness, and trustworthiness to successfully transition into adult life.

PSHE is the vital bridge connecting academic success with real-world readiness.

The Mandate: Statutory Government Guidance



Status

Guidance: Department for Education (July 2025)

Statutory Requirement: It is a legal mandate for all secondary schools in England to teach these subjects. This framework is designed for pupil protection and wellbeing.

The Requirement

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education are compulsory for all secondary pupils.

The Goal

To integrate these subjects within a broad curriculum to actively promote the moral, social, mental, and physical development of young people.

Curriculum Highlights: Navigating Modern Complexities



The Law & Equality

Teaching the practical applications of the Equality Act, human rights, and the legal frameworks governing modern Britain.



Consent & Boundaries

Exploring ethical behaviour, clear communication, and the precise legal definitions of consent across all age groups.



Digital & Online Safety

Navigating digital footprints, the realities of social media, artificial intelligence (including deepfakes), and exposure to pornography.



Inclusivity & Respect

Fostering tolerance, understanding diverse family structures, and actively challenging stereotypes, prejudice, and misogyny.

The Roadmap: A Journey of Maturation

The Spiral Curriculum

Topics such as online safety, health, and relationships are not taught just once. We revisit these themes every year, increasing the depth, complexity, and real-world application as our students mature from foundational understanding to full independence.

**KS3
(Years 7-9)**

Building
Foundations

**KS4
(Years 10-11)**

Navigating
Complexity

**KS5
(Years 12-13)**

Stepping into
Adulthood

Key Stage 3 (Years 7, 8 & 9) – Building Foundations

Relationships

- Establishing healthy friendships
- Understanding family structures
- Resolving conflict without escalation
- Basic introduction to consent and boundaries



Health & Wellbeing

- Navigating puberty and physical changes
- Learning basic first aid and CPR
- Managing early mental health (anxiety, sleep hygiene)



Life Skills & Safety

- Financial basics (budgeting, needs vs. wants)
- Protecting digital footprints
- Managing cyberbullying
- Understanding fundamental human rights



Key Stage 4 (Years 10 & 11) – Navigating Complexity

Relationships

- Navigating intimate relationships
- Understanding the legal age of consent
- Addressing sexual assumptions
- Challenging harmful online narratives (misogyny, incel culture)



Health & Wellbeing

- STI prevention and contraception choices
- Recognizing addiction (drugs, vaping, alcohol, county lines)
- Eating disorders and self-image
- Managing intense exam pressure



Life Skills & Safety

- Recognizing financial exploitation
- Understanding income and tax mechanics
- Advanced online safety (deepfakes, sexting laws)



Key Stage 5 (Years 12 & 13) – Stepping into Adulthood

Relationships

Focusing on being a good partner, understanding long-term commitment, and mastering the advanced legal and ethical realities of sexual consent.



Health & Wellbeing

Independent mental health management, self-care during the transition to higher education, and navigating access to the NHS and specialist services.



Life Skills & Safety

Pure practical readiness: moving out, driving laws and car maintenance, understanding part-time work payslips, budgeting, and cooking hygiene.



Parent Partnership: The Right to Withdraw

Statutory & Compulsory (Cannot Withdraw)



- Relationships Education
(friendships, consent, safety)



- Health Education
(mental health, online safety, drugs/alcohol)



- Science Curriculum
(biological reproduction, anatomy, puberty)

Parental Right to Request (Can Withdraw)

Specific lessons focused
solely on sexual content
(part of RSE).



The Process

Parents wishing to request withdrawal must formally contact the Headteacher.

Note: By law, students have the independent right to opt back into sex education three terms before they turn 16.

EXTERNAL PARTNERS



Charlie's Promise

Expert and empathetic classroom sessions specifically in Year 8, exploring knife crime prevention, law, and consequences.



Rabbits

Specialist, sensitive, and age-appropriate Year 9 delivery concerning female genital mutilation (FGM) and Breast Ironing safety.



Unifrog

A unified portal utilized across all cohorts for continuous career benchmarking, personal statements, and future pathways.

Here to Support You

We view parents and carers as vital partners in this journey.
If you have any questions about the curriculum, or if you would like to view specific teaching materials and resources, please reach out.

Head of Department (PSHE)
sblackburn@brakenhale.co.uk

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Questions & Discussion