

## What's New in the 2026 RSHE Guidance?

The 2026 guidance **does not replace** what schools were already teaching in Relationships Education. Instead, it **strengthens and clarifies** expectations so schools can better support children's wellbeing and safety in today's world.

Here are the main updates explained simply:

### **Greater focus on skills, not just knowledge**

Children are now taught more explicitly how to:

- Manage feelings like anger, frustration, disappointment, and loneliness
- Resolve disagreements calmly and respectfully
- Communicate their needs and boundaries clearly
- Develop confidence, self-respect, and resilience

This helps children **apply what they learn in real life**, not just understand ideas.

### **Clearer safeguarding and protection**

The guidance is clearer about helping children:

- Recognise emotional, physical, and inappropriate behaviour (in an age-appropriate way)
- Understand that **being hurt or abused is never their fault**
- Know exactly **who to talk to and how to seek help**

This strengthens safeguarding while **avoiding frightening or explicit detail**.

### **Stronger support for emotional wellbeing**

The 2026 guidance places more emphasis on:

- Emotional and mental wellbeing
- Normalising feelings such as loneliness
- Encouraging pupils to talk about worries
- Helping children know when to support friends and when to seek adult help

### **More up-to-date online safety learning**

Because children's online lives have changed, the guidance now includes clearer expectations around:

- Online anonymity and people pretending to be someone else
- Peer pressure online
- The permanence of images or messages shared online
- Understanding that some online content may be upsetting and what to do

This reflects the **reality of children's experiences** and focuses on keeping them safe.

### **Clearer, inclusive language about families**

The guidance:

- Continues to recognise that families come in many forms
- Emphasises that all families should be treated with respect
- Updates legal references (for example, marriage and civil partnerships)

The message remains the same: **no child should ever feel excluded, judged, or different because of their family.**

### **Reassurance about age-appropriateness**

The 2026 guidance is clear that:

- Teaching must be suitable for the age of the child
- Sensitive topics should only be introduced when relevant
- Lessons should protect children **without causing alarm**
- Parents should be kept informed if adaptations are needed

### **In summary**

**What hasn't changed:**

- ✓ Primary Relationships Education is about relationships, safety, and wellbeing
- ✓ It does *not* include teaching sexual activity
- ✓ It is inclusive, respectful, and safeguarding-focused

**What's improved:**

- ★ More emotional skills
- ★ Clearer safeguarding
- ★ Stronger online safety
- ★ Greater reassurance for parents