

Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education Policy

Reference Number	SO-0126
Version Number	1.7
Latest Revision	September 2025
Policy Owner	Education Directorate
Date Ratified by Board	November 2024
Next Review	September 2026

Purpose

To outline the NAS Education Directorate's policy for NAS schools' approach to the teaching of PSHE, including statutory arrangements for Relationships and Health Education.

Scope

This policy applies to all schools and children's services within National Autistic Society. This policy includes all relevant aspects of PSHE, SMSC and promoting British Values.

Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Education Act 2002
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- DfE (2014) 'National curriculum in England: framework for key stages 1 to 4'
- DfE (2022) 'Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education'
- DfE (2021) DfE (2019) 'Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education'
- DfE (2023) 'Keeping children safe in education 2023' (KCSIE)

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Relationships and Sex Education Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Policy

Roles and responsibilities

The Schools Governing Group is responsible for:

- Ensuring the school's PSHE Policy is implemented effectively.
- Ensuring that the PSHE Policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds or protected characteristics.

The Principal is responsible for:

- Knowing, understanding, and acting within the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.
- Showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others, recognising differences and respecting cultural diversity within contemporary Britain.
- Upholding fundamental British values including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- Ensuring a broad, structured and coherent curriculum entitlement which sets out the knowledge, skills and values that will be taught.
- Ensuring that PSHE teaching is underpinned by high levels of subject expertise and approaches which respect the distinct nature of the subject.
- Facilitating the day-to-day implementation and management of the PSHE Policy.
- Reviewing the PSHE Policy annually.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy, as outlined in the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.

The PSHE lead is responsible for:

- Leading, managing and developing the school's provision in the subject area.
- Promoting and implementing the school's Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy at all times.
- Promoting and safeguarding the welfare of all pupils at all times.
- Liaising with other staff and professional agencies to devise a suitable scheme of work to ensure the PSHE curriculum is comprehensive and extensive.
- Ensuring the curriculum is inclusive and enables all pupils to achieve their full potential.
- Acting as a positive role model for all pupils and staff members.

Approach

All schools must provide a curriculum that is broadly based, balanced and meets the needs of all pupils. Under section 78 of the Education Act 2002 and the Academies Act 2010, a PSHE curriculum:

- Promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and
- Prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

The Education (Independent school standards) 2014 includes the requirement for independent schools to provide

“personal, social, health and economic education which:

(i) reflects the school's aim and ethos; and

(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act”

Autism affects the way a person communicates with and relates to people around them. Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) plays a core part in the development of an autistic person as well as running through all aspects of the curriculum each of our schools will offer a specific coherent PSHE programme throughout the age ranges which will be applicable to the abilities and needs of pupils.

We have a clear ethos of respecting each young person, recognising each other's strengths and achievements, as well as equipping pupils with effective support to help minimise any areas of difficulty. We provide a caring and supportive learning environment that facilitates the development of the whole child and promotes their welfare and wellbeing. Through our culture of high expectation and positive regard we seek to develop aspiration in our pupils for their lives beyond school.

Objectives

The new programme of study sets out learning opportunities for key stages 1 to 5, based on three core themes:

1. Health and wellbeing
2. Relationships
3. Living in the wider world

The PSHE curriculum will include teaching that aims for pupils to:

- Understand what is important to them and will help them to have a fulfilling quality of life.
- Understand what constitutes a healthy and safe lifestyle.
- Respect themselves and others and understand that their own and others opinions are valued.

- Develop self-confidence, self-esteem and self-worth.
- Develop social communication and social interaction skills.
- Understand how to support their own wellbeing.
- Understand themselves and their autism.
- Understand how to stay safe and behave online
- Understand the dangers they may face, both in and around school and beyond, and be provided with the means to keep themselves safe.
- Understand the law and consequences of risky and harmful behaviours.
- Develop responsibility and independence within school which they will take forward into society and in their working lives.
- Develop emotional regulation skills and coping and tolerance strategies
- Understand what constitutes 'socially acceptable' behaviour at school and in society.
- Participate in their community and be a constructive member of society.
- Respect cultural diversity.
- Understand democracy.
- Develop good relationships with peers and adults.
- Make positive, informed choices as they make their way through life.
- Understand that they have a right to speak up about issues or events, and to respect other's right to do the same.
- Understand and promote equal opportunities for all.
- Enable pupils to make a successful transition into adulthood by developing their vocational and independent living skills.
- Participate in a range of enrichment activities.

Operational delivery

The approach to delivering specialist education by NAS schools includes the following key features:

Subject teaching: Schools have a predetermined timetable for all key stages. The PSHE curriculum acknowledges that pupils mature at their own speed and will only cope with new learning when they are developmentally ready. In order to ensure the highest possible level of personal development many aspects will be revisited at later key stages using age-appropriate and suitable, differentiated content.

Curriculum documentation / schemes of work: schools will have their own curriculum documentation which will set out what will be taught at each key stage in line with statutory guidance and based on each individual pupil's developmental level.

Personalised: Schools provide a range of opportunities and delivery strategies to meet the individual needs of pupils so each pupils timetable is adapted and individualised accordingly.

Parent involvement: Parents/carers will be involved in this aspect of their child's learning through consultation, involvement in planning and in identifying important areas for individual pupil development. The school and parents/carers will work together to inform pupils/pupils of what is being done and why.

Pupil Involvement: Pupils will be actively encouraged to be involved in shaping their own learning. We aim to understand what is important to each of our pupils for the quality of their own life and their future aspirations. This will then inform provision planning. Pupils will be encouraged to take some responsibility for organising and assessing their own learning.

Additional curricula: complements the National Curriculum with specialist areas such as Learning to learn or Understanding autism.

Autism specific approaches: our schools have adopted the National Autistic Societies SPELL framework. **SPELL** is an acronym that stands for:

Structure

Positivity

Empathy

Low arousal

Links

This is a framework that promotes best practice in supporting Autistic people of all ages.

Schools will also use a variety of autism specific teaching approaches as appropriate to the group or individual. All of these approaches will be ethical, non-aversive and supported by research. Some approaches used in our schools include:

TEACCH

Social stories

Comic strip conversations

Intensive Interaction

Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

More information can be found about these approaches on the NAS website.

Transdisciplinary approach: schools have clinical teams which typically include Psychologists, Speech and Language therapists, Occupational therapists and Positive Behaviour Support Co-ordinators. These professionals will work with all other staff in the schools to support pupils' access to learning and personal, social and health development.

Qualifications: Pupils are supported to gain appropriate nationally recognised qualifications (including academic and vocational qualifications), tailored to individual need where appropriate.

Community based learning: Significant emphasis on community-based learning to develop functional skills in natural settings.

Careers: Each school will have a careers programme that meets the needs of pupils and supports destination planning. Schools will provide Independent careers advice.

Enterprise: Schools will develop enterprise activities that can be considered a curriculum in their own right. Pupils will have the opportunity to participate in enterprise activities.

Assembly: Our weekly assemblies provides opportunities for pupils to come together. They have a clear theme which wherever possible links to the current curricular theme. Assemblies will provide opportunities for collective worship and associated spiritual, moral and cultural learning, and may also involve appropriate guests from the local community. Assemblies also provide opportunities to reflect and reward achievement.

The teaching of Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural education (SMSC)

NAS schools recognise the importance of SMSC in the development of our pupils. SMSC requires schools to establish a positive culture in which pupils thrive. SMSC is broader than PSHE but does encompass much of what is in the PSHE curriculum. Our schools promote -

The spiritual development of pupils including:

- ability to be reflective about their own beliefs (religious or otherwise) and perspective on life
- knowledge of, and respect for, different people's faiths, feelings and values
- sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others and the world around them
- use of imagination and creativity in their learning
- willingness to reflect on their experience.

The moral development of pupils including:

- ability to recognise the difference between right and wrong and to readily apply this understanding in their own lives, recognise legal boundaries and, in so doing, respect the civil and criminal law of England
- understanding the effects of their behaviour and actions
- interest in investigating and offering reasoned views about moral and ethical issues and ability to understand and appreciate the viewpoints of others on these issues.

The social development of pupils including:

- use of a range of social skills in different contexts, for example working and socialising with other pupils, including those from different religious, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds
- willingness to participate in a variety of communities and social settings, including by volunteering, cooperating well with others and being able to resolve conflicts effectively

- acceptance and engagement with the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance for those of different faiths and beliefs.

The cultural development of pupils including:

- understanding and appreciation of the wide range of cultural influences that have shaped their own heritage and that of others
- understanding and appreciation of the range of different cultures in the school and further afield as an essential element of their preparation for life in modern Britain
- understanding and acceptance of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)
- ability to recognise, and value, the things we share in common across cultural, religious, ethnic and socio-economic communities
- knowledge of Britain's democratic parliamentary system and its central role in shaping our history and values, and in continuing to develop Britain
- willingness to participate in and respond positively to artistic, musical, sporting and cultural opportunities
- interest in exploring, improving their understanding of and showing respect for different faiths and cultural diversity and the extent to which they understand, accept and respect diversity. This is shown by their respect and attitudes towards different religious, ethnic and socio-economic groups in the local, national and global communities

The teaching of British Values

Within PSHE all schools have a duty to 'actively promote' the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. These values were first set out by the government in the 'Prevent' strategy in 2011 and then defined in 2014 guidance. Through ensuring pupils' SMSC development, schools can also demonstrate they are actively promoting fundamental British values. Meeting requirements for collective worship, establishing a strong school ethos supported by effective relationships throughout the school, and providing relevant activities beyond the classroom are all ways of ensuring pupils' SMSC development. The school's ethos and teaching, which schools should make parents aware of, should support the rule of English civil and criminal law and schools should not teach anything that undermines it.

Fundamental British values are:

Democracy

1. The rule of law
2. Individual liberty and mutual respect
3. Tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs

Our schools will aspire and aim to:

- Enable pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence

- Support pupils to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England
- Encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative, and to understand how they can contribute positively to society
- Enable pupils to develop knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England
- Promote tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation and respect for their own and other cultures
- Encourage respect for other people, democracy and support for participation in the democratic processes, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England.
- Promote pupils voice and choice and an understanding that the importance of their decisions.

Drugs Education

Drugs education will form part of the curriculum, included in PSHE.

Definitions:

Drug - a substance people take to change the way they feel, think or behave. The term drugs are used to refer to all drugs:

- Illegal drugs (those controlled by the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971)
- Legal drugs, including alcohol, tobacco and volatile substances all over-the-counter and prescription medicines

Drug use - drug taking, for example consuming alcohol, taking medication or using illegal drugs.

Drugs education - the planning and structuring of learning opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and attitudes about all drugs and appreciate the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.

All drugs are not permitted to be used, bought, sold or otherwise obtained on the school and residential premises, including when pupils are taking part in off-site visits. These rules apply to staff working at and for the school.

This is with the exception of those pupils who need to take prescribed medicines.

Drugs education plans will be tailored to individual need and individual level of understanding according to each pupil's level of ability and age.

Drugs education in our schools will:

- Enable pupils to make healthy, informed choices by increasing their knowledge, exploring their own and other people's attitudes and developing and practicing skills.
- Promote positive attitudes towards healthy lifestyles and keeping self-safe.
- Provide accurate information about legal and illegal substances.

- Increase understanding about the implications and possible consequences of use and misuse
- Encourage an understanding for those experiencing or likely to experience substance abuse.
- Widen understanding about related health and social issues, e.g. sex and sexuality, crime, HIV and AIDS.
- Seek to minimise the risk that users and potential users may face.
- Enable young people to identify sources of appropriate personal support.
- Seek to develop in all pupil the ability to reject anything that could be potentially harmful to their health, future prospects and to nurture respect for the law.
- Seek to prepare our pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.
- Explain that there are special rules (laws) around supplying or possessing illegal substances, and why they exist.
- Describe some of the risks and possible consequences of drinking alcohol, smoking and other drugs on the body.
- Identify how misusing substances/alcohol might impact on relationships.
- Identify when, why and how to ask for help in relation to drugs and alcohol

Withdrawal from lessons

The school will always recognise that parents have the right to request that their child is withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE. The school will uphold that parents do not have a right to withdraw their child from the relationships or health elements of the programmes.

Requests to withdraw a child from sex education will be made in writing to the Principal.

Before granting a withdrawal request, the Principal will discuss the request with the parents and, as appropriate, the pupil, to ensure their wishes are understood and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum. The Principal will inform parents of the benefits of their child receiving sex education and any detrimental effects that withdrawal might have. All discussions with parents will be documented. These records will be kept securely in the school office in line with the school's Records Management Policy.

For requests concerning the withdrawal of a pupil with SEND, the Principal will take the pupils' specific needs into account when making their decision.

Equality and accessibility

The school will comply with the relevant requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and will ensure the curriculum does not discriminate against pupils because of any of the protected characteristics.

The school will consider the backgrounds, gender, age range and needs of its pupils and determine whether it is necessary to put in place additional support for some pupils based on their protected characteristics.

The school will design the PSHE curriculum to be inclusive of all pupils. The school will be aware that some pupils are more vulnerable to exploitation, bullying and other issues due to their characteristics, e.g. having SEND or being LGBTQ+.

Teachers will understand that they may need to liaise with the SENCO and adapt their planning or work to appropriately deliver the curriculum to pupils with SEND.

Where there is a need to tailor content and teaching to meet the needs of pupils at different developmental stages, the school will ensure the teaching remains sensitive, age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate, and is delivered with reference to the law.

The school is aware that some pupils are more vulnerable to exploitation, bullying and other issues due to the nature of their Autism and teachers will understand that they may need to liaise with other members of the transdisciplinary team and be more explicit and adapt their planning or work to appropriately deliver the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The school recognises the role it plays in preventative education and will ensure that pupils are taught about how to keep themselves and others safe, including online.

The school will implement a whole-school approach to PSHE that prepares pupils for life in modern Britain and creates a culture of zero tolerance for sexism, misogyny, misandry, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and sexual violence and harassment.

Teaching will be tailored to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of individual pupils, including pupils who are victims of abuse and pupils with SEND.

Confidentiality within the classroom will be an important component of PSHE, and teachers will be expected to respect the confidentiality of their pupils as far as is possible, in compliance with the school's Pupil Confidentiality Policy.

Due to the nature of the matters discussed in PSHE, there may be a higher likelihood for safeguarding concerns to arise or be disclosed by pupils. In line with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, all staff will be aware of the indicators and risks of a range of safeguarding issues, including child-on-child abuse, and will follow the appropriate procedures should a safeguarding concern be disclosed.

PSHE teachers will encourage pupils to discuss the issues raised in the lesson with a member of staff if they wish to do so. Pupils will also be made aware of how to raise concerns or make reports about potential safeguarding issues, and how reports will be handled. This also includes concerns and reports about a friend or peer.

The DSL or deputy DSL will be involved in the development of safeguarding-related elements of the PSHE curriculum.

Evaluation of Policy

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis for its effectiveness and to ensure it takes account of current legislation.

The delivery of PSHE will be monitored by the school's leadership team and by the Director of Education and Children's services who in turn will inform the policy lead about any required changes to policy.

Related Policies

Safeguarding Children (Child Protection) Policy SO-0189

Relationships and Sex Education Policy SO-0133

Online safety policy SO-0106

NAS Supporting Behaviour in Schools SO-0030

Schools Local policies for Teaching and Learning, British Values, SMSC

Definitions

PSHE – Personal, Social, Health and Economic education

RSE – Relationships and Sex Education

SMSC – Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural development

SGG – Schools Governing Group