

Thornden School

Year 7 Personal Development – Parent Overview

Headteacher - Caroline Lowing

Our Safeguarding Curriculum

Dear Parents and Carers,

At Thornden School, we are deeply committed to ensuring that every student grows into a confident, informed, and compassionate young person. One of the most important ways we achieve this is through our Personal Development (PD) curriculum—a vital and statutory part of our provision that sits at the heart of our safeguarding and wellbeing culture.

Personal Development provides our students with the knowledge, skills, values and confidence they need to manage their wellbeing, form respectful relationships, make safe and informed decisions, and prepare for life beyond school. In an ever-changing world—socially, digitally, emotionally and economically—PD equips young people with the tools they need to thrive as healthy, safe, responsible and successful citizens.

Why Personal Development Matters

Our PD curriculum is sometimes referred to as our ‘Safeguarding Curriculum’, because it plays such a key role in keeping students safe. Through engaging, inclusive, and age-appropriate lessons, students learn how to recognise and manage risks, understand their rights and responsibilities, and develop the emotional literacy, digital resilience, and decision-making skills they need to navigate the world around them.

Our Intent – What Year 7 Students Will Learn

The Year 7 PD program is carefully designed to support students with their transition into secondary school, while also laying strong foundations in areas such as mental health, respectful relationships, physical wellbeing, digital safety, and understanding the wider world. It builds personal confidence and a sense of belonging, while also introducing key safeguarding topics in a supportive and age-appropriate way.

This year, we have refreshed and strengthened our curriculum in response to feedback from students and parents. Students told us they wanted to learn more about topics like online safety, mental health, healthy relationships, and careers. Parents highlighted the importance of clearer communication around RSE content and life skills such as budgeting and CV writing. As a result, we have introduced several new elements across the curriculum, including:

- Digital consent, image sharing and grooming awareness lessons from Year 7
- Financial literacy and budgeting from Year 7 through to Year 11

- Mature, age-appropriate discussion of topics such as coercion, radicalisation, and abortion at KS4
- Careers preparation including CV writing, interview skills, and revision planning in Year 10 and 11

A Spiral Curriculum – Building Knowledge Over Time

Our PD curriculum is structured as a spiral—students revisit key themes like health, relationships and citizenship every year, with growing complexity and relevance. For example, in Year 7 we explore puberty, friendships and emotional wellbeing, while by Year 9 students examine anxiety, pornography, and social responsibility. In Year 11, they build on this with lessons on digital safety, reproductive health, and financial independence.

Each year is structured into three core strands which rotate across the school year:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)
- The Wider World

These themes run across the following half-termly structure:

- Autumn 1: Health and Wellbeing
- Autumn 2: Relationships and Sex Education
- Spring 1: The Wider World
- Spring 2: Health and Wellbeing
- Summer 1: RSE
- Summer 2: The Wider World

This design ensures continuity and progression while enabling content to be tailored to students' age and stage.

Autumn 1: Focus on Health and Wellbeing

In Autumn 1, Year 7 students explore how to stay physically and mentally healthy, how to build resilience, how to manage risk, and how to develop positive self-esteem. They also begin learning about important personal safety topics including puberty, hygiene, and the dangers of vaping.

Your child's PD lessons this half term will include:

- Introduction to PD
- Mental Health – An Introduction
- Building Resilience
- Life Online
- Puberty and Hygiene
- The Harms of Vaping
- What is a Risk?

- Self-Esteem and Positivity

These sessions are delivered through interactive discussion, multimedia content, and practical tasks. They are designed to promote safe behaviours, challenge stereotypes, and encourage students to reflect on their choices and values.

Intended Impact

By the end of the year, your child will be better equipped to:

- Manage their wellbeing and mental health
- Form respectful, healthy relationships
- Recognise and manage risks
- Access support and report concerns
- Understand their rights, responsibilities and identity
- Contribute positively to their school and community
- Navigate digital spaces safely and responsibly

They will have developed the empathy, self-awareness, critical thinking, and digital literacy needed to grow into a well-rounded, informed, and confident young person.

Working Together

We believe that Personal Development is most effective when it is part of a shared journey between home and school. Each half term, we will provide a short overview of the content your child is studying, and we always welcome your thoughts and questions. If you would like more information about any aspect of our PD curriculum, including our statutory RSE content, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Thank you for your continued support in helping us to shape students who are not only academically successful, but also kind, confident, and equipped for life.

Warm regards,



Mr A. Thomas
Deputy Headteacher
Designated Safeguarding Lead
Thornden School