



## Year 8 Personal Development – Parent Overview

*The Safeguarding Curriculum at Thornden School*

**Headteacher - Caroline Lowing**

### Dear Parents and Carers,

At Thornden, Personal Development (PD) is much more than a statutory subject—it is a central part of our *Safeguarding Curriculum*, designed to help students understand themselves, others, and the wider world. Through PD, students build the knowledge, values, confidence and skills to stay safe, manage their wellbeing, form respectful relationships, and make informed choices about their lives.

In today's fast-changing world—socially, emotionally, digitally, and economically—PD ensures that every student receives inclusive, preventative education rooted in the real issues they face. It supports our whole-school commitment to wellbeing and safety, helping young people grow into compassionate, resilient, and responsible citizens.

### Our Intent – Building on Strong Foundations

The Year 8 program deepens the key safeguarding and wellbeing concepts introduced in Year 7. It challenges students to think more critically about identity, online behaviour, self-worth, and the choices they face as they become more independent. The intent is to equip students with the maturity and judgement to navigate social influences, peer dynamics, and risk.

### What's New – A Curriculum Shaped by Student Voice and Parent Feedback

We regularly review and update our PD curriculum based on feedback from students and families. This year:

- Students requested more learning on online safety, peer pressure, and emotional wellbeing.
- Parents highlighted the need for clearer communication about RSE content and an emphasis on practical life skills.

As a result, the curriculum now includes:

- Enhanced focus on digital safety and peer influence (e.g. group chats, social media stress)
- Earlier exploration of body image, mental health, and harmful behaviours such as disordered eating and knife crime
- Continued development of financial literacy, respectful relationships, and personal safety throughout KS3 and KS4

## **Spiral Curriculum – Revisiting Key Themes with Greater Depth**

PD is taught through a *spiral curriculum*—meaning students revisit key themes like health, relationships, and living in the wider world each year, but at a deeper, more age-appropriate level. This ensures consistency and progression, helping students connect prior learning to new challenges.

The year is structured around three themes:

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

Each theme is taught across the year in half-termly rotation to ensure all strands are revisited regularly.

### **Autumn 1 – What Your Child Will Learn**

This half term, Year 8 students are focusing on the *Health and Wellbeing* strand. Tutor sessions explore personal safety, physical and mental health, and the pressures young people face—particularly online and in peer groups.

Lessons this half term include:

- Healthy Eating Choices and Reading Food Labels
- The Risks of an Unhealthy Lifestyle
- Eating Disorders and Mental Health
- Group Messaging and the Law
- Social Media Stress and Online Trolls
- Self-Esteem and Peer Influence
- Knife Crime Awareness

These lessons are taught with sensitivity and care. Students are encouraged to share ideas, ask questions, and reflect on scenarios that may affect them or their peers. They are also reminded of support systems in school and beyond, reinforcing our commitment to safeguarding.

### **Intended Impact**

By the end of the year, students will:

- Better understand their own physical and mental wellbeing
- Recognise and manage pressure in social and digital settings
- Have stronger critical thinking and emotional literacy
- Be more confident in identifying risk and seeking support
- Be equipped to make healthy, informed, and safe decisions

PD at Thornden is most effective when home and school work in partnership. We will continue to share half-termly updates on the curriculum, and we welcome your feedback, questions, or suggestions at any point.

Thank you for your support.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Thomas', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Mr A. Thomas**

Deputy Headteacher

Designated Safeguarding Lead

Thornden School