

Year 9 Personal Development – Parent Overview

The Safeguarding Curriculum at Thornden School

Dear Parents and Carers,

Headteacher - Caroline Lowing

At Thornden, Personal Development (PD) is a core part of our Safeguarding and Wellbeing Curriculum. It ensures that every student receives the preventative education needed to navigate today's complex world—socially, emotionally, digitally, and economically. Through weekly lessons and tutor time, students build the knowledge, values, and critical thinking required to make informed choices, maintain their wellbeing, and stay safe in both their offline and online lives.

Personal Development at Thornden helps young people grow into compassionate, resilient, and responsible citizens. It is an inclusive, real-world curriculum that supports our whole-school culture of safeguarding, care, and aspiration.

Our Intent – Preparing Students for the Real World

In Year 9, the PD curriculum focuses on:

- Supporting students to think critically about real-world health and social challenges
- Building emotional intelligence, digital literacy, and financial awareness
- Equipping students with the confidence to prepare for KS4 and future pathways

We aim to help students reflect more deeply on identity, influence, pressure, and personal choice. Year 9 is a pivotal year in our spiral curriculum: students revisit key safeguarding themes with greater depth and maturity, especially around mental health, risk, consent, and resilience.

Shaped by Student Voice and Parental Feedback

This year's curriculum has been directly influenced by feedback from our students and parent community:

- Students asked for more learning on anxiety, digital safety, healthy relationships, and careers.
- Parents requested clearer communication around RSE content and more practical life skills (e.g., budgeting and CV writing).

In response, the following improvements have been made:

- New lessons on digital consent, grooming, and image sharing
- Financial literacy and budgeting now taught across all year groups

- Mature, age-appropriate discussion of abortion, coercion, and radicalisation introduced at KS4
- CV writing, interview practice, and revision strategies now embedded into the Year 10 and 11 curriculum

A Spiral Safeguarding Curriculum – Building Year on Year

Our curriculum follows a spiral model where students revisit core safeguarding themes—Health and Wellbeing, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE), and Living in the Wider World—each year with increasing complexity.

Half-Term Theme Structure (Year 9)

Autumn 1 – Health and Wellbeing

Autumn 2 – Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)

Spring 1 – The Wider World

Spring 2 – Health and Wellbeing

Summer 1 – RSE

Summer 2 – The Wider World

This structure ensures continuity, progression, and a well-rounded experience for every student.

Autumn Term – What Your Child Will Learn

In Autumn Term 1, Year 9 students will focus on **Health and Wellbeing**, exploring both physical and mental health, risk, and resilience through tutor time and dedicated PD lessons. The lessons this half term include:

- Managing Anxiety
- Stigma and Mental Health
- Healthy Eating on a Budget
- Emergency First Aid
- Vaping and Smoking Risks
- Gambling and Online Risk

These lessons are delivered with care and sensitivity, supported by trained staff, high-quality resources, and signposting to support services both in and out of school.

Intended Impact – Building Safety, Confidence and Responsibility

By the end of Year 9, students will:

- Understand how to maintain their mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing
- Be able to recognise and manage peer and online pressure
- Know where and how to access help when needed
- Have developed greater resilience, empathy, and decision-making skills

- Feel more confident about their future, rights, and responsibilities

Working in Partnership with Parents

We believe that PD is most effective when delivered in partnership between home and school. We will continue to send regular updates on the content your child is studying, and we welcome your feedback and questions at any point.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of the PD curriculum, including the RSE content, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Warm regards,

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

Mr A. Thomas

Deputy Headteacher

Designated Safeguarding Lead

Thornden School