

Thornden School – Key Stage 4 Personal Development

Intent, Implementation and Impact

Intent

The Key Stage 4 Personal Development (PD) curriculum at Thornden School forms a central part of our safeguarding and pastoral strategy. It provides a structured, preventative framework that enables every student to feel safe, be safe, and stay safe while preparing for adulthood, relationships, and life beyond school.

Our intent is to ensure that all students develop the knowledge, skills, and values needed to make informed, responsible choices about their wellbeing, relationships, beliefs, and futures. The curriculum promotes inclusion, empathy, and personal integrity—values that underpin Thornden’s ethos of *Belong, Care, Aspire, Succeed*.

The KS4 programme builds deliberately on the foundations established in Key Stage 3. It represents the culmination of a five-year spiral curriculum, revisiting key safeguarding and PSHE themes each year at greater depth and complexity. Across Years 10 and 11, students move from guided exploration to confident, independent reasoning, reflecting growing maturity and readiness for post-16 life.

Aims

By the end of Key Stage 4, students will:

- Understand and manage their physical, emotional, and mental health effectively.
- Demonstrate empathy, respect, and inclusion in all relationships.
- Apply ethical and critical thinking to complex issues.
- Recognise and manage risk, both online and offline.
- Reflect on their beliefs, values, and identity with maturity and confidence.
- Possess the self-awareness and independence to navigate further education, work, and adult responsibilities.

The PD curriculum at KS4 integrates statutory PSHE, RSE, Health Education, Careers, and Citizenship requirements while fulfilling Thornden’s commitment to SMSC and the Religious Education entitlement through strands exploring ethics, philosophy, and belief.

Implementation

Curriculum Structure

- Weekly 30-minute tutor sessions consolidate safeguarding themes and reflective discussion.
- One dedicated PD lesson per week provides time for deeper exploration, debate, and application.
- Lessons are written and quality-assured internally by the PD leadership team and DSLs, ensuring accuracy, consistency, and contextual relevance.
- All lessons follow the Thornden DNA and adaptive teaching principles, providing equitable access, stretch, and support for every student.

The KS4 curriculum is organised into thematic strands that run across both years, each revisited with progressive depth:

Core Strand	Year 10 Focus	Year 11 Focus	Safeguarding & SMSC Emphasis
Health & Wellbeing	Managing mental health, resilience, body image, and stress; prevention of self-harm and substance misuse.	Advanced wellbeing management, coping with exam stress, and transition to adulthood.	Preventative mental health education; promoting self-help and support seeking.
RSE	Healthy relationships, consent, equality, respect, and gender identity.	Adult relationships, communication, intimacy, and legal frameworks.	Sexual health, coercive control, online safety, and personal boundaries.
Living in the Wider World / Careers	Financial literacy, online safety, civic responsibility, and employability.	Post-16 pathways, applications, workplace rights, and budgeting.	Preparation for independence and safe participation in society.
Philosophy & Ethics / Traditions / Medical Ethics	Critical thinking, fake news, moral reasoning, equality, and justice.	Ethical dilemmas in science and medicine; belief, morality, and human rights.	SMSC and RE development; empathy, integrity, and ethical literacy.

Core Strand	Year 10 Focus	Year 11 Focus	Safeguarding & SMSC Emphasis
Believing & Belonging	Exploration of identity and values begins through discussion of fairness and inclusion.	Reflection on personal and cultural identity, belonging, and coexistence.	Promoting respect for faith, culture, and community; British Values integration.

Spiral Curriculum Design

The KS4 PD curriculum operates as a *spiral*, revisiting universal safeguarding and wellbeing themes through progressively complex content, language, and context.

- **From Awareness to Application:**
In Year 10, students identify and explore core ideas (e.g. “What is mental health?” or “What makes a fair society?”). In Year 11, they apply ethical and critical reasoning to nuanced real-world scenarios (e.g. “How should we balance personal freedom with public safety?” or “Should assisted dying be legal?”).
- **From Guided Discussion to Independent Thinking:**
Structured debates and reflective journaling in Year 10 evolve into independent ethical reasoning and peer dialogue in Year 11.
- **From Personal Safety to Global Citizenship:**
Year 10 builds protective behaviours and empathy. Year 11 extends this to moral responsibility, belief, and participation in society.

This design ensures that safeguarding, inclusion, and personal growth are not isolated units, but interconnected and developmental threads that run across the two-year sequence.

Pedagogy and Delivery

All lessons are grounded in Thornden’s adaptive teaching approach and follow a consistent structure:

- *Do Now* retrieval or reflection task to activate prior learning.
- Clear learning intentions and success criteria.
- Explicit vocabulary and key concept teaching.
- Scaffolded activities promoting accessibility and challenge.
- Structured discussion, debate, and ethical reasoning.

- Personal reflection and signposting to support.

Every lesson includes a “Need Support? You’re Not Alone” section, ensuring safeguarding signposting is embedded into learning.

Staff Development and Consultation

Staff confidence and consistency are maintained through:

- Annual statutory RSE and safeguarding training.
- Fortnightly DSL briefings connecting live safeguarding themes to PD content.
- Termly PD staff consultation meetings to share feedback and adapt lessons.
- Collaboration with external partners (NHS, Hampshire Police, local employers, CAMHS, and community faith leaders).

This ensures that teaching is informed, inclusive, and responsive to emerging needs.

Student and Parent Voice

Student and parent engagement shape the ongoing development of PD at KS4.

- Entry and exit surveys measure knowledge, confidence, and attitudinal change across each theme.
- Student focus groups provide feedback on relevance, inclusivity, and wellbeing impact.
- Parent questionnaires assess confidence that PD contributes to safety and readiness for adult life.

Recent feedback from both groups directly influenced:

- Prioritising mental health and exam resilience early in Year 11.
- Increasing practical financial education in Living in the Wider World.
- Expanding coverage of ethical and cultural belief systems to reflect Thornden’s diverse community.

Impact

The KS4 PD curriculum has a measurable impact on student outcomes, culture, and safeguarding.

Students demonstrate:

- Mature understanding of risk, safety, and mental health.
- Confidence in discussing ethical, moral, and personal issues respectfully.
- Empathy, tolerance, and inclusion in relationships and community life.
- Readiness for post-16 transition, with informed decision-making about education, work, and lifestyle.
- Clarity in personal identity and belief, balanced with respect for diversity.

Evidence of Impact

Source	Description	Indicators
Entry & Exit Surveys	Quantitative tracking of knowledge and confidence across each strand.	Increase in accurate understanding of safeguarding, consent, and wellbeing concepts.
Student Voice	Qualitative focus groups and tutor evaluations.	Students articulate how PD helps them stay safe and make informed decisions.
Parent Voice	Surveys and consultation.	Parental confidence that PD addresses real issues relevant to their child's stage.
Safeguarding Data (CPOMS)	DSL analysis of referrals and themes.	Reduction in concerns relating to relationships, mental health, and online behaviour.
Careers Data	Post-16 destinations and NEET tracking.	Sustained positive destinations; high engagement with careers guidance.
Lesson Observations and Tutor Feedback	Quality assurance and reflection.	Consistent delivery; strong student participation and critical thinking.

Whole-School Outcomes

- Reduced safeguarding referrals linked to issues covered in PD lessons.
- Improved emotional resilience and attendance among vulnerable groups.
- Consistently positive student feedback on the relevance and safety of PD content.
- Increased staff confidence in delivering sensitive and complex topics.
- Clear articulation by students of how PD supports their personal safety and future readiness—an Ofsted hallmark of effective provision.