

Dear Parents and Carers,

At Thornden School, our Personal Development (PD) curriculum forms a core part of our safeguarding and wellbeing provision, supporting students to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to stay safe, healthy and informed as they progress through secondary school.

Each half term, students explore a different theme. Following the Easter break, the Year 9 Summer 1 focus is Relationships and Sex Education (RSE). This unit explores how relationships, identity, online influences and emotional wellbeing interact as young people move further through adolescence.

### **Statutory PSHE and RSHE Content**

The content taught within this unit forms part of the statutory PSHE and Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) framework. Lessons are planned in line with statutory guidance and support safeguarding by helping students understand risk, develop respectful attitudes, and recognise potentially harmful influences both online and offline.

As students become more independent online and socially, it is important they develop the critical thinking skills needed to navigate complex messages around relationships, gender roles and digital behaviour.

### **Why This Matters in Year 9**

Year 9 is a stage where young people are increasingly exposed to online communities, social media discussions and digital content that can influence their attitudes and behaviours. This unit helps students explore these issues in a balanced and evidence-informed way, encouraging respectful relationships and responsible decision-making.

It also supports students' emotional development by helping them understand how people manage conflict, cope with loss, and maintain healthy relationships.

### **This Half-Term's Topics**

During Summer 1, Year 9 students will explore the following topics:

- 1) **Online Influences: The "Manosphere" and Misogyny**  
Students will examine how some online spaces promote harmful attitudes towards women and relationships. Lessons encourage students to think critically about online "experts", understand how misinformation spreads, and develop respectful attitudes towards others.
- 2) **Grief, Loss and Digital Legacies**  
Students will explore how people experience grief and how digital technologies can affect the way we remember and process loss. This includes understanding the idea of a digital

legacy and how online accounts and memories can affect individuals after a relationship ends or someone dies.

3) Conflict Management in Relationships

Students will learn practical strategies for managing disagreements respectfully and constructively. This includes understanding why conflicts arise, how to listen effectively, and how to find common ground to resolve disagreements.

4) Pornography and the Impact on the Brain and Relationships

Students will explore how exposure to pornography can shape unrealistic expectations about relationships, body image and intimacy, and why critical awareness of online sexual content is important for maintaining healthy relationships.

**By the end of the Summer 1 unit, Year 9 students will:**

1. Develop stronger critical thinking skills when engaging with online content
2. Understand how harmful attitudes and misinformation can influence behaviour
3. Build strategies for managing disagreements and maintaining respectful relationships
4. Gain awareness of how online content can affect expectations around relationships and identity
5. Understand how people process grief and loss, including in the digital age
6. Know where to seek help or advice if they feel uncomfortable or concerned about any of these issues

All lessons are delivered in a supportive, respectful and age-appropriate environment, with opportunities for students to ask questions and access guidance if needed. Students are also reminded of the range of support available in school, including tutors, Heads of Year, the Wellbeing Team and safeguarding staff.

Thank you for your continued support in helping young people develop the knowledge, resilience and critical thinking skills needed to navigate modern relationships and digital environments safely.

Warm regards,

Adam Thomas  
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Thornden School