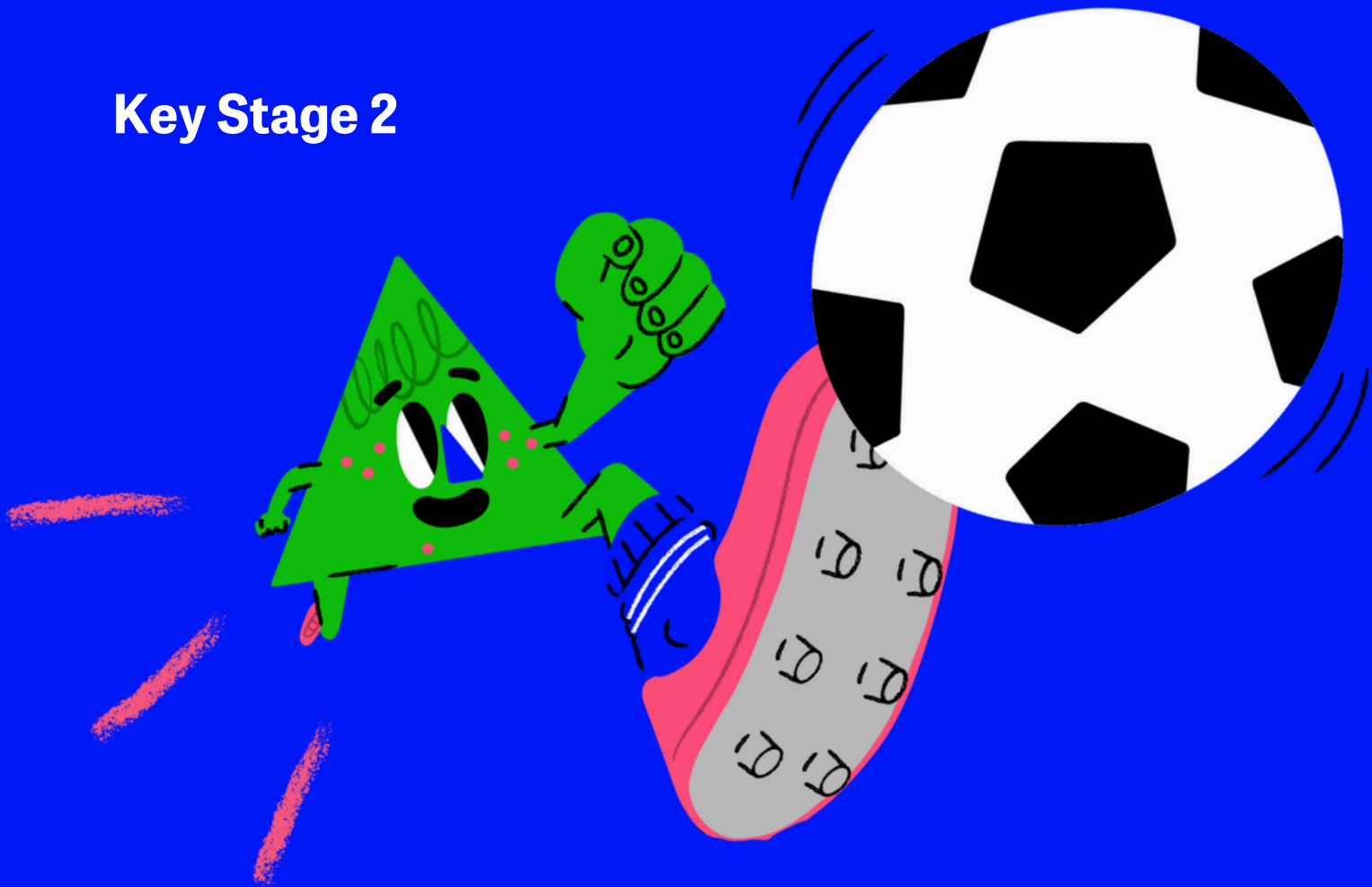


BEYOND GENDER STEREOTYPES

TEACHER GUIDANCE

Key Stage 2



Beyond Gender
Stereotypes

a curriculum by

GLOBAL
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Lifting
Limits

The
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Introduction

The Beyond Gender Stereotypes resource has been written to support primary schools to teach about restrictive or limiting gender stereotypes, and to encourage children, whatever their gender, to behave in gender inclusive and equitable ways.

This resource provides opportunities to teach safeguarding, including the concepts of stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination and equality ([Appendix 1](#)). It also supports schools' statutory duty to teach Relationships Education, including about respectful relationships and caring friendships ([Appendix 2](#)). Designed to be taught through the school subject of PSHE education, these lessons meet a number of learning opportunities as outlined in the Programme of Study for PSHE education ([Appendix 3](#)).

These lessons have been designed to be fully consistent with RSHE statutory guidance applicable until 31st August 2026. From September 2026, schools will need to follow this new statutory guidance: [RSHE statutory guidance \(July 2025\)](#).

This resource is part of [The Children's Society's Lifting Limits programme](#), and of the [Global Boyhood Initiative](#), coordinated by [Equimundo](#) and funded in the UK by Cummins Inc. in partnership with GlobalGiving.

About the organisations

The Children's Society is a UK charity working to transform the hopes and happiness of young people facing abuse, exploitation and neglect. We support them through their most serious life challenges and we campaign tirelessly for the big social changes that will improve the lives of those who need hope most. Our Lifting Limits programme offers a comprehensive, evidence-based programme of training, resources, networking opportunities and ongoing support to help schools promote gender equality and challenge limiting gender stereotypes. This approach has been independently evaluated in this [report](#).

Equimundo is a US-based non-profit organisation dedicated to achieving gender equality and social justice by transforming intergenerational patterns of harm and promoting care, empathy, and accountability among boys and men throughout their lives. Equimundo has been developing and training partners to implement [evidence-based programmes](#) with adults, adolescents and children to drive positive societal change for over two decades.

The Global Boyhood Initiative is designed to support boys aged 4 to 13 and the adults in their lives with the resources they need to raise, teach, coach and set an example for boys to become men who embrace healthy masculinity and gender equality.

Why teach about gender stereotypes?

A gender stereotype is a widely held, over-simplified idea of a person or group of people, based on their gender. Gender stereotyping has negative effects on all children.* It perpetuates gender inequality, undermines healthy ways of expressing emotions and establishing relationships, and limits children's ability to achieve their full potential. Challenging limiting gender stereotypes, and promoting gender equality, benefits boys as well as girls: it helps children, whatever their gender, lead happier and healthier lives. For example, when boys break free from limiting stereotypes,

* See, for example, the Fawcett Society literature review in 2019, [Gender Stereotypes in Early Childhood](#); and Equimundo's 2017 report about being a young man in the UK, US and Mexico, [The Man Box](#).

they are much more likely to invest in their own social, emotional and mental health - in short to care for themselves - whilst also developing a stronger sense of self and a greater likelihood to care for others.

Gender stereotypes are internalised early in childhood but childhood is also an opportunity when young people can effectively challenge these. With evidence-based lessons and appropriate tools, teachers and schools can play a positive role in promoting positive and equitable gender norms.

The aims of this resource are for pupils to develop the essential knowledge, skills and attributes to recognise and challenge gender stereotypes, develop healthy relationships and ways of expressing emotions, and thrive in the world in which they live ([Appendix 4](#)).

The Lessons

This resource for key stage 2 pupils provides two short units of learning for pupils in Year 3/4 and Year 5/6. The lessons are written to follow on progressively and should not be taught as one-off or stand-alone lessons. There are three lessons for pupils in lower key stage 2 and four lessons for upper key stage 2. See curriculum overview (below) for learning objectives and outcomes.

Curriculum Overview

Year 3/4

PSHE education learning objectives and outcomes for pupils:



Lesson 1: Exploring gender stereotypes

Pupils learn what is meant by gender stereotypes.

Pupils will be able to:

- recognise what is meant by gender stereotype.
- identify some examples of gender stereotypes.
- explain how gender stereotypes might influence how someone thinks or behaves.

Lesson 2: Learning not to feel limited by gender stereotypes (friendship and feelings)

Pupils learn to identify if gender stereotypes are influencing family, friendships or play.

Pupils will be able to:

- recognise gender stereotypes.
- explain how to challenge gender stereotypes.
- ask for help and support to challenge gender stereotypes.

Lesson 3: Challenging gender stereotypes and supporting gender equality

Pupils learn how to challenge gender stereotypes in friendships and play.

Pupils will be able to:

- identify the qualities of friendship.
- explain what they can do to challenge gender stereotypes.
- give examples of how to change words and phrases so they are not gender stereotyped.

Curriculum Overview

Year 5/6

PSHE education learning objectives and outcomes for pupils:



Lesson 1: Exploring gender stereotypes

Pupils learn how gender stereotypes can be reinforced as we grow and change.

Pupils will be able to:

- describe gender stereotypes.
- explain how gender stereotypes can be reinforced as we grow and change (including through online targeting).
- explain how gender stereotypes might affect people.

Lesson 2: Learning not to feel limited by gender stereotypes (friendship and feelings)

Pupils learn about how gender stereotypes might influence friendships and feelings.

Pupils will be able to:

- explain how people can feel pressure from gender stereotypes.
- recognise that gender stereotypes can stop them from sharing their feelings honestly.
- explain ways to overcome gender stereotypes.

Lesson 3: Understanding how gender stereotypes can influence aspirations and careers

Pupils learn that a person's career aspirations should not be limited by gender stereotypes.

Pupils will be able to:

- explain how stereotypes could influence the careers or jobs people choose.
- recognise the need for gender equality for career and job opportunities.
- identify the skills required for different careers or jobs, and how they can be developed by people of any gender.

Lesson 4: Challenging gender stereotypes and supporting gender equality

Pupils learn how gender stereotyping can lead to discrimination.

Pupils will be able to:

- explain how gender stereotypes can lead to prejudice and discrimination.
- recognise how gender discrimination has been challenged in the past and today.
- identify ways to address gender discrimination.

Effective teaching principles

To ensure these lessons are taught safely and effectively, the following principles must be followed:

PSHE curriculum

- These lessons are designed to be embedded within the school PSHE education curriculum framework. They are best placed when pupils are learning about friendships, rights and responsibilities, aspirations and careers, identity, growing up and changing, or mental health and emotional wellbeing. PSHE Leads and teachers will need to decide the most appropriate year group in which to teach the lessons, and when in the academic year is best; this will depend on the school PSHE education curriculum design and pupil needs.

Teachers

- Lessons have been designed for mainstream schools, including single sex and mixed sex schools, to be facilitated by the class teacher, who is a trained professional, who usually teaches the PSHE education curriculum, who knows the pupils well, and who has built up a positive classroom ethos alongside the pupils.
- The teacher needs to be competent, and feel confident to handle discussions with potentially sensitive and possibly controversial themes with the pupils in their class. Likewise, the pupils should be used to regular PSHE education lessons, and able to discuss topical issues. There is guidance below about ways to set a positive classroom ethos.
- Lesson delivery may be supported by other trained professionals, such as specialists in gender equality.
- Other staff or adult volunteers participating in the lessons should be introduced to the lesson aims and briefed on lesson content, before teaching commences.
- Ideally all staff involved should have received training in the effective delivery of PSHE education and specifically on how to teach about gender stereotypes and equality.

Staff training

Free online training modules to support the delivery of these lessons are available for curriculum leaders, teachers and support staff.

It is important that educators have the opportunity to develop their own knowledge and understanding, and have an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and professional values, as these will influence the quality of content delivery, facilitation and ultimately, the effectiveness of the lessons in achieving learning outcomes. Therefore, we strongly advise that these interactive modules are completed as part of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and before teaching the lesson plans.

Creating a positive learning environment

It is important that these lessons are delivered with care and sensitivity. Teachers will need to ensure a positive learning environment is established before, and maintained during, the delivery of the lessons.

Before teaching, to help ensure pupils are ready for learning, teachers may want to practice an activity to help calm and centre pupils, such as a warm-up game, ice-breaker, meditation or mindful movement activity.

All participants should feel they are able to explore the issues within a shared equal space. Teachers should be aware of, and employ, safe practice for teaching PSHE education, including the following:

Ground rules

Ground rules should be developed before teaching the lessons. These should be referred to throughout the lessons when required, and act as a shared class agreement between staff and pupils regarding behaviour expectations, and to highlight that these lessons are a time when everyone in the classroom will be able to reflect and build knowledge and skills together. These lessons should be taught to pupils who are used to being taught PSHE education, so learning in this way should not be something new or unfamiliar.

Included should be statements about:

- How the participants (adults and pupils) will talk and listen to each other.
- How respect will be given to each other in the classroom, other people outside of the classroom, and the subject matter.
- Language and terminology.
- Accepting that people can have different views and opinions.
- The right to pass.
- Privacy and confidentiality.
- The importance of help-seeking.

How ground rules are written is up to the teacher and pupils; they might be a list of do's / don'ts; what the teacher/pupils will give and what they expect to get back in return; or statements about how everyone included in the lessons should feel. Example ground rules might include:

- Allow everyone to have a chance to speak. Listen to everybody's thoughts and ideas.
- Regard the issues we are discussing as serious and important.
- Use words that show we respect and value each other.
- Accept that people will have different views and opinions.
- Understand we have the 'right to pass' if a question is 'personalised'.
- Keep privacy – make sure experiences described are anonymous.
- Ask for help, advice or support from a trusted adult if needed.

Distancing strategies

Distancing is important so that pupils do not feel guilt or shame about current or past behaviour. Distancing strategies allow pupils to consider the issue, without it being about them. Pupils are enabled to 'look at a situation from the sidelines', or 'through a window'- they view situations through the experiences of a given character, rather than being placed in the situation themselves.

This resource has been developed with distancing strategies in mind, so includes activities with fictional case studies and scenarios.

Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own experiences, but should be discouraged from sharing personalised stories and experiences in a whole class setting. One technique to help them to depersonalise stories is to suggest they use sentences starters like... 'a situation I heard about...' / 'someone I know...' / 'something that happens sometimes is...'

If pupils are asked to reflect and comment on their own personal experiences, they could write these in their PSHE education books or journals, to be shared with the teacher, rather than being expected to share them with other pupils.

Managing pupils' questions

Questions should be welcomed and valued during and after the lessons. Teachers should be mindful about how they react and respond to pupils' questions, accepting each question as valid and genuine without judgement.

Some positive strategies for managing difficult questions include:

- Letting the pupil know their question has been 'heard' – nod, comment 'that's an interesting question,' with an attitude of curiosity, not judgement.
- Asking the question back to the pupils, or if appropriate to the whole class, to find out what they think before responding.
- Taking time to answer, especially if teachers are unsure how to answer, or how best to answer. Teachers can write the question down and tell the pupil they will come back to it, next lesson or another time. In the meantime, they should seek advice from colleagues or senior leaders.
- Utilising the 'right to pass' if pupils ask a personal question that asks someone to share something about their private life.

A couple of good strategies for collecting pupils' questions are:

- **Question park:**
 - Teachers may find it useful to display a 'park-it-board' where pupils' questions can be written on to a piece of flipchart paper, or sticky-note and then stuck on the flipchart paper, 'parked', if it is not an appropriate time to focus on that particular question during the lesson. Pupils may want to add to the park-it-board independently at other times.
- **Anonymous questions box:**
 - It is good practice to enable pupils time to reflect on the topic and ask any questions they have, either at an appropriate moment in the lesson, or after at another time in the school day. Ask pupils to (anonymously) write their question on to a piece of paper. So that all the pupils write something, if they don't have a question, they can just write their teacher a message. Teachers can collect the pupils' questions or messages in a box or envelope, read through the questions after the lesson and alongside colleagues discuss which to address, and how, in subsequent lessons.

Encouraging open discussion

Facilitators should feel able and confident to discuss the issues in a calm and open manner. They

should encourage discussion from pupils, rather than hearing themselves speak for the majority of the lesson. When planning lessons, teachers should be aware of building in adequate time for discussion, and recognise that whilst the lesson should remain structured, sometimes there is value in allowing discussions to continue longer than initially planned. If needed, additional sessions for follow-up discussions may be required. The following suggestions can help keep conversations active and deepen pupils' learning whilst enabling them to feel supported.

- **Questions to encourage critical thinking**

- Why do you think that?
- Where do those ideas come from?
- What do you think about this?
- How do you feel about that?
- What questions do you have about this?
- I wonder if doing it this way is...
- Should we think about this in a different way?

- **Respectful challenging**

- That's an interesting idea, but how about this?
- Can you explain a bit more so I can understand?
- I'm not sure about that, but I am interested to hear why you think that?
- I understand what you are saying, but I don't quite agree...
- I see what you mean, but...
- I don't think you should be saying or doing that because...

- **Supportive learning**

- I really like the way you are...
- Tell me more about...
- I hear you. So, I think what you are saying is...
- How can we put our ideas together?
- It's ok to change your mind.
- It's ok not to know all the answers.

Pupils can also be encouraged to use these questions and sentence starters in their discussions with each other. Helping pupils to respectfully challenge views they don't agree with whilst managing their feelings about this, is an important skill that should be developed over time, as pupils experience these lessons. By giving them this language and modelling how to respond when alternative viewpoints are raised, pupils learn to be assertive without being aggressive.

Managing pupils' experiences and responses

It is important that teachers both acknowledge and value the wide range of experiences that it is likely pupils will bring to the lessons, even for pupils in the same class. For some, for example, scenarios will be very familiar and for others this may be an entirely new concept that they have never considered before. Using the sentence starters above will help guide the class discussions and help pupils become more reflective learners.

There may be concerns that highlighting these issues may cause pupils to start behaving in a more, not less, stereotyped way, as it has alerted them to an issue or way of thinking that they had not thought about or have no experience of. Through subjects like PSHE education, young people develop an awareness of the world they are growing up in, which can help them to navigate situations successfully both now and in the future. It is important for pupils to know that, just

because it is not in their experience, it does not mean that the issue did not exist in the past, or does not exist for some people now. Pupils also need opportunities to learn and understand that people have different views and opinions, and that these may not mirror their own viewpoint. This is part of having an open and reflective learning classroom, and this ethos needs to be instilled, ultimately by the class teacher or facilitator.

This guide to [Challenging Questions Children Might Ask](#) offers suggestions on how teachers could respond to some questions that children might ask. In answering all questions raised by pupils, it is important to respond consistently with PSHE Guidelines and your school's policies.

Signposting

Signposting support during and after the lessons will encourage early help seeking. It is essential that pupils are made aware what to do, should they wish to raise concerns or discuss incidents. Pupils should be informed about what might happen next, if they do seek support. The [Circles of support resource](#) (page 19) can be used to help direct pupils to help and advice.

- It is very important that pupils know who they can report to in school, and how to do this.
- Outside of school, pupils should be encouraged to talk to their parents or carers in the first instance. They may also have a trusted relative or close family friend, whom they know well and feel comfortable and secure with.
- It is also good practice, where possible, to inform pupils of agencies and support outside of school - providing exact website links will guard against unsafe searches.

There is a blank version of [Circles of support](#) included in this resource (page 20), as pupils may appreciate the opportunity to develop their own version. The people pupils choose to include will vary according to their individual sense of their trusted adults.

Inclusion and sensitivities

The lessons in this resource allow pupils to draw on their own, and others' experiences in a safe way, whilst enabling them to become more critically aware of the limiting effects of gender stereotypes on all people, whatever their gender. All children are likely to experience expectations about their behaviour, attributes or roles, based on gender stereotypes. The lessons have been written to be inclusive, relevant and reflective of pupils' diverse backgrounds and lived experiences.

Teaching should be sensitive to the communities that individual schools serve, and recognise that gender and gender stereotypes may play a role in informing gendered attitudes - but without making assumptions about attitudes across a given community. Further, cultural sensitivities must not be seen as justification for gender inequalities. Additional guidance and suggestions for working with families are provided in the online training modules.

This resource does not teach directly about gender identity or encourage pupils to question their assigned biological sex or gender, but rather to be accepting and non-judgemental of all people, whatever their gender identity.

There may be pupils in the class who identify as non-binary and staff should be aware that pupils

may be at different stages in thinking about their gender identity, including that for some 'non-binary' may not (or not yet) be a fixed identity but part of an ongoing process. In some lessons, we have included scenarios designed to be relatable for non-binary children, which schools can choose to include if they want to - these are clearly demarcated within the lesson plans. Teachers should have due regard to national guidance and refer to school policies when necessary.

Intersectionality

Throughout the resource, it is recognised that many different factors contribute to a person's identity and influence their experiences. These factors intersect, and this is known as 'intersectionality'.*

Discrimination** can be based on a number of factors or characteristics - and the effects of discrimination can be compounded where multiple factors intersect. Gender is one of these factors, alongside others such as a person's ethnicity, disability, age and social class. These diverse characteristics (for example, of Black and white teenage boys)*** can create unique different experiences of the world and of discrimination. This can also contribute to more serious or more nuanced disadvantage and lack of equal opportunity.

When discussing gender-based discrimination, it is also important to reflect about intersectionality. Whilst primary school pupils do not necessarily need to know the term 'intersectionality', they can begin to get an understanding of how different factors intersect.

Where relevant, we have included guidance for teachers and input directly to pupils to highlight intersectionality, at an age-appropriate level. We encourage teachers to raise this issue in discussion with pupils. Pupils may also raise points and want to talk more about the experiences of different people and groups. The extent to which teachers may want to explore the issues associated with intersectionality will depend on the pupils' levels and understanding, the context of the school, and the time available.

In order for pupils to begin to have an understanding of intersectionality, it is recommended that they have already been taught lessons about the different factors that make up a person's identity (gender being one such factor), before delivering these lessons, although this is not a prerequisite for delivering these lessons. Learning about other issues related to discrimination (such as racism), would also complement these lessons. For suggested resources, please see www.pshe-association.org.uk.

Vocabulary and terminology

Throughout the resource, key terms, such as male/female, boy/girl, man/woman, masculine/feminine are predominately used to describe gender. The phrase 'all people, whatever their gender' has also been used when collectively describing gender.

Beyond Gender Stereotypes does not directly teach children about biological sex. However, in

* 'Intersectionality' is a term first coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, Professor of Law at the University of California, <https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/books/255/>. Here is a [short video](#) explaining the term.

** See this BBC KS2 resource [What is Discrimination?](#) for more information.

*** In these resources, we follow the practice in the UK of capitalizing "Black" when referring to ethnic groups (adopted eg by the National Education Union in its [Framework for developing an anti-racist approach](#)). This acknowledges "Black" as a racial and cultural identity, and shows respect for the identity and experiences of Black people.

order to teach effectively about gender stereotypes, it is important for teachers to have an understanding about what biological sex is, and the relationship between that and gender.

Biological sex (also known as sex assigned at birth) refers to the physiological characteristics each of us is born with, such as chromosomes, hormones, and reproductive organs. Gender, on the other hand, refers to the expectations a society has about the behaviour, attributes and roles seen as appropriate for people based on their perceived biological sex – whether they are a boy/girl or man/woman. Gender is a social construct and can change from society to society and over time. How individual people experience and express their gender (through behaviour, clothing, interests etc) can also vary. An individual person may outwardly express their gender in ways which may or may not conform to the gender expectations of their society. In summary, biological sex is based on physical characteristics, while gender is a social construct that varies across societies and cultures and can change over time. It's important to distinguish between the two.

A glossary for educators is included in this resource which can also be used to support pupils' understanding of new vocabulary.

Safeguarding

These lessons must be delivered within the framework of school policies on teaching and learning, relationships education, safeguarding and confidentiality.

Students vulnerable to distress from lesson content

If staff are aware of this possibility for particular pupils, teachers should liaise with the school pastoral team to support in class, or for example, to provide an 'exit pass' should the pupil find the lesson content too uncomfortable to manage safely.

Disclosures

During or following the lessons, pupils may choose to disclose situations they are currently experiencing, or have experienced previously. It is helpful if teaching staff can make themselves available at the end of the lessons should individual pupils wish to talk, or ask for further help and advice.

Serious concerns

When teaching staff have concerns about pupil welfare, this must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, following the school child protection procedures.

The Lesson Plans

Lesson plans include learning objectives and outcomes, and a structured plan for teachers to follow. We recognize that teachers may adapt lessons to reflect the needs and context of their classes. However, we encourage teachers to keep the learning objective and outcomes of each session as they are, to support the fidelity and impact of the programme. There is also a lesson summary which can be used in the classroom as an 'at-a-glance' guide. The detailed lesson plans provide additional guidance for teachers such as: how to set up or take feedback on the learning activities, possible responses from pupils, and further information to support teaching.

Accompanying PowerPoint (PPT) presentations help guide the teacher and pupils through the lessons. In the 'Notes' section of the PPT, there are instructions for how to carry out the learning

activities. However, for full explanations and further information, teachers should refer to the detailed lesson plans. Additional resources are also provided, which can be printed and copied.

Activities have been designed to promote discussion and engage pupils' interest through a variety of teaching methods. It is useful to enable pupils to work in a range of different groupings, so they can experience working with different peers, share and listen to different viewpoints. We recommend mixed gender groups where possible. Teachers will need to adapt the lessons according to the needs of pupils within the class, which may include altering timings if the teacher chooses to spend longer on a particular activity or discussion point.

In some classes, pupils will have very different levels of awareness and attitudes about gender stereotypes. Some children may not hold or be aware of gender stereotyped views, other children may hold such views strongly, while others may say what they think others around them want to hear. The online training course offers advice for school staff about how to be sensitive to these different points of view, and how to respond to challenging questions that pupils might ask.

The lesson plan timings are provided as a guide only. Teachers will need to consider the time they have available and the pupils' learning needs, which may mean adapting the lessons - for example teaching the lesson over two sessions if their timetable does not allow 60 minutes sessions for PSHE education, or if pupils need longer on some activities than others. Lessons may be taught on a weekly or bi-weekly basis - again this will depend on how the school has chosen to timetable PSHE education.

It is not recommended that all the lessons are taught over the course of one week, because delivering the lesson over a longer period (eg across one term) gives more opportunities for reflection and reinforcing learning. But in schools where this is the model for teaching PSHE education, teachers should follow their school model. (See PSHE Association guidance for teaching for further explanation).

recommend mixed gender groups where possible. Teachers will need to adapt the lessons according to the needs of pupils within the class, which may include altering timings if the teacher chooses to spend longer on a particular activity or discussion point.

Support / Extension

Teachers are best placed to adapt the lesson plan to meet the needs of their class and individual pupils but some suggestions for how main activities can be adapted are given. Suggestions for extension activities are provided for each lesson, for pupils who complete tasks more quickly, or for teachers who want to extend the lesson further.

Assessment

Baseline assessment

It is good practice to establish students' starting points; gaining a sense of the knowledge, skills and attitudes, pupils are bringing into the classroom, before delivering the lessons. The lessons include activities to support the teacher to do so, usually in the introductory activities. Teacher notes provide further guidance explaining that teachers should aim not to prompt pupils' ideas too much at these points.

Summative assessment - lesson plenaries

Each lesson includes a plenary that allows time to sum up the main teaching and learning points. Sentence starters have been provided which give a simple structure for pupils to reflect on their learning. These have been deliberately written to allow for open-ended responses and can provide rich feedback on what pupils are taking away from the lesson. Teachers might choose to ask pupils to record their response in their PSHE education exercise books, journals, on a sticky-note; to say their sentence aloud to a partner, group or the whole class; or just to reflect for themselves.

Whilst we aim for all pupils to meet and achieve the learning outcomes, teachers need to be realistic about the learning expectations of pupils in the class, and potentially to re-address learning outcomes not met in lessons at a future date if need be. By keeping a record of pupils' assessment activities, monitoring of individuals and groups can help teachers and PSHE education subject leaders to consider the starting point for pupils when they revisit this topic later in key stage 2, or refer on to secondary school.

Summative assessment – end-of-unit

At the end of each unit of learning, as part of the plenary, end-point assessment activities have been included which will provide an individual reflection of learning. This may include a reconfirmation, change or development in knowledge, skills and attitudes, and can also highlight future learning needs.

It is important to note that participation in these lessons will not necessarily lead to an immediate transformation of pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships. This is a long and complex process but these lessons are an important gateway to longer term change in individual awareness behaviour and societal level change. Evidence of similar programmes have shown changes in young people's attitudes and behaviour.*

Equally it is important to value and celebrate a confirmation or reconfirmation of positive views around these issues. For example, if pupils explain they don't agree with gender stereotypes at the beginning of the lessons, and still feel the same after having been taught the lessons, teachers should acknowledge that positive learning outcomes have been reinforced. They could do this perhaps by saying something along the lines of 'That's great, we have people in this class who are proud to have an equal and inclusive classroom, and who would not allow gender stereotypes to happen here. We have learned that they can and do exist elsewhere, but not here – and that's a great thing!' That being said, there are instances where teachers have reported changes in pupils' behaviour and support for challenging gender stereotypes when they arise in everyday situations. Again, this should be recognised, valued and celebrated by school staff, for example saying something like 'I really like the way you chose your language carefully there. That felt really

* [Equimundo, Program H: A review of the evidence](#)

inclusive and helps to challenge gender stereotypes', or 'It's great to see girls and boys choosing all types of activities this afternoon!'

A whole school approach

These lessons should reflect and be supported by a whole school approach to promoting gender equality. When choosing to use these lesson plans, it is our hope that teachers will reflect on their classroom practice, and that schools will be inspired to evaluate their ethos and environment to ensure it is reflective of the values being taught in the PSHE education lessons. The online training modules are specifically designed to support this.

Staff should be given the opportunity to consider their own attitudes and assumptions about gender. School leaders should aim to create a climate where staff feel able to explore their own beliefs without feeling judged, but also respectfully challenge their own or others' professional behaviour if and when required. Developing professional codes of conduct regarding the use of language, descriptions of gender roles and behaviour expectations could be part of whole school development. To support professional reflection and a whole-school approach to gender equality, free online modules are available for all school staff.

Embedding the learning throughout the school year

It is important not to leave the learning from the lessons as a 'half-term' topic, but instead to revisit the learning themes throughout the year. Opportunities may arise via topics in other subjects, but also in everyday scenarios that arise in the life of the classroom. Use these as 'teachable moments' to reflect on previous learning. For example, there may be a news story the class are discussing, or perhaps an incident has occurred in the playground. These are excellent times for reflective learning, where you can refer back to the lessons, and embed the learning through real-life moments. National or charity awareness days are also a good opportunity, such as International Women's Day and International Men's Day, when awareness can be highlighted through school events or assemblies.

Additional and cross-curricular activities

Included in the resource are also suggestions for linking the PSHE education lesson content to other curriculum subjects, including English, History and citizenship. When embedding these lessons in their curriculum, teachers and school leaders can choose to include these suggestions as part of a cross-curricular approach to teaching about gender equality ([Appendix 5](#)).

Parents and carers

We actively encourage school partnership with parents and carers. For ideas of how to include parents and carers in their children's learning and encourage partnership learning, we have listed some ideas for home-school activities ([Appendix 6](#)). We have developed an Engaging with Parents and Carers guide for schools and teachers to use to build support for and engagement with the lessons, and to promote the lesson objectives.

We recognise that school leaders know their community best, and know ways of working with their parent community that work well. This will differ from school to school. For example, in one school a brief sentence in a curriculum booklet or a school newsletter may be all that is required, but in others, parents may prefer to be invited to an information session or workshop to explore the lesson content.

As these lessons are designed to be part of the overall PSHE education curriculum and link to statutory requirements for teaching about stereotypes, they should be viewed as part and parcel of the curriculum, and not necessarily anything 'special or different'. However, for some schools, perhaps especially the first time these lessons are delivered, teachers and school leaders will need to work more closely with their parent community to both promote and support the lesson content. Schools should work within statutory guidelines for Relationships and Health Education, and engaging with parents.*

There is more information and support about how to engage with parents and carers in the "Supporting Families" module of the Beyond Gender Stereotypes online training course.

Further information for school leaders and teachers

- 'We can all be who we want to be': A whole school approach to challenging gender stereotyping and promoting gender equality in primary schools, [Independent Evaluation of the Lifting Limits Pilot Year 2018-2019](#)
- [Unlimited Potential: Report on the Commission on Gender Stereotypes in Early Childhood](#), The Fawcett Society, 2020
- [Addressing misogyny, toxic masculinity and social media influence through PSHE education](#), PSHE Association, 2023

Training and continuing professional development

- For information and resources from the Global Boyhood Initiative: <https://www.boyhoodinitiative.org/>
- For teacher and school-based training on gender equality: [Lifting Limits' Gender Equality in Schools Programme](#)
- For training and advice about teaching PSHE education: www.pshe-association.org.uk
- Beyond Gender Stereotypes – Teacher Overviews - see **Appendix 7 (Year 3/4)** and **Appendix 8 (Year 5/6)** - designed for teachers, to be used in training, or to support classroom planning, these include an overview of learning objectives and outcomes, learning activities and resources.

* [Parental Engagement on Relationships Education, 2019](#)

Key terms and definitions used in the lessons

Feminine / Femininities

The behaviour, characteristics and roles that society associates with girls and women. These expectations can vary from society to society and change over time.

Gender:

- **Definition for adult professionals:**

The behaviour, attributes and roles that society thinks are appropriate for boys and girls, men and women based on their perceived biological sex. Gender is a social construct which varies from society to society and can change over time.

- **Definition for pupils:**

The way boys and girls, and men and women, are expected to behave and be like (their characteristics), according to the society in which they live.

Gender discrimination

When someone is treated unfairly because of their gender.

Gender equality

The idea that all people, whatever their gender, should be treated fairly and have equal rights and opportunities in all areas of life.

Gender stereotype

A widely held, over-simplified idea of a person, or group of people, based on their gender.

Masculine/masculinities

The behaviour, characteristics and roles that society associates with boys and men. These expectations can vary from society to society and change over time.

Non-gendered

Not associated with any particular gender.

Prejudice

A negative judgement, opinion of, or feeling towards, a person or group of people (based on a fixed set of ideas about the characteristics of that group of people).

Society

A group of individuals in a social community, it includes the people and institutions around us.

Other terms and definitions

The following concepts are not taught in these lessons. However, definitions of them have been included here to support teachers' and pupils' understanding, in case the concepts are mentioned by pupils. It is important to refer to national guidance and school policies before any of these concepts are discussed with pupils.

Gender expression

How people choose to express or show their gender identity.

Gender identity

A person's sense of their own gender. It can be the same as or different from the biological sex they were assigned at birth. It includes the inside feeling of being a boy/man, a girl/woman, or not exclusively either. It is also about how people want society to see them.

Gender non-conforming

A term used to describe someone whose personal gender expression does not conform to society's expectations of them based on their sex.

Gender questioning

A term used to describe someone who may be unsure or concerned about applying a label to their gender identity for various reasons.

It is important not to label a child as 'gender questioning' simply because they are exploring a range of behaviour, attributes and/or roles that may not conform to gendered expectations in our society. To do so may reinforce stereotypical expectations of what a boy or girl should be like or how they should behave.

LGBTQ+

An acronym that refers to people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning and more. Even though in this acronym they are referred to together, gender identity is not the same as sexuality. The '+' indicates that as understanding of gender and sexuality has developed over time, definitions have been updated. The '+' therefore encompasses and celebrates many different identities. There are other related acronyms that are also still in common use.

Non-binary

If someone identifies as non-binary in their gender, it means that they do not identify exclusively as male or female.*

Sex (or biological sex)

People are generally assigned male or female when they are born, according to their genitalia, hormones and chromosomes, and this is referred to as their sex (or biological sex).

Sex discrimination

When someone is treated unfairly because of their sex.

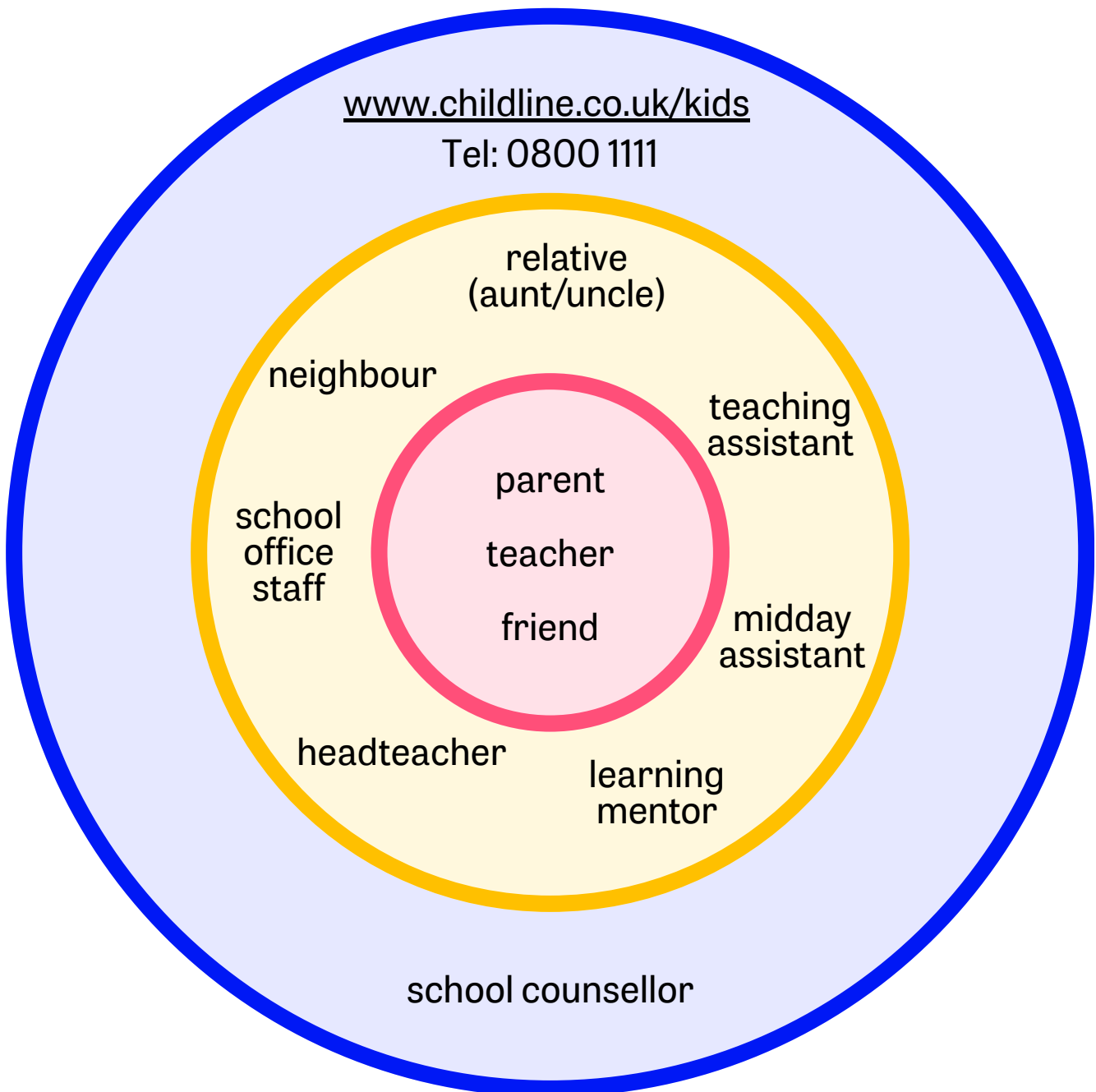
Transgender/Trans

An overarching term used to describe someone whose gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. A transgender man, for example, is someone who was assigned as female at birth but whose gender identity is male.

* In some lessons, scenarios that include people of non-binary gender identities have been provided. For schools who wish to include these, please refer to national guidance and school policies before discussion with pupils.

Circles of Support

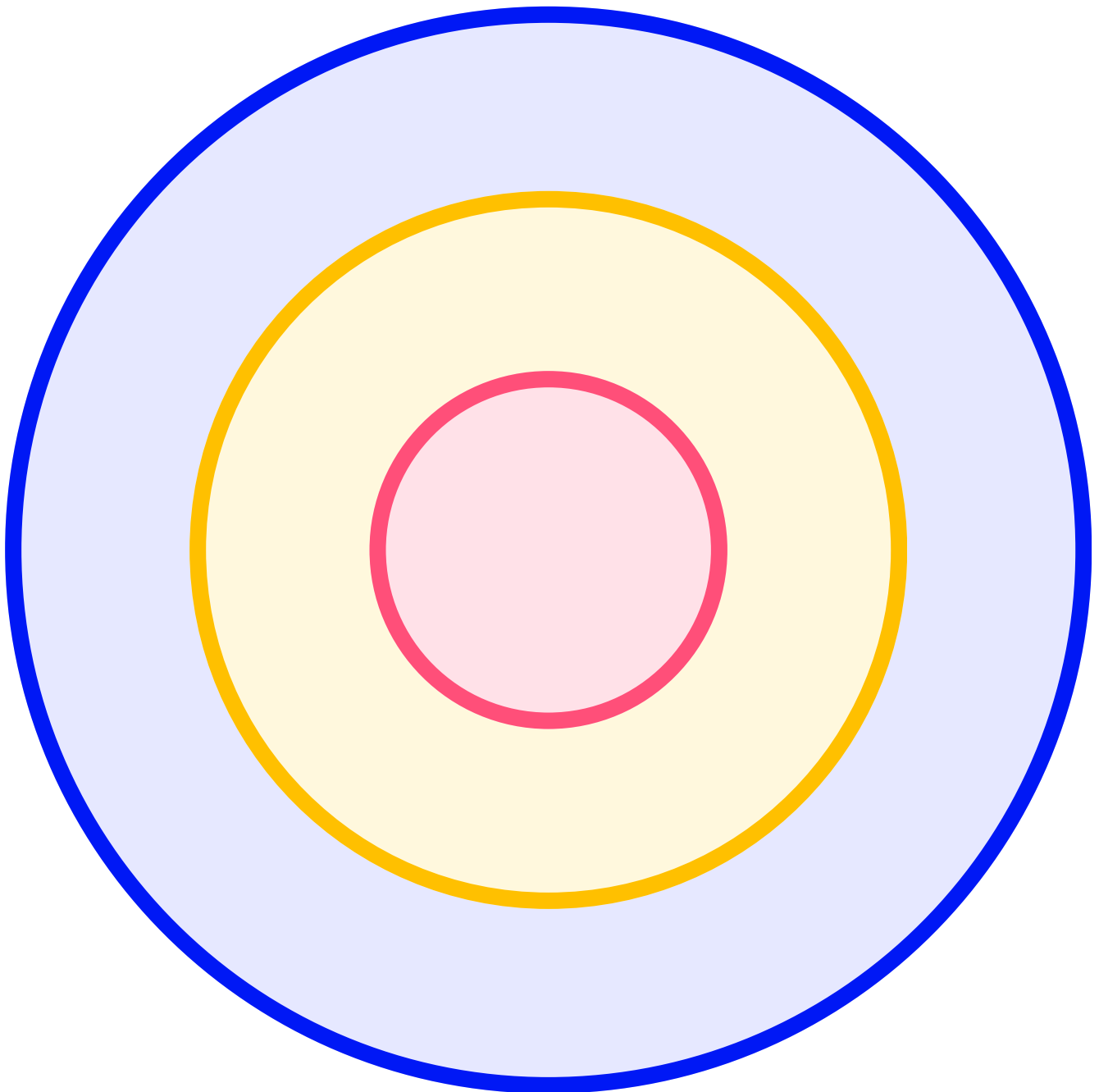
We all have people we can trust, who we feel comfortable and secure with, who will listen to us and be there if we need them. The inside circle is people we are closest to and can easily reach out to. The next circle is for people, we are not as close to, but are happy to talk to if needed. The outer circle is for people we don't know but can trust. Below is an example:



These people can help you with your worries – all you have to do is ask. If one of them is busy, don't give up, ask the next in line!

Circles of Support

We all have people we can trust, who we feel comfortable and secure with, who will listen to us and be there if we need them. The inside circle is people we are closest to and can easily reach out to. The next circle is for people, we are not as close to, but are happy to talk to if needed. The outer circle is for people we don't know but can trust. Below is a blank version for pupils to fill out as an additional activity.



These people can help you with your worries – all you have to do is ask. If one of them is busy, don't give up, ask the next in line!

Appendix 1: Beyond Gender Stereotypes and safeguarding

Safeguarding Policy – Teaching the ‘Beyond Gender Stereotypes’ lessons support the school duty to safeguard pupils. Relevant links from DfE guidance are provided below, or view the [full 2024 document](#).

Here is the [July 2025 version](#), pending publication of the final version which comes into force in September 2025. Relevant links are unchanged.

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE), updated 2024, 2025, DfE

Equality Act 2010:

86. ...governing bodies and proprietors should carefully consider how they are supporting their pupils and students with regard to particular protected characteristics – including disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and race.

87. Provisions within the Equality Act allow schools and colleges to take positive action, where it can be shown that it is proportionate, to deal with particular disadvantages affecting pupils or students with certain protected characteristics in order to meet their specific need.

90. The Public Sector Equality Duty (part of the Equality Act) places a general duty on schools and colleges to have, in the exercise of their functions, due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation (and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act), to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

Opportunities to teach safeguarding:

129. **In schools, relevant topics will be included within Relationships Education** (for all primary pupils), and Relationships and Sex Education (for all secondary pupils) **and Health Education** (for all primary and secondary pupils). In teaching these subjects schools must have regard to the statutory guidance.

130. **Schools and colleges play a crucial role in preventative education. Preventative education is most effective in the context of a whole school or college approach that prepares pupils and students for life in modern Britain and creates a culture of zero tolerance for sexism, misogyny/misandry, homophobia, biphobic and sexual violence/harassment.** The school/college will have a clear set of values and standards, upheld and demonstrated throughout all aspects of school/college life. These will be underpinned by the school/college's behaviour policy and pastoral support system, as well as by a planned programme of evidence based RSHE delivered in regularly timetabled lessons and reinforced throughout the whole curriculum. Such a programme should be fully inclusive and developed to be age and stage of development appropriate (especially when considering the needs of children with SEND and other vulnerabilities). **This program will tackle, at an age-appropriate stage, issues such as... stereotyping, prejudice and equality.**

Appendix 2: Beyond Gender Stereotypes and statutory RSHE

Teaching the 'Beyond Gender Stereotypes' lessons help fulfill the statutory requirement to teach Relationships and Health Education as detailed below, or view the [full document](#).

This Appendix relates to the statutory guidance applicable until 31st August 2026. From 1st September 2026, schools will need to follow this [new statutory guidance](#).

Statutory Relationships and Health Education (primary), updated 2021, DfE

Relationships Education

Respectful relationships

By the end of primary school, pupils should know:

- practical steps they can take in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful relationships.
- that in school and in wider society they can expect to be treated with respect by others, and that in turn they should show due respect to others, including those in positions of authority.
- **what a stereotype is, and how stereotypes can be unfair, negative or destructive.**

Caring friendships

By the end of primary school, pupils should know:

- how important friendships are in making us feel happy and secure, and how people choose and make friends.
- the characteristics of friendships, including mutual respect, truthfulness, trustworthiness, loyalty, kindness, generosity, trust, sharing interests and experiences and support with problems and difficulties.
- that healthy friendships are positive and welcoming towards others, and do not make others feel lonely or excluded.

Health Education

Internet safety and harms

By the end of primary school, pupils should know how to be a discerning consumer of information online including understanding that information, including that from search engines, is ranked, selected and targeted.

Appendix 3: Beyond Gender Stereotypes and PSHE education

Teaching the 'Beyond Gender Stereotypes' lessons will enable schools to meet the needs of pupils through the subject of PSHE education. Links to the PSHE Association Programme of Study are detailed below, or view the [full document](#).

PSHE education Programme of Study, 2020, PSHE Association, Key Stage 2

Health and Wellbeing (H)

Pupils learn...

Mental Health

H18. about everyday things that affect feelings and the importance of expressing feelings.

H20. strategies to respond to feelings, including intense or conflicting feelings; how to manage and respond to feelings appropriately and proportionately in different situations.

Ourselves, growing and changing

H25. about personal identity; what contributes to who we are (e.g. ethnicity, family, gender, faith, culture, hobbies, likes/dislikes).

Relationships (R)

Pupils learn...

Friendships

R10. about the importance of friendships; strategies for building positive friendships; how positive friendships support wellbeing.

R11. what constitutes a positive healthy friendship (e.g. mutual respect, trust, truthfulness, loyalty, kindness, generosity, sharing interests and experiences, support with problems and difficulties); that the same principles apply to online friendships as to face-to-face relationships.

R14. that healthy friendships make people feel included; recognise when others may feel lonely or excluded; strategies for how to include them.

R15. strategies for recognising and managing peer influence and a desire for peer approval in friendships; to recognise the effect of online actions on others.

R16. how friendships can change over time, about making new friends and the benefits of having different types of friends.

Relationships (R)

Managing hurtful behaviour and bullying

R20. strategies to respond to hurtful behaviour experienced or witnessed, offline and online (including teasing, name-calling, bullying, trolling, harassment or the deliberate excluding of others); how to report concerns and get support.

R21. about discrimination: what it means and how to challenge it.

Respecting self and others

R30. that personal behaviour can affect other people...

R34. how to discuss and debate topical issues, respect other people's point of view and constructively challenge those they disagree with.

Living in the Wider World (L)

Pupils learn...

Shared responsibilities

L4. the importance of having compassion towards others; shared responsibilities we all have for caring for other people and living things; how to show care and concern for others.

Communities

L9. about stereotypes; how they can negatively influence behaviours and attitudes towards others; strategies for challenging stereotypes.

L10. about prejudice; how to recognise behaviours/actions which discriminate against others; ways of responding to it if witnessed or experienced.

Media literacy and digital resilience

L14. about how information on the internet is ranked, selected and targeted at specific individuals and groups...

Economic wellbeing: aspirations, work and career

L27. about stereotypes in the workplace and that a person's career aspirations should not be limited by them.

L28. about what might influence people's decisions about a job or career (e.g. personal interests and values, family connections to certain trades or businesses, strengths and qualities, ways in which stereotypical assumptions can deter people from aspiring to certain jobs).

Appendix 4: Beyond Gender Stereotypes - Aims

For pupils to learn and develop the following knowledge, skills, attitudes and attributes:

Knowledge and understanding	Skills	Attitudes and attributes
• What is meant by gender stereotypes and how these become social norms or expectations. • That gender norms or expectations can change with time, or in different settings. • That gender stereotypes can be experienced and reinforced in a variety of ways. • Why gender stereotyping is limiting and restrictive. • Ways people have challenged gender stereotypes in the past, and continue to do so today. • The importance of friendship and that the qualities of friendship do not depend on gender. • What is meant by gender equality.	• To question what societal norms or expectations are gendered. • To recognise gender stereotypes in different aspects of everyday life. • To recognise when someone (including themselves) may be influenced by gender stereotypes (such as by what they say or how they behave). • To safely and appropriately challenge gender stereotypes in different ways. • To build positive, gender equitable friendships. • To communicate about gender stereotypes in different situations and with different people (parents/carers, teachers, peers etc). • To participate in social action projects that target gender inequality.	• Developing sense of self-worth and self-respect for their own gender identity and expression of self. • Respect for others, including people of different genders. • Empathy with people of all genders. • Acceptance that people of all genders have similar characteristics and can feel and express emotions in the same way as each other. • Confidence and assertiveness to challenge gender stereotypes. • Developing a sense of justice and desire to tackle inequality in relation to gender stereotypes. • Value and celebration of diversity, equity and inclusion in relation to gender.

In addition, the following behaviours may be observed:

- Recognising when self, or others, may be influenced by gender stereotypes.
- Expressing emotions in healthier ways, whilst having an awareness of how gender stereotypes might affect the expression of emotions.
- Choosing and participating in non-stereotypical activities in and out of school.
- Developing more equitable and inclusive relationships with pupils of all genders.
- Less differentiated friendships across genders (friends behave in similar ways, no matter their gender).
- Challenging gender stereotypes in safe and appropriate ways.

Appendix 5: Beyond Gender Stereotypes and cross-curricular learning

Teachers may want to link pupils' learning in PSHE education with other subjects, some suggestions are given below:

Year 3/4

English

- Re-write a traditional tale which reinforces gender stereotypes, challenge these by changing the character traits and/or situation in the story. Share the story with pupils in Key Stage 1.
- Create a comic strip of a playground situation where gender stereotypes are influencing someone's behaviour. Show a positive outcome to the situation by how other children react and stand up to the stereotyping.
- Read children's fiction about positive role models, the importance of being oneself, and expressing emotions.

Art and design

- Film or photograph an advert for a product made for children to challenge the gender stereotyped use of the product.

Enterprise

- When studying periods of history (e.g. Victorians), discuss the expected roles and behaviour of boys and girls in society, as well as role models who broke away from those expectations.
- Sell non-stereotypical items at the school fair (e.g. t-shirts, pencil cases, greeting cards).

Year 5/6

Citizenship

- Participate in a social action project to challenge gender stereotypes. For example, the school council could assess and evaluate school activities, uniform etc, then challenge school leaders appropriately to effect positive change.

English

- Read children's fiction about positive role models, the importance of being oneself, and expressing emotions.

Art and design

- Design a poster for boys, girls or for all children whatever their gender, encouraging them to express their emotions in healthy ways and display these around the school.

History

- Make a timeline of key events in the history of women's football, highlight challenges to discrimination. More information can be found at [TheFA](#).

Enterprise

- When studying periods of history (e.g. Victorians), discuss the expected roles and behaviour of boys and girls in society, as well as role models who broke away from those expectations.
- Develop a range of non-stereotypical items to be sold at the school fair (such as t-shirts, pencil cases, greeting cards).

Appendix 6: Beyond Gender Stereotypes - home-school activities

Suggestions for activities to support and encourage a positive partnership between home and school learning:

- Pupils can be encouraged to notice different gender stereotypes in everyday life and talk to someone about their views about them. Positive role models can also be discussed. This might include people who appear in local or national news stories who have achieved something that is not in line with stereotypical expectations for their gender.
- Ask pupils to have a look at different products in the supermarket or shops, on adverts, TV programmes, films and cartoons. Do they notice gender stereotypes? Are there non-gender stereotypical examples too?
- Read children's fiction about positive role models, the importance of being oneself, and expressing emotions.
- Parents and pupils can talk about how social expectations have changed over time - for example, the types of toys boys and girls played with then and now, or the types of activities boys and girls participated in then, and now. Parents or grandparents might talk about their own childhood experiences so pupils can compare how things have changed or stayed the same.
- Ask pupils to talk to their parents about the different careers, jobs and roles they chose and what skills or qualities they have that helps them do their role or roles, including recognising their role as parents as part of this.
- Pupils and parents might like copies of [Resource 2: Caring conversations guide](#) (Year 3/4 Lesson 2) to support conversations they might have at home, about concerns or worries they have about gender stereotyping, and/or bullying.
- Pupils and parents might also find these **Lifting Limits** resources useful:
 - [Gender Stereotype Detective Activities](#)
 - [Guide for families](#)
 - [Online Influencers and Primary-Aged Children](#)
- Pupils and parents might also find these resources from **Equimundo's Global Boyhood Initiative** useful:
 - [Conversation Starters for 7-9 yr olds](#)
 - [Conversation Starters for 10-13 yr olds](#)
 - [Breaking Free from Boyhood Stereotypes: Tips for Parents and Adults in Boys' Lives](#)
 - [10 Tips for How to Talk to Kids about Radical Influencers](#)

Appendix 7: Teachers' overview - Year 3/4

Beyond Gender Stereotypes - PSHE education lessons – Year 3/4

Lesson and title	Learning objectives and outcomes	Summary of learning activities	Resources
Lesson 1 Exploring gender stereotypes	Pupils learn what is meant by gender stereotypes. Pupils will be able to: • recognise what is meant by gender stereotype. • identify some examples of gender stereotypes. • explain how gender stereotypes might influence how someone thinks or behaves.	• Introduction: Introducing gender • Main activity 1: Gender stereotypes in films and books • Main activity 2: Product investigation • Main activity 3: Re-writing stereotypes • Plenary: Sentence starters	• PPT Y3/4 – Lesson 1 • Investigation record <i>(for pupils requiring support)</i>
Lesson 2 Learning not to feel limited by gender stereotypes (friendship and feelings)	Pupils learn to identify if gender stereotypes are influencing family, friendships or play. Pupils will be able to: • recognise gendered stereotypes. • explain how to challenge gender stereotypes. • ask for help and support to challenge gender stereotypes.	• Introduction: Gender stereotypes • Main activity 1: Stereotype scenarios • Main activity 2: Advising a character • Main activity 3: Caring conversations • Plenary: Sentence starter	• PPT Y3/4 – Lesson 2 • Gender stereotype scenarios • Caring conversations guide
Lesson 3 Challenging gender stereotypes and supporting gender equality	Pupils learn to challenge gender stereotypes in friendships and play. Pupils will be able to: • identify the qualities of friendships. • explain what they can do to challenge gender stereotypes. • give examples of how to change words and phrases so they are not gender stereotyped.	• Introduction: Shrinking ice-berg game • Main activity 1: Friendship zone of relevance • Main activity 2: Sentence starters • Main activity 3: Stereotyped statements • Plenary: Signpost support / My head, heart, hands	• PPT Y3/4 – Lesson 3 • Friendship qualities cards • Friendship qualities diagram • Playground scenarios

Appendix 8: Teachers' overview - Year 5/6

Beyond Gender Stereotypes - PSHE education lessons – Year 5/6

Lesson and title	Learning objectives and outcomes	Summary of learning activities	Resources
Lesson 1: Exploring gender stereotypes	Pupils learn how gender stereotypes can be reinforced as we grow and change. Pupils will be able to: - describe gender stereotypes. - explain how gender stereotypes can be reinforced as we grow and change (including through online targeting). - explain how gender stereotypes might affect people.	- Introduction: Act like a boy, Act like a girl - Main activity 1: Greetings cards stimulus - Main activity 2: Identifying gender stereotypes - Main activity 3: Targeted gender stereotyping - Plenary: Sentence starters	- PPT Y5/6 – Lesson 1 - Gender messages scenarios
Lesson 2: Learning not to feel limited by gender stereotypes (friendship and feelings)	Pupils learn about how stereotypes might influence friendships and feelings. Pupils will be able to: - explain how people can feel pressure from gender stereotypes. - recognise that gender stereotypes can stop them from sharing their feelings honestly. - explain ways to overcome gender stereotypes.	- Introduction: Stereotypical characteristics - Main activity 1: Gendered emotions - Main activity 2: Expressing emotions - Main activity 3: The human box - Plenary: Sentence starter	- PPT Y5/6 – Lesson 2 - Emotion scenarios
Lesson 3: Understanding how gender stereotypes can influence aspirations and careers	Pupils learn that a person's career aspirations should not be limited by gender stereotypes. Pupils will be able to: - explain how stereotypes could influence the careers or jobs people choose. - recognise the need for gender equality for career and job opportunities. - identify the skills required for different careers or jobs and they can be developed by people of any gender.	- Introduction: Sociology study analysis - Main activity 1: Occupations by gender - Main activity 2: Positive role models - Main activity 3: Gender skill match - Plenary: Sentence starters	- PPT Y5/6 – Lesson 3 - Gender and jobs worksheet - Role model cards - Skills descriptions - Skills record sheet

Beyond Gender Stereotypes - PSHE education lessons – Year 5/6

Lesson and title	Learning objectives and outcomes	Summary of learning activities	Resources
Lesson 4: Challenging gender stereotypes and supporting gender equality	Pupils learn how gender stereotyping can lead to discrimination. Pupils will be able to: • explain how gender stereotypes can lead to prejudice and discrimination. • recognise how gender discrimination has been challenged in the past. • identify ways to address gender discrimination.	• Introduction: Historical stimulus • Main activity 1: Prejudice and discrimination • Main activity 2: Agents of change • Main activity 3: Challenging discrimination • Plenary: Signpost support / Gender equal society statement	• PPT Y5/6 – Lesson 4 • Agents of change • Discrimination scenarios