RSE expectations: primary

Here's what all pupils should know by the end of primary school. These are the expectations set by the Department for Education. We've highlighted anything new from 1 September 2026 in **bold**.

Families and people who care for me

- That families are important for children growing up because they can give love, security and stability

- The characteristics of healthy family life, commitment to each other, including in times of difficulty, protection and care for children and other family members, the importance of spending time together and sharing each other's lives

- That other people's families, either in school or in the wider world, sometimes look different from their family, but that they should respect those differences and know that other children's families are also characterised by love and care

- That stable, caring relationships, which may be of different types, are at the heart of happy families, and are important for children's security as they grow up

- **That marriage and civil partnerships represents a formal and legally recognised commitment of two people to each other which is intended to be lifelong**

- How to recognise if family relationships are making them feel unhappy or unsafe, and how to seek help or advice from others if needed

Caring friendships

- How important friendships are in making us feel happy and secure, and how people choose and make friends

- **That healthy friendships are positive and welcoming towards others, and do not make others feel lonely or excluded. Pupils should learn skills for developing caring, kind friendships**

- That not every child will have the friends they would like at all times, that most people feel lonely sometimes, and that there is no shame in feeling lonely or talking about it

- The characteristics of friendships that lead to happiness and security, including mutual respect, honesty, trustworthiness, loyalty, kindness, generosity, trust, sharing interests and experiences, and support with problems and difficulties

- That most friendships have ups and downs, and that these can often be worked through so that the friendship is repaired or even strengthened

- **How to manage conflict, and that resorting to violence is never right**

- **How to recognise when a friendship is making them feel unhappy or uncomfortable, and how to get support when needed**

Respectful, kind relationships

- How to pay attention to the needs and preferences of others, including in families and friendships. Pupils should be encouraged to discuss how we balance the needs and wishes of different people in relationships and why this can be complicated

- The importance of setting and respecting healthy boundaries in relationships with friends, family, peers and adults

- How to communicate effectively and manage conflict with kindness and respect; how to be assertive and express needs and boundaries; how to manage feelings, including disappointment and frustration

- Pupils should have opportunities to discuss the difference between being assertive and being controlling, and conversely the difference between being kind to other people and neglecting your own needs

- That they can expect to be treated with respect by others, and the importance of respecting others, including those who are different (e.g. physically, in character, personality or backgrounds), or make different choices, or have different preferences or beliefs

- The importance of respecting others, even when they're very different from them (e.g. physically, in character, personality or backgrounds), or make different choices or have different preferences or beliefs

- Practical steps they can take and skills they can develop in a range of different contexts to improve or support their relationships

- The conventions of courtesy and manners

- The importance of self-respect and how this links to their own happiness. Pupils should have opportunities to think about how they foster their own self-esteem and build a strong sense of their own identity, including through developing skills and interests

- **The different types of bullying (including online bullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders (primarily reporting bullying to an adult), and how to get help**

- **What a stereotype is, how stereotypes can be unfair, negative, destructive or lead to bullying and how to challenge a stereotype**

- How to seek help when needed, including when they are concerned about violence, harm, or when they are unsure who to trust

Online safety and awareness

- That people should be respectful in online interactions, and that the same principles apply to online relationships as to face-to-face relationships, including where people are anonymous. For example, the importance of avoiding putting pressure on others to share information and images online, and strategies for resisting peer pressure

- **How to critically evaluate their online relationships and sources of information, including awareness of the risks associated with people they have never met. For example, that people sometimes behave differently online, including pretending to be someone else, or pretending to be a child, and that this can lead to dangerous situations. How to recognise harmful content or harmful contact, and how to report this**

- That there is a minimum age for joining social media sites (currently 13), which protects children from inappropriate content or unsafe contact with older social media users, who may be strangers, including other children and adults

- The importance of exercising caution about sharing any information about themselves online. Understanding the importance of privacy and location settings to protect information online

- **Online risks, including that any material provided online might be circulated, and that once a picture or words has been circulated there is no way of deleting it everywhere and no control over where it ends up**

- That the internet contains a lot of content that can be inappropriate and upsetting for children, and where to go for advice and support when they feel worried or concerned about something they have seen or engaged with online

Being safe

- **What sorts of boundaries are appropriate in friendships with peers and others (including online). This can include learning about boundaries in play and in negotiations about space, toys, books, resources etc.**

- **About the concept of privacy and the implications of it for both children and adults (including that it's not always right to keep secrets if they relate to being safe)**

- **That each person's body belongs to them, and the differences between appropriate and inappropriate/unsafe physical and other contact**

- **How to respond safely and appropriately to adults they may encounter (in all contexts, including online), including those they do and do not know**

- **How to recognise when a relationship is harmful or dangerous, including skills for recognising who to trust and who not to trust**

- **How to report abuse, concerns about something seen online or experienced in real life, or feelings of being unsafe or feeling bad about any adult and the vocabulary and confidence needed to do so**

- **How to ask for advice or help for themselves or others, and to keep trying until they are heard. Where to get advice e.g. family, school and/or other sources**

Source:

These expectations are set out in the DfE's guidance for schools on relationships education, RSE and health education (pages 8 to 10).