From: ACCOUNT, Unmonitored <Unmonitored.ACCOUNT@education.gov.uk>
Subject: CRM:0910031
Date: Nov 4 2026, at 11:18 am

Dear Catherine,

Thank you for writing to us, and for your request for information. Your request was received on 29 September 2026.

You requested a substantive departmental response to your policy questions, and that 'Where the Department holds recorded information relevant to those questions that is not already published, please treat this letter as a request for that recorded information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000'. As requested, I have dealt with your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 where relevant.

The first section of the letter covers substantive policy responses to your questions.

As the Secretary of State for Education made clear in her announcement, the government is committed to ensuring that children are taught to challenge harmful ideas, unhealthy attitudes towards relationships, and misogyny in schools. The whole-school approach has been designed to provide a framework to support preventing misogyny and promoting respect, belonging and positive participation. It is based on the principle that schools are more likely to prevent harmful attitudes and behaviours by strengthening the protective factors associated with positive development.

Status and publication of the framework; Whether schools will be required to implement it

The whole-school approach has not been designed as statutory or non-statutory government guidance, nor departmental advice. It is intended to provide a supportive, practical framework, comprising classroom materials, case studies, videos and supporting guides and materials for leaders, teachers, governors and trustees, and parents and carers.

The approach has been designed for education settings covering Key Stages 2 to 5. Settings will be able to adapt and integrate some or all of the approach within their existing curriculum, training, and safeguarding arrangements. The

approach is deliberately flexible to take into account where settings may be on their journey. There is no expectation that settings introduce additional standalone initiatives or teams, or purchase programmes in order to use the resources. We will continue to review and refine the whole-school approach ahead of publication.

Relationship with RSHE guidance

The whole-school approach is intended to work largely through the structures that schools and colleges already use, including behaviour systems, pastoral support, safeguarding, staff development, pupil leadership, parent engagement and RSHE. It is distinct from the statutory RSHE guidance and is not intended to replace or amend it.

However, children and young people's attitudes and behaviours are influenced not only by what they are taught in lessons, but also by relationships, school culture, opportunities for participation, behaviour expectations, peer interactions and safeguarding systems. A whole-school approach recognises that respectful relationships and a positive culture are shaped across all aspects of school life, rather than solely through curriculum delivery.

The revised RSHE statutory guidance came into effect on 1 September 2026, and schools must have regard to it. Any support developed through the RSHE Advisory Group and teacher-support package would be intended to support implementation of that guidance, rather than replace or extend statutory requirements. The package is focused on helping teachers and schools deliver sensitive and complex aspects of RSHE and identifying where additional practical support may be helpful.

Decisions about how schools deliver RSHE, and how this interacts with wider safeguarding responsibilities, behaviour policies, assemblies, pastoral support and other activities, remain matters for schools within the existing statutory and regulatory framework

Parental transparency

The RSHE statutory guidance is clear that schools should ensure that parents are able to view all curriculum materials used to teach RSHE on request. This is based on the public interest in parents being given the opportunity to see

materials used in RSHE teaching if they would like to. This applies regardless of the context in which RSHE content is being delivered.

Parental withdrawal

Where schools teach sex education, the statutory guidance is clear that they should differentiate between relationships and sex education, so that parents have clear information. Relationships education doesn't involve explaining the detail of different forms of sexual activity, but can cover sensitive topics such as sexual violence in order to keep children safe. The guidance is clear that parents have a right to request that their children are withdrawn from sex education (pupils can opt back in from three terms before they turn 16) and schools should ensure parents are aware of sex education content in advance.

Parents do not have the right to withdraw their pupils from relationships and health education, nor can they be withdrawn from topics taught as part of the science curriculum, including science topics related to puberty or sexual reproduction.

The RSHE statutory guidance is also clear that pupils may ask questions about topics which go beyond any sex education covered by the school or relate to sex education from which they have been withdrawn. The school's policy should explain how teachers will handle such questions.

The RSHE statutory guidance applies to any RSHE content delivered in the context of the whole school approach, and we would expect schools to take the same approach to differentiating between relationships and sex education, where relevant, and follow the principles and legal provisions set out in the guidance relating to parental withdrawal.

The whole-school approach is not intended to duplicate the RSHE curriculum or to take sex education beyond RSHE lessons. Its focus is on discussion, reflection and learning relating to participation, belonging, inclusion, critical thinking, respectful relationships, leadership, responsibility and safeguarding awareness.

VAWG Prevention Programme funding

As part of the Freedom from Violence and Abuse Strategy, DfE is delivering a £16 million investment through the VAWG Prevention Programme to identify, test, and evaluate interventions that seek to prevent harmful behaviour before it starts. The programme combines DfE and Home Office funding – supporting

commitments set out in the action plan accompanying the strategy. It will test interventions to support teachers to deliver the updated RSHE curriculum, provide healthy relationships training through external providers, and address harmful behaviours.

The programme will be delivered through the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF), with delivery organisations funded through YEF to deliver individual elements of the programme. The funding will support work directly with children and young people aged 10 to 18 in schools and colleges, addressing issues including teenage relationship abuse and misogyny and supporting healthy and respectful relationships. You can find more information on the YEF website.

Evaluation and data collected from pupils

The VAWG Prevention Programme will run from July 2026 to March 2029 in schools and colleges across England. The evaluation approach will be developed by YEF and an independent evaluator commissioned by YEF. Further information about the planned evaluation approach is available on the YEF website for both Objective 1 and Objective 2. Information on data collection and handling is also available on the YEF website here.

Avoiding the stigmatisation of boys

Objective two of the VAWG Prevention Programme is about responding to inappropriate and problematic attitudes and behaviours on gender norms and relationships in educational settings. It will deliver targeted interventions that identify and respond to inappropriate and problematic attitudes and behaviours around gender norms and relationships among children and young people aged 10–18. Inclusion is aimed specifically at children and young people who have begun to show emerging concerns.

The whole-school approach does not identify boys as a risk group or assume problematic attitudes on the basis of sex. It explicitly recognises that most young people do not hold misogynistic beliefs and directs schools to focus on individual behaviours, attitudes and evidence rather than identity. It also recognises challenges experienced by boys and young men and addresses stereotypes directed towards them. The pupil-facing approach primarily builds universal protective factors, including belonging, critical thinking, respectful relationships and safeguarding, for all children and young people.

External providers; Political impartiality

The whole-school approach does not set out expectations for schools to commission external organisations for provision and will therefore not include recommendations with regard to due diligence. Schools should continue to have regard to their duties as set out in *Keeping children safe in education* (KCSIE) and satisfy themselves that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place when engaging with external organisations.

Similarly, the approach will not set out schools' duties regarding political impartiality. Schools are also already subject to legal duties relating to political impartiality, including when teaching about political issues and when using external organisations, speakers or resources. DfE guidance on political impartiality in schools applies regardless of whether content is delivered through curriculum lessons, assemblies, enrichment activities, pastoral provision, behaviour interventions or by external providers. Schools remain responsible for ensuring that teaching, resources and external contributors are consistent with their legal obligations.

Belonging and school accountability, Ofsted, funding, and accountability

The whole-school approach is intended to support schools to prevent misogyny by promoting respect, belonging and positive participation. It has not been designed to be linked to funding, safeguarding or compliance requirements, or Ofsted expectations.

However, the protective factors that underpin the whole-school approach align closely with many existing school priorities. For example:

- Belonging is linked to attendance, engagement and wellbeing.
- Participation supports pupil voice, confidence and leadership.
- Critical thinking supports curriculum learning and media literacy.
- Emotional literacy supports wellbeing and relationships.
- Positive leadership supports behaviour and culture.
- Safeguarding awareness supports early identification of concerns.

As a result, schools may find that implementation contributes to a range of priorities rather than a single issue. In the longer term, the ambition is to help create environments where harmful attitudes and behaviours are less likely to emerge and more likely to be challenged appropriately.

Source of the statistics

The statistics quoted in the article were taken from the DfE's May 2026 Parent, Pupil and Learner Voice survey, also known as the Omnibus survey, which was published on 24 September 2026. The survey ran from 13 May to 20 May 2026. The release is available here: Parent, pupil and learner voice: May 2026 - GOV.UK. Details of the sample sizes and associated methodology are available in the publication.

For clarity, the sample size for the statistic that '50% of females witnessed misogynistic comments' was 1,926 KS3, KS4 and 16-19 learners who consented to answer questions about behaviour and attitudes towards women and girls. The sample size for the statistic that '30% of year 10 and 11 pupils heard comments about safety of women and girls' was 684 key stage 4 pupils who consented to answer questions about behaviour and attitudes towards women and girls.

The following section deals with those parts of the letter being treated as a Freedom of Information request, under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Definitions

The whole-school approach remains under development, and the final content has not yet been determined.

The information requested below is being withheld under section 35(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, which allows for the withholding of information if it relates to the formulation or development of government policy.

You requested the following information:

- Whether the framework will contain operational definitions of misogyny, harmful attitudes, healthy relationships, belonging and negative online influences.
- If definitions have already been agreed, copies of those definitions.

In applying section 35(1)(a), the Act requires the Department to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosing it. We have concluded that, in this instance, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure. The factors considered in reaching this conclusion are set out below.

There is a general public interest in transparency about the development of government policy. Disclosure can increase understanding of how Government works and of the information and considerations which inform policy development and can support effective public engagement in that process. Conversely, there is a public interest in ensuring that Ministers and officials have the necessary space to develop, consider and refine policy and associated materials before they are finalised. Effective policy making requires the ability to consider and test emerging proposals and materials, and to make changes in light of further review, advice and feedback.

In this case, the whole-school approach has been developed but is not yet final. It will be subject to further review and refinement ahead of publication. Disclosure at this stage would therefore place material into the public domain before that process has been completed and could inhibit the Department's ability to consider and make appropriate changes as part of the ongoing policy development process. It could also create a misleading impression of the Department's settled position where the content remains subject to change. The Department has therefore concluded that the public interest is better served by allowing this process of review and refinement to take place before the resources are published in their final form. On balance, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure at this stage.

RSHE Advisory Group

The RSHE Advisory Group will be advisory in nature. Its role will be to help identify the areas where teachers would benefit most from additional support and to inform the development of the teacher-support package and toolkit. The Department will retain responsibility for commissioning, developing and quality assuring any resulting products through its usual procurement and governance processes.

You requested that we provide, or say when we expect to publish:

- the group's membership and the organisations represented;
- its terms of reference;
- the appointment or selection process;
- declarations of interest;
- remuneration or grants, where applicable;

- meeting arrangements; or
- the outputs the group will produce.

Following a search of the Department's paper and electronic records, I have established that this information is not held by this Department.

The arrangements for the Advisory Group are still under development. Once arrangements for the group have been finalised, the Department intends to publish information on the group's membership and terms of reference.

VAWG Prevention Programme Pilots

With regard to the VAWG Prevention Programme (the 'pilots'), you requested that we provide:

- the participating schools, or the number of schools, where publishable;
- the programme content;

Following a search of the Department's paper and electronic records, I have established that the information is not held by this Department.

You also requested that we provide:

- the delivery organisation(s);

This information is being withheld under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The exemption which applies to this information is s22, which applies to information intended for future publication. Section 22 is a qualified exemption and therefore subject to the public interest test.

In favour of disclosure, the Department recognises the general public interest in openness and transparency about the delivery of government programmes, including the organisations selected to deliver publicly funded activity. Disclosure can support public understanding of the programme and accountability for decisions about its delivery.
However, the Department intends to publish details of the organisations selected to deliver the VAWG prevention programme pilots as part of a planned announcement of the programme. While organisations have been selected to deliver pilots under Objective 1, the assessment process for Objective 2 is still ongoing. Releasing the names of the Objective 1 organisations at this stage

would therefore result in the piecemeal disclosure of information about the programme before the full package of delivery arrangements is ready to be announced.

There is a public interest in allowing the Department to communicate the outcome of the selection processes in an orderly and coordinated way, once the relevant processes have concluded, so that information about the organisations involved can be presented together and with the appropriate context about the wider programme. Premature disclosure through individual correspondence would undermine that planned approach and could result in an incomplete picture of the programme being placed in the public domain.

On balance, the Department considers that the public interest in maintaining the planned and orderly publication of this information outweighs the public interest in disclosure at this stage. The information will be made publicly available in due course.
If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me via the DfE contact form on GOV.UK. Please remember to quote the reference number 2026-0092157 in any future communications.

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, you should write to me within two calendar months of the date of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, however, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have already exhausted the Department's complaints procedure.

Yours sincerely

Shreena Kotecha

Deputy Director, Counter-Extremism and Non-School Education Division

Department for Education