



Children & Young People Relationships and healthy sexual behaviour

Pupil
Wellbeing
Survey
2024

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Introduction

Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) includes important life skills, such as the ability to say no and ask for help. RSE starts with what makes a good friend, how to care for other people and to respect yourself. RSE should give young people the information needed to develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, not just intimate relationships.

Researchers¹ have found no evidence that RSE encourages early sexual activity, and some evidence it can delay it. Young people who have had good RSE are also more likely to use contraception when they first have sex.

On 1 March 2017, the then Education Secretary, Justine Greening, announced her intention to put relationships and sex education on a statutory footing. This led to section 34 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, which requires regulations to be made for relationships and sex education to be taught in all schools in England.

The legal requirement came into force on 1 September 2020 and means that:

- All primary schools in England teach relationships education.
- All secondary schools teach relationships and sex education.

The right of parents to withdraw their children from sex education has been retained. Children approaching age 16 have new rights to ‘opt-in’.

Schools can remain flexible in their approach. This includes faith schools being allowed to teach within the tenets of their faith.

In March 2021, the Government asked Ofsted to immediately review safeguarding policies in state and independent schools in relation to sexual harassment and abuse.

The review was [published in June 2021](#). It depicted “widespread” sexual harassment in schools, and made recommendations for action from schools, government, and Ofsted to address the problem.

The Pupil Wellbeing Survey

The Pupil Wellbeing Survey (PWS) and Online Pupil Survey™(OPS) is a biennial survey that has been undertaken with Gloucestershire school children since 2006. Children and young people participate in years 4, 5 (added in 2016) and 6 in Primary schools; years 8 and 10 in Secondary schools; and year 12 in Post 16 settings such as Sixth Forms and Colleges. A large proportion of mainstream, special and independent schools, colleges and educational establishments take part – representing 57.2% of pupils in participating year groups in 2024. The PWS asks a wide variety of questions about children’s characteristics, behaviours and lived experience that could have an impact on their overall wellbeing. The 2024 PWS was undertaken between January and April 2024.

Limitations and caveats of the survey

Not all children and young people who are resident in Gloucestershire attend educational establishments in the county and similarly not all children and young people attending educational establishments in Gloucestershire are residents in the county. It is therefore important to remember this analysis is based on the pupil population not the resident population.

Gloucestershire is a grammar authority, has a number of notable independent schools and several mainstream schools very close to the county’s boundary these all attract young people from out of county. This results in the school population (particularly at secondary phase) having slightly different characteristics, especially regarding ethnicity, to the resident young people’s population. 12.3% of Gloucestershire’s resident population (2021 Census) were estimated to be from minority ethnic groups however 21.0% of Gloucestershire’s school population were pupils from minority ethnic groups in January 2024 and 21.7% of the PWS cohort were pupils from minority ethnic groups in the 2024 survey.

Although a large proportion of the county’s educational establishments took part in the survey some only had low numbers of students completing the survey in contrast others had high

¹

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse->

numbers. Although this does not impact the overall county analysis as demographics are represented as expected at this geography, analysis by district and education phase might only have certain demographic groups represented due to numbers of pupil take up (for example low numbers completing the survey in Tewkesbury at FE level), where FE provision is situated also impacts the survey as older students travel further to access FE provision.



Analysis of deprivation

Schools can be categorised into statistical neighbour groups which groups schools together based on the type of school and the social profile of their pupils, such as level of deprivation, affluence or personal/family characteristics.

We use Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) to determine the relative deprivation of pupils. The IMD is based on the home postcode of pupils (collected in the January school census that corresponds with the time of the survey being live). This is aggregated to give an overall IMD score for the school, reflecting the deprivation levels experienced by pupils. The schools are then split into quintiles based on their scores: quintile 1 is the most deprived and quintile 5 is the least deprived in Gloucestershire.

In addition:

- Grammar/selective schools are compared to other grammar/selective schools in their phase without reference to the IMD.
- Independent schools are compared to other independent schools in their phase without reference to the IMD.

- Post-16 only/Further Education (FE) colleges are compared to all other Post-16 only colleges without reference to the IMD.
- Special and alternative schools are compared to all other schools of this type in the same phase without reference to the IMD.

Throughout the whole survey we aimed to ask age-appropriate questions, this means the same question is occasionally asked in a slightly different way to younger and older pupils to ensure understanding. We also restrict some questions to older pupils only, for example questions about sexuality and gender identity (as opposed to biological sex), domestic abuse and sexual activity are only asked to secondary and further education/post-16 pupils. This approach ties in with the stage at which these topics are taught in the PSHE curriculum. All questions are voluntary, and pupils can choose to skip individual questions or sections if they feel uncomfortable or would prefer not to answer.

Relationships

During childhood and into adolescence forming friendships with peers is vital. Friendships help children develop important life skills like getting along with other people and sorting out conflicts and problems. Children with these skills are less likely to have social and emotional difficulties later in life. In the teenage years friends become more important as they provide a big part of forming a sense of identity outside the family. Teenage friendships can also be incredibly supportive in helping young people to cope with problems and issues that they may not want to share with adults.

Relationships with parents and families give children and young people emotional support, security, and safety; helping them navigate the ups and downs of adolescence. Family relationships can be strengthened with communal meals, activities, rules, meetings, rituals and responsibilities. Not only does building positive relationships make pupils happier, improve their feelings of security, and provide meaning to their lives, but it also affects both mental and physical health.

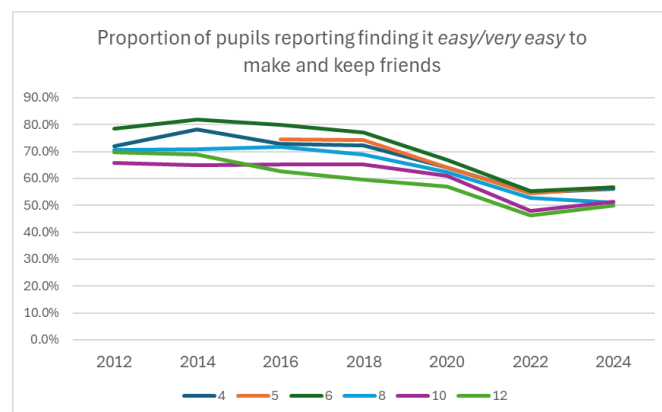
Relationship breakdown including family relationships, friendships and romantic relationships can increase the risk of self-harm and suicide ideation in young people.

Friendships

The proportion of all pupils saying they find it easy to make and keep friends has been in decline since 2012 when it was 71.4%, there was a stark drop that started pre-pandemic and continued during and after the pandemic period (69.4% in 2018 vs. 52.5% in 2022). However, in 2024 there has been an increase (to 53.9%) in pupils reporting they find it easy to make and keep friends, seemingly reversing a six-year trend.

Less than half (49.9%) of pupils in Y12 now say they find it easy to make and keep friends compared to over two thirds in 2012 (69.9%). This had been declining steadily in the period but was in line between 2022 and 2024. There is some emerging evidence² that social media may be affecting the way young people view friendships, how they

interact with friends and how it may indirectly increase loneliness.



During the pandemic many children will have used social media positively to keep in touch with friends, however not seeing friends in person will have reduced the ability to read body language and communication may have become harder with friends, leading to dis-connection and misunderstandings.

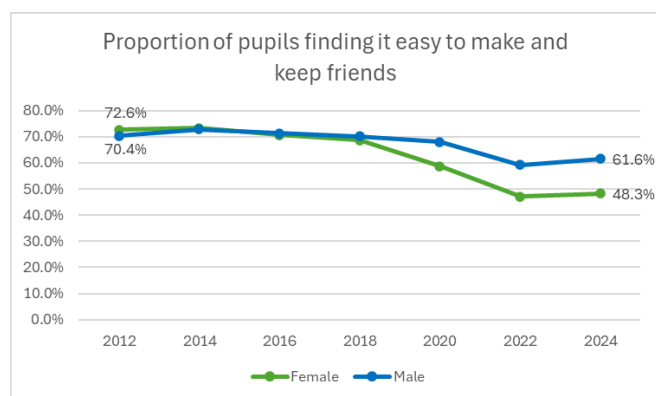


Neuro-divergent children such as those with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and those with other learning and physical disabilities can find it particularly hard to make and keep friends. Only 39.7% of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support or an Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP) said they found it easy to make and keep friends, significantly lower than those with no SEN (54.6%). The difference between pupils with a disability and those with no disability was equally stark, in 2024 only 39.2% reported finding it easy to make and keep friends vs. 53.9%.

Between 2012 and 2016 the proportion of females finding it easy to make and keep friends was fairly static (72.6%-70.6%). However, since 2016 the proportion of females finding it easy to make and keep friends has been reducing rapidly (by

² [https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X\(20\)30083-5/fulltext](https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X(20)30083-5/fulltext)

approximately 10 percentage points per survey) and was only 47.1% in 2022. This has stabilised in 2024 rising slightly to 48.3%. In contrast, for males there has only been a significant decrease observed during the pandemic period when the proportion fell from 68.0% in 2020 to 59.1% in 2022. Again, this has risen slightly in 2024 to 61.6%, suggesting there has been some recovery since the pandemic.



Despite the reduction in pupils who find it easy to make and keep friends the proportion of primary pupils reporting having two or more good friends has remained similar over the last ten years; 90.7% in 2012 and 90.6% in 2024.

There has been an increase in pupils asking to know more about friendships and relationships from 1 in 6 in 2012 to 1 in 5 in 2024.

Family relationships

In 2024 1 in 5 pupils said they needed to know more about relationships. The proportion of pupils saying they needed to know more about relationships was highest in primary age children and the proportion reduced as they got older. Female pupils were slightly more likely to want to know more about relationships than male pupils (21.8% vs. 18.4%).

Just under three quarters (71.9%) of pupils reported that they live full-time with both their parents, which is similar to the number in 2022 (73.3%). 11% of pupils reported living part-time with both their parents in separate houses, 13.7% reported living in a single parent family. Between 2012 and 2024 the proportion of pupils reporting they live somewhere other than with one or both of their parents has remained in line at around 3%. Pupils

from minority ethnic backgrounds were significantly more likely to report living somewhere other than with parents than their white British peers (4.2% and 2.7% respectively). This may be due to cultural differences, but national evidence³ suggests pupils from minority ethnic group backgrounds are more likely to be looked after by the Local Authority and more likely to live in poverty, which may lead to parents sending them to live with family members to ease financial pressures.



In 2024 pupils reported that when they were worried about something the majority (84.3%) said they had someone to turn to, and in most cases (74.9%) this was their parents. Around half (44.8%) of young people said they would go to friends if they were worried about something, this was also significantly lower than in 2020 (52.6%). The pandemic generally, but lockdowns in particular, may have put extra pressure on relationships for all pupils and their families.

Pupils from minority ethnic groups were significantly less likely (70.6%) to say they seek help from parents than white British peers (76.1%). Just over half (56.3%) of LGBTQ+ pupils said they would go to their parents for help, significantly lower than heterosexual/cis pupils (76.0%).

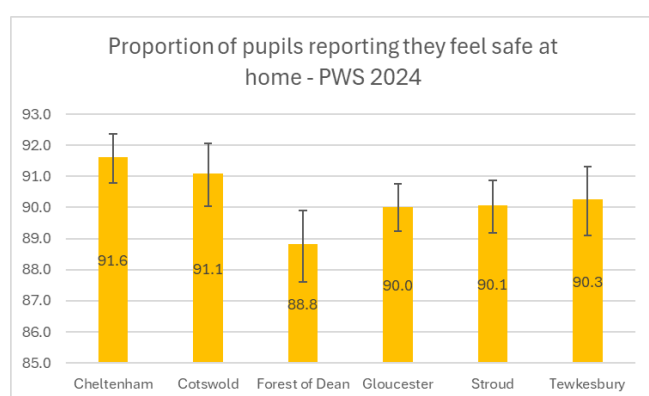
In 2014 5.1% of pupils reported they had a family social worker and in 2024 this had risen significantly to 7.8%. Around 3.3% (4,250) of resident pupils aged 0-17 were known to Children's Social Care in 2023/24, suggesting families may be accessing support from a wide range of sources that pupils are conflating as 'Social Workers'. The increase in pupils reporting they have a family

³

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ethnicity-and-childrens-social-care>

social worker may also indicate a growing need in family-based support more generally. 1.6% of pupils said they were a Child in Care/Looked after child (CiC) and a further 1.0% said they used to be in care, again this is higher than the known figure of 0.7% in April 2024 although not significantly.

The proportion of pupils saying they feel safe where they live has been increasing since 2012 from 86.0% to 90.4% in 2024. In 2024 younger pupils in the primary phase were slightly more likely to report feeling safe at home than older pupils in secondary and FE phases. There was a significant difference in feeling safe at home between pupils in Forest of Dean (88.8%) and those in schools in Cheltenham (91.6%) and Cotswold districts (91.1%).



Pupils from schools in the Cheltenham district also saw the greatest increase (7.2 percentage points) in feeling safe at home since 2012.

Vulnerable pupils such as females, pupils identifying as LGBTQ+, pupils with a disability, young carers, those known to social care, those eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), those seriously bullied and those from minority ethnic group backgrounds were all significantly less likely to say they felt safe at home than their less vulnerable counterpart peers.

Domestic abuse, domestic violence, coercive control or teen relationship abuse

In 2024 just over a quarter (28.1%) of pupils reported ever witnessing domestic abuse, coercive control or teen relationship abuse (subsequently referred to collectively as 'domestic abuse') which was in line with the values in both 2020 and 2022. If this proportion is extrapolated to the current pupil population it equates to around 26,176 pupils across Gloucestershire.

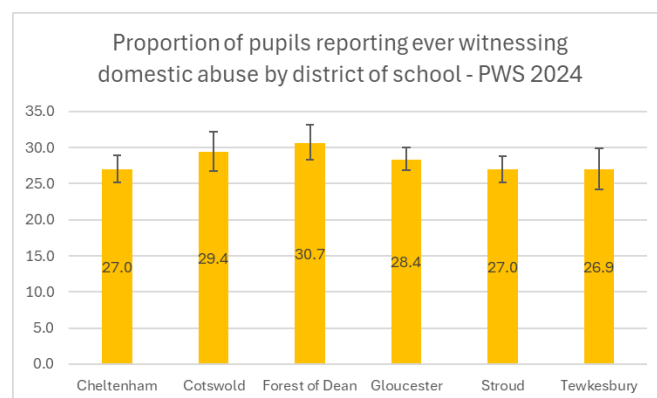
1 in 20 pupils reported regularly (*Quite often(weekly) /Most days*) witnessing domestic abuse.

Pupils aged 11-13 were significantly less likely (3.5%) to report witnessing domestic abuse regularly than those aged 14-16 (5.1%) and in line with those aged 17 and over (3.9%).



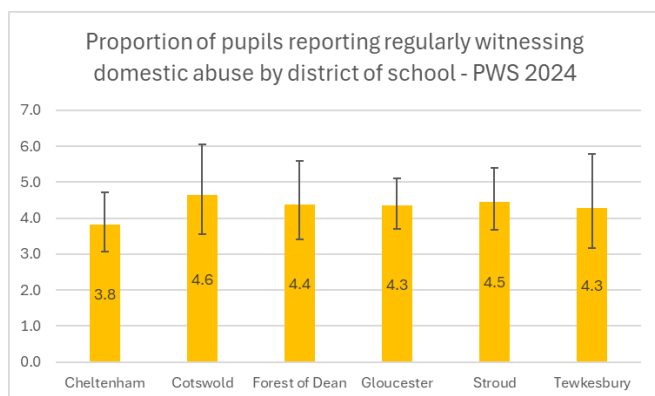
In a change to previous observations, there was little difference in the proportion of pupils reporting regularly witnessing domestic abuse by statistical neighbour group (based on deprivation of pupils). The proportion reporting regularly witnessing domestic abuse increased slightly as deprivation decreased, peaking in pupils in quintile 4, but was lowest in quintile 5 pupils.

There was no significant difference in the proportion of pupils reporting to have ever witnessed domestic abuse, by district of school. Pupils attending schools in Forest of Dean (30.7%) had the highest reported levels of ever witnessing domestic abuse and pupils attending schools in Cheltenham, Stroud and Tewkesbury had the lowest levels (27.0%, 27.0% and 26.9%).

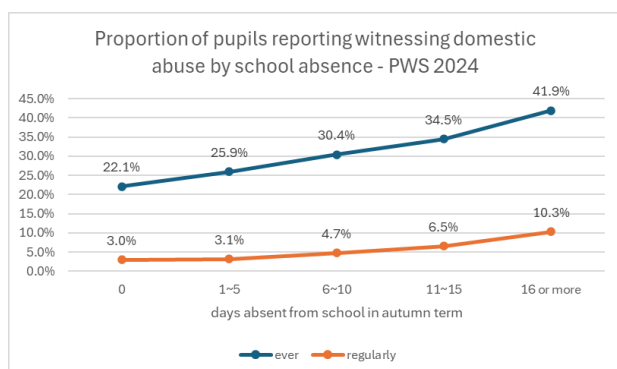


There was no significant difference between the districts where pupils reported they witnessed

domestic abuse regularly, although the proportion was lowest in pupils from Cheltenham schools.

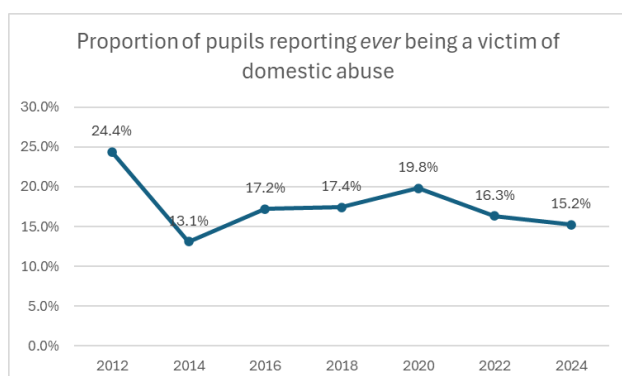


Pupils who were persistently absent were more likely to witness domestic abuse than those who had not missed school (34.3% vs. 22.1%). Pupils who had at least one exclusion were almost twice as likely (41.0%) to have witnessed domestic abuse than those with no exclusion (25.7%).

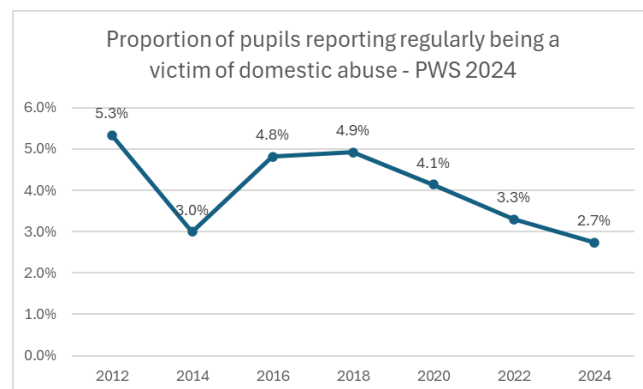


Pupils who witnessed domestic abuse regularly were less likely (37.1%) to report enjoying school, than those who do not report witnessing domestic abuse (53.2%).

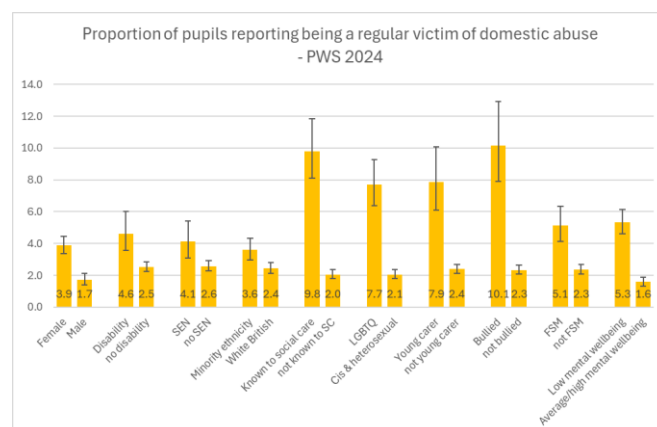
Around 1 in 6 pupils in 2024 reported ever being a victim of domestic abuse, this is a reduction from previous surveys. If this proportion is extrapolated to the pupil population it equates to around 14,000 pupils across Gloucestershire.



In 2024 2.7% of pupils reported being a victim of domestic abuse regularly. Again, this is a reduction on the previous year and continues a downward trend from 2018 but could still equate to around 2,500 pupils at population level.



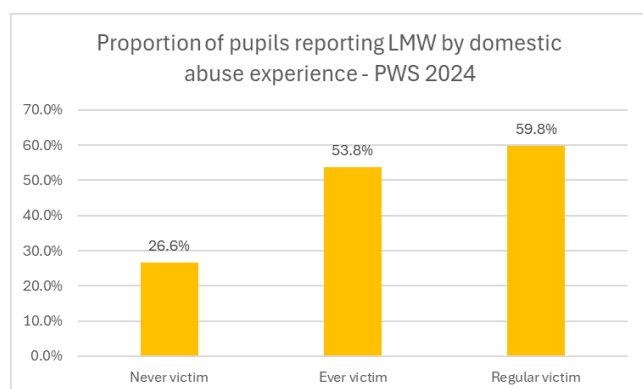
Female pupils were almost two and a half times more likely to report being the victim of domestic abuse regularly than male pupils (3.9% vs. 1.7%). Vulnerable pupils were also more likely to report being a victim of domestic abuse regularly than their less-vulnerable peers and was highest in pupils experiencing bullying and those known to social care, as shown in the chart below.



1 in 5 pupils who were a regular victim of domestic abuse had run away from home in the last 6 months compared to only 2.3% of those who had never been a victim of domestic abuse; and were also 7 times more likely to report being in serious trouble with the police (15.3% vs. 2.3%) and 4 times as likely to have carried a weapon (18.9% vs. 4.8%) than those who had never been a victim of domestic abuse.

Pupils who were regular victims of domestic abuse were twice as likely to have low mental wellbeing than those who had never been a victim and were significantly more likely to report low mental

wellbeing than those who had ever been a victim of domestic abuse.



1 in 6 pupils (17.6%) who were regular victims of domestic abuse were currently receiving support for their mental wellbeing from a health professional compared to 1 in 20 (5.3%) of those who had never been a victim of domestic abuse. Twice as many pupils who had been a regular victim of domestic abuse and sought help from a health professional had been supported by CAMHS than those who had never been a victim of abuse (33.1% vs. 14.8%).

Pupils who were a regular victim of domestic abuse and sought help from a health professional were also significantly more likely to have received support from TiC+⁴ than those who had not been a victim of domestic abuse (34.4% vs. 20.9%).

Pupils who were a regular victim of domestic abuse but who had not received help for their mental wellbeing were significantly more likely to say they felt they would benefit from the support of mental health services than those who had never been a victim of abuse.

Where pupils had not received any help from a Health professional for their mental wellbeing, pupils who had ever been a victim of domestic abuse were more likely to say they had tried but adults hadn't taken them seriously (17.7% vs. 9.6%) and 1 in 7 (13.8%) of those who were a regular victim of domestic abuse reported they had tried to access support but adults hadn't taken them seriously.

Around half of pupils who had been a victim of domestic abuse said they had not accessed

support because they didn't want their parents to know.

Victims of domestic abuse were also more likely to infer they had a strong fear of disclosure, with three quarters (75.9%) saying they didn't want their parents, friends or teachers to know which was higher than those who had never been a victim of abuse (68.1%).

Child-to-parent abuse (CPA) is any behaviour used by a child or young person to control, dominate or coerce parents. [Research](#) from the University of Brighton, puts potential prevalence at 1 in 10 families experiencing some form of CPA. Domestic abuse support systems are often set up to focus on managing intimate partner violence, leaving parents confused about where to seek support.

A report from the [Oxford Law Faculty](#) published in August 2020 found 70% of parents whose children had a history of abuse reported an increase in violent episodes during lockdown; 69% of practitioners said they had seen an increase in referrals for families experiencing CPA, and 64% of practitioners identified that the severity or incidence of violence had increased.

There is currently no way of measuring the extent of child-to parent abuse in Gloucestershire using the PWS but 7.1% reported they were often aggressive or violent (the question doesn't specify towards parents).

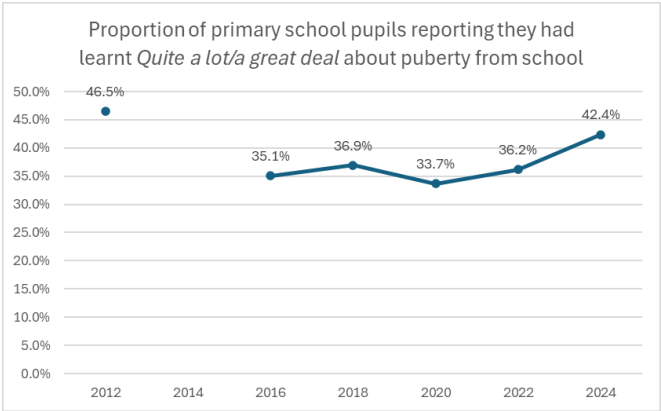
Puberty and Body Positivity

Puberty is the process of physical changes through which a child's body matures into an adult body capable of sexual reproduction. It can be a difficult time for children and young people managing changes in their body and mood. It's important for pupils to learn about changes associated with puberty before they happen so they can understand and be prepared for them and also realise that everyone goes through these changes.

⁴ TiC+ - Teens in Crisis is a mental health service for children and young people

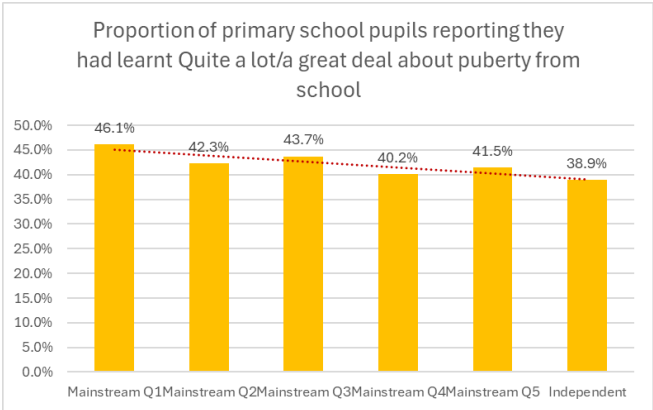


In 2024 42.4% of primary pupils said they had learnt *Quite a lot/a great deal* about puberty at school, this had been fairly static since 2016, but has increased since the last survey in 2022.



Most schools include puberty in the curriculum of Y5 or Y6, this is clear when looking at the proportion of pupils reporting they have been taught *Quite a lot/a great deal* about puberty at school by year group, where it rises from 1 in 3 in Y4 to 1 in 2 in Y6.

There appears to be a slight correlation between learning about puberty and deprivation, with pupils living in the most deprived areas being the most likely to say they have been taught *Quite a lot/a great deal* about puberty at school.

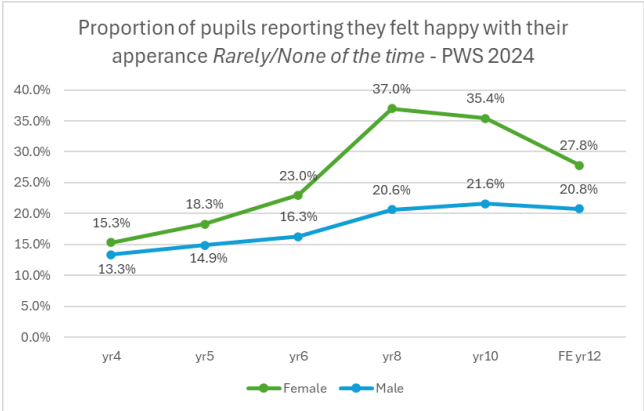


Almost three quarters (72.3%) of pupils said they learnt about puberty at school up from only 22.0% in 2012 and 64.9% in 2022. 35.7% said they had learnt about puberty from their parents, re-iterating the importance of puberty in the curriculum. In 2024 7.0% said they had learnt about puberty from the internet, this has risen significantly since 2012 when only 4.2% said they had learnt about puberty from the internet but was in line with 2022.

Physical changes due to puberty can lead to a reduction in body positivity. The proportion of pupils saying they like their appearance *Often/All of the time* had reduced between 2016 (when the question was first asked) and 2022 (50.0% to 48.8%), however it has risen slightly in 2024 to 49.8%. The proportion of pupils reporting they like their appearance *Rarely/None of the time* has decreased between 2022 and 2024 from 23.8% to 21.0%.

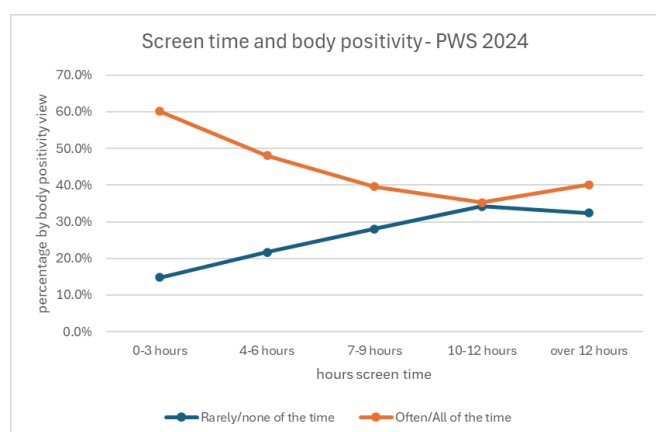
As pupils age the proportion reporting they like their appearance *Rarely/None of the time* increases, with the highest proportion in Y10, this trend has been the same since 2016. However, the overall increase in pupils reporting they like their appearance *Rarely/None of the time* in the period 2016-24 is mostly attributable to increases in younger pupils in Y6 and Y8 who would be likely to be starting puberty.

Females have historically been almost twice as likely to report liking their appearance *Rarely/None of the time* than males and whilst still higher in females the gap has narrowed significantly between 2022 and 2024. When looking at this by year group the sharp increase in a lack of body positivity in females co-insides with the average age of onset of puberty.



The peak in low body positivity in females has historically been in Y10, however in 2024 this has shifted to Y8.

Pupils who reported they like their appearance *Rarely/None of the time* were almost twice as likely to report above average personal screen time⁵ than those who reported they like their appearance *Often/All of the time* 38.3% vs. 20.7%. The chart below shows as screen time increase pupils are less likely to be happy with their appearance.



1 in 5 secondary/FE females who did no/little exercise cited the reason for this was *I don't like wearing tight/clinging sportswear* compared to only 1 in 10 males. This may be due to a lack of body positivity, but lack of exercise may also contribute to low body positivity.

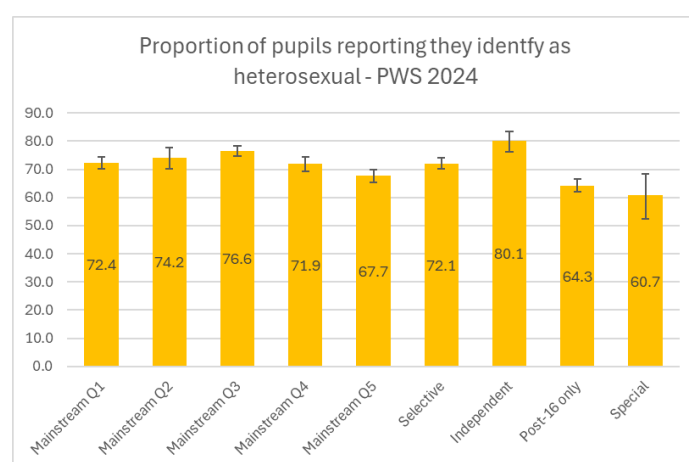
1 in 6 pupils said they would like more information about *Feeling positive about my appearance*, a similar amount said they would like more information about *Losing weight*. 6.2% of secondary and post-16 pupils reported they wanted support around the *Effect that the media, pornography and internet has on the way I feel about my appearance*.

Sexuality and gender

Sexuality is about a person's sexual feelings, thoughts, attractions and behaviours towards other people. The proportion of pupils reporting they are *heterosexual* in 2024 has reduced since 2020 although not significantly from 77.9% to 71.5%. This has been almost entirely driven by changes in females identifying as *heterosexual*. There has

been a slight increase in females reporting they are *Bisexual* and *Lesbian* in the period.

There appears to be a slight correlation between identifying as heterosexual and deprivation. Pupils in schools where the majority of pupils lived in deprived neighbourhoods were significantly more likely to report identifying as heterosexual as those in schools where the majority of pupils lived in the least deprived areas. However, pupils at independent schools who are likely to have the most affluent backgrounds have a similar proportion of pupils reporting they are heterosexual as those living in the most deprived areas. This trend may be more about increased prejudice and discomfort in 'coming out' in these environments.



Pupils at Special schools were less likely to report identifying as heterosexual. International research including a [study](#) based on Australian men in 2018 suggest that a larger proportion of disabled than non-disabled people are sexual minorities.



In 2020 we asked pupils if they identified as the same gender as the biological sex they were

⁵ Median hours usage per day for YP in the survey fell within 4-6 hours per day, so over 6hrs

has been classified as above average usage. The UK average for teenagers is estimated to be 6.5-7 hours per day.

assigned at birth. In 2020 1.6% of pupils said they did not identify as the same gender as the biological sex they were assigned at birth, in 2024 this had risen to 2.0%. This is driven by an increase in biological female pupils saying they did not identify as the same gender as the biological sex they were assigned at birth.

Pupils who gave their biological sex as female were significantly more likely to say their gender was not the same as the biological sex they were assigned at birth.

An American [study](#) found “Of the 1.3 million adults who identify as transgender, 38.5% (515,200) are transgender women, 35.9% (480,000) are transgender men, and 25.6% (341,800) reported they are gender nonconforming”, as the level of biological female pupils in the survey reporting their gender identity was not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth was much higher than this (64.4%), this research suggests in our pupil cohort there may be more stigma associated with biological males identifying as a transgender female.

In 2024 1.1% of pupils reported they identified as transgender (1.6% of biological females and 0.9% of biological males). This was similar to 2022.

Research⁶ suggests among youths ages 13 to 17 in the U.S., 1.4% identify as transgender.

In the 2024 PWS a further 0.6% of pupils identified as *Gender-fluid*, and 0.9% identified as *Non-binary*. Biological females were more likely to be non gender-conforming than biological males.

Gender identity by biological sex, secondary/post-16 pupils - PWS 2024			
Gender indetified	Biological sex		
	Female	Male	All
(not answered)	3.0%	3.8%	10.5%
Cis gender	85.3%	86.0%	79.3%
Don't know	5.9%	5.9%	5.5%
Gender fluid	0.9%	0.4%	0.6%
Non-binary	1.4%	0.4%	0.9%
Transgender	1.6%	0.9%	1.1%
Would rather not say	1.8%	2.6%	2.1%

⁶ [https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/trans-adults-united-](https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/trans-adults-united-states/#:~:text=Among%20youth%20ages%2013%20to,reported%20they%20are%20gender%20nonconforming)

Pupils who identify as LGBTQ+ face significant challenges, they are more likely to report low mental wellbeing, more likely to self-harm, more likely to be bullied and more likely to engage in health harming behaviours.

Teenage sexual relationships

Knowing how to establish and maintain healthy romantic relationships can help adolescents develop into well-functioning adults with healthy adult relationships. Healthy dating during the teenage years can be an important way to develop social skills, learn about other people, and grow emotionally.

Sexual behaviour

In the PWS 2024 6.4% of pupils (in Y8 and above) report not understanding consent in a healthy relationship. This is significantly lower than in 2020 (8.8%), although this is attributable to an increase in pupils declining to answer rather than an increase in those saying they understood consent. There was also a significant reduction in the proportion of pupils reporting they understood consent between 2020 and 2024 (88.4% vs. 83.5%).

The proportion reporting understanding consent increases as pupils age (probably due in part to when this is taught in the PSHE curriculum); however, males are less likely to report understanding consent than females at all ages.

Understanding consent appears to be higher in pupils from the least deprived backgrounds, at 97.1% in pupils from selective schools and 95.1% in pupils living in Q5 neighbourhoods.

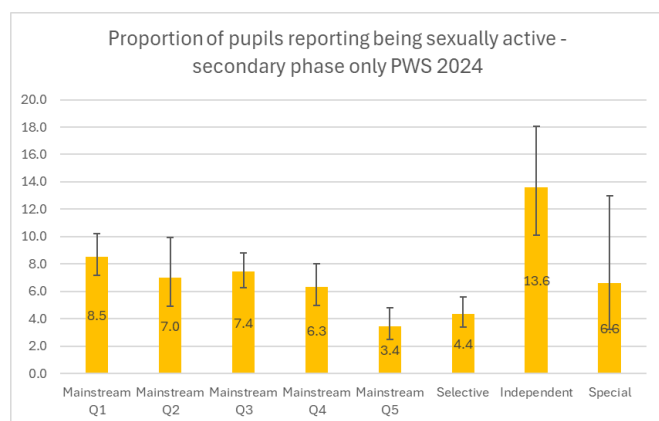
Pupils from black backgrounds (Black Caribbean, Black African, Black other) were significantly less likely to say they understood consent than their white British peers. This was also the case with pupils from Gypsy/Roma backgrounds.

[states/#:~:text=Among%20youth%20ages%2013%20to,reported%20they%20are%20gender%20nonconforming](#)



In 2024 12.0% of pupils (in Y8 and above) reported engaging in sexual activity; this was lower than in 2020 (17.7%) and 2022 (14.0%). Engaging in sexual activity increases with age from 3.1% in Y8 to 10.0% in Y10 and 25.7% in Y12. Males were slightly more likely to say they had engaged in sexual activity than females although not significantly, this trend has been observed since 2020. Pupils from Black Caribbean (24.4%), Mixed – white and Black Caribbean (22.4%), Gypsy/Roma (29.5%) and Irish Traveller (29.2%) backgrounds were significantly more likely to report being sexually active than their white British peers (12.7%).

Pupils from more deprived backgrounds appear to be slightly more likely to engage in sexual behaviour although they are only significantly different to those in the least deprived (quintile 5) and selective schools. The chart below shows sexual activity by statistical neighbour group for secondary pupils.

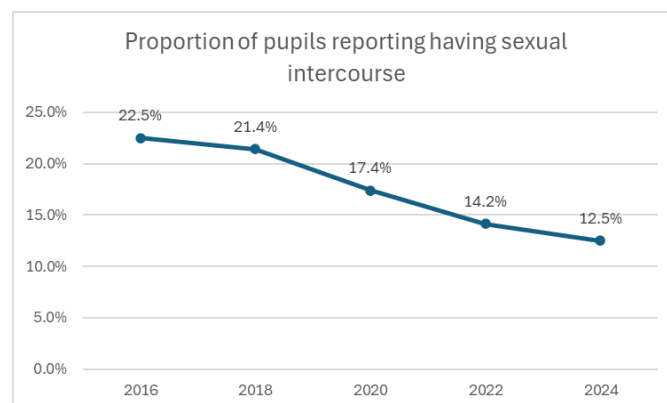


There has been a significant increase in pupils at independent schools reporting being sexually active between 2022 (5.4%) and 2024 (13.6%).

Of those who had engaged in sexual activity 67.5% had their first sexual experience below the age of 16, this was a higher proportion than in 2022. There was no significant difference between males and females engaging in sexual activity under 16.

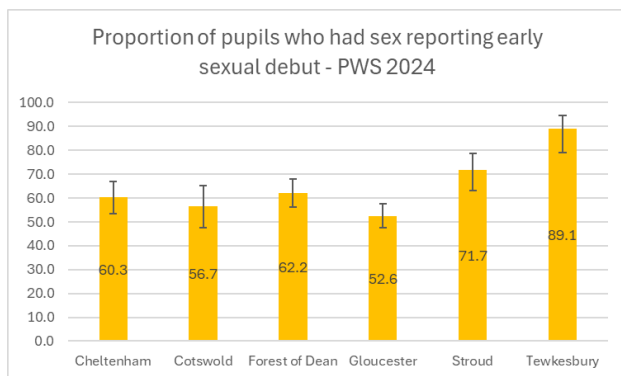
1 in 10 pupils who had engaged in sexual activity felt they couldn't say no to partaking in sexual activity. Males were more likely to say they couldn't say no to partaking in sexual activity than females, this has been the same since 2020. Pupils from the most deprived areas were the most likely to say they didn't feel they could say no to sexual activity (1 in 6).

The vast majority (75.7%) of those who had engaged in sexual activity had had intercourse (10.5% of all pupils Y8 and above). Due to a slight change in how this question was asked (it became a routed question in 2020) the best way to compare year on year values is to look only where pupils had given an answer (i.e., excluding those who declined to answer and those who didn't see the question). The chart below shows the proportion of pupils having sex has been decreasing steadily since 2018.



Over half (60.8%) of pupils who had intercourse had Early Sexual Debut (ESD) - intercourse under the legal age of consent. This has been increasing slowly since 2016. There was no difference in likelihood of reporting ESD between the sexes. There was also no significant difference between different ethnic groups and levels of ESD.

Pupils in Tewkesbury schools were significantly more likely to report ESD than pupils in schools in all other Gloucestershire districts; pupils in Gloucester schools were significantly less likely to report ESD than pupils in all other districts except Cotswold.

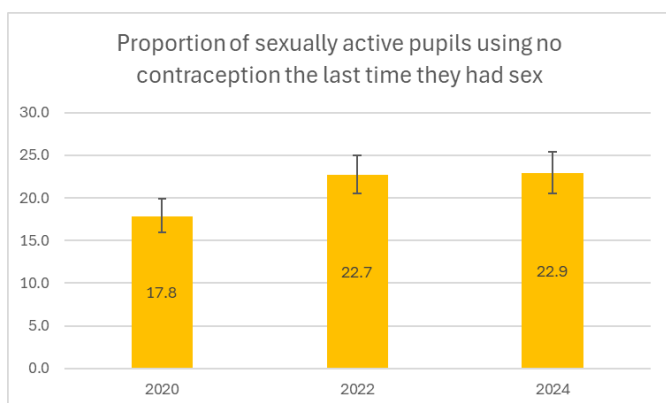


Safe sex

The majority of pupils who had intercourse protected themselves by using a condom the last time they had intercourse, this was higher in males than females (59.9% vs. 50.2%). A third of pupils said they had used the contraceptive pill the last time they had sex; this was higher in females than males (40.2% vs. 25.3%).

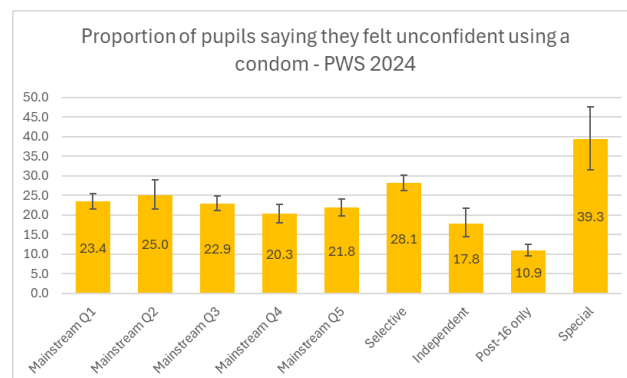


In 2024 22.9% of pupils who had intercourse reported using no protection the last time they had intercourse and a further 2.6% reported using emergency contraception after the last time they had intercourse.



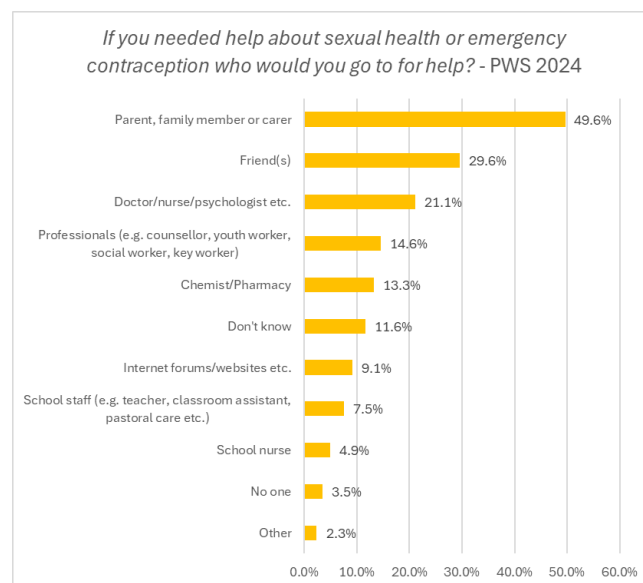
In 2022 54.1% of pupils said they felt confident using a condom, this was a significant reduction on 2020 (59.4%). Almost two thirds (62.3%) of males said they felt confident using a condom compared to 54.1% of females. Feeling unconfident using a condom generally decreased as deprivation decreased, the highest proportion of pupils saying they were unconfident using a condom in

mainstream schools were in selective schools (28.1%), this may be due to most selective schools being single sex so pupils at these schools may have had less opportunity to try this practically and therefore be less confident.



Pupils were asked where they would access support if they needed help and advice about *contraception/ emergency contraception/ not getting pregnant or preventing STIs* (sexual health advice), the most common response (49.6%) in 2024 was they would go to a parents/carers/family member. This was a similar proportion in 2020 and 2022. A quarter of pupils said they had gone to a doctor/nurse for sexual health advice, this was unchanged since 2012.

Since 2012 there has been a significant reduction in pupils reporting they get sexual health advice on the internet from 34.0% to 9.1% in 2024. There is also a marked decrease in the proportion of pupils who report getting sexual health advice from a School Nurse in the same period (from 14.6% to 4.9%).



In 2024 5.6% of pupils said they would like more information about *Safer sex and contraception*, this was a reduction on the 2020 figure (9.8%). Pupils at special schools were the most likely to say they would like more information about *Safer sex and contraception* (12.9%). 4.5% of pupils said they would like more help or advice with *STIs*.

Sexual abuse

Around 1 in 4 pupils said they had received a message or picture of a sexual nature in 2024, this was similar in 2020 and 2022. Females were more likely to have received a message or picture of a sexual nature than males (23.4% vs. 15.2%).

8.9% pupils reported they had sent a message or picture of a sexual nature in 2024 this has been reducing since 2020 (12.2%). Again, females were more likely to have sent a message or picture of a sexual nature. The proportion of pupils reporting sending a sexual image of themselves (6.7% all pupils, 7.4% of females and 5.9% of males) has reduced significantly since 2020 (8.7%). Pupils with low mental wellbeing were twice as likely to report sending a message or picture of a sexual nature than those with average or high mental wellbeing.

4.4% of pupils said *Someone tried to blackmail me over the internet e.g. tried to force me to send money or naked pictures* however, this was twice as high in females than males (5.8% vs. 3.0%). After increasing significantly during the pandemic the proportion of pupils saying *Someone tried to blackmail me over the internet e.g. tried to force me to send money or naked pictures* has returned to be in line with pre-pandemic (4.5% in 2020). Pupils with low mental wellbeing were almost 3 times as likely to say *Someone tried to blackmail me over the internet e.g. tried to force me to send money or naked pictures* than those with average or high mental wellbeing.

Around 1 in 30 pupils said they would like more advice about *Sexting/Sextortion*, this was higher in females than males.

In 2022 questions around sexual harassment/abuse were included for the first time. Only 1 in 5 (20.4%) pupils reported they had **never** experienced any form of sexual harassment/abuse in 2024 in line with the 2022 survey. In most forms of sexual harassment/abuse females were around twice as likely to report experiencing it regularly

(*Quite often (e.g. weekly)/Most days*) than males, except *Unwanted touching* which was reported by a higher proportion of males.

Two thirds of females reported ever experiencing *Sexist comments* (69.7%) and *Comments that affect their body image* (69.2%).

Sexual harassment/abuse	Ever experienced		
	All	Female	Male
Rumours about other students' sexual activity	55.7%	63.1%	50.1%
Unwanted or inappropriate sexual remarks	46.2%	54.0%	39.8%
Sexist comments	56.4%	69.7%	44.7%
Comments that affect your body image	57.6%	69.2%	48.0%
Unwanted touching	37.1%	37.1%	38.1%
Feeling pressured to take part in unwanted kissing or behaviour of a sexual nature	19.8%	23.4%	16.6%
Up skirting	12.0%	15.2%	8.9%
Sexual images/videos of students being shared without consent	27.6%	33.5%	22.4%
Verbal or physical threat of a sexual nature	21.7%	24.6%	19.5%
Any other form of sexual harassment or abuse	22.0%	26.5%	17.9%

Levels of sexual harassment were in line with figures from 2022.

Overall, the most prevalent form of sexual harassment/abuse reported were *Comments that affect your body image* – 18.0% of pupils reported experiencing regularly (*Quite often (e.g. weekly)/Most days*); followed by *Sexist comments* where 16.7% reported experiencing regularly. Twice as many females reported experiencing *Sexual images/videos of students being shared without consent* regularly than males (6.5% vs. 3.3%), and twice as many females reported experiencing *Sexist comments* regularly than males (22.6% vs. 11.3%).

A third of pupils reported ever experiencing unwanted touching, 7.6% of pupils reported experiencing unwanted touching regularly, this was significantly higher for males (9.9%) than females (5.4%). 1 in 5 pupils reported ever feeling pressured to undertake unwanted sexual behaviour (19.8%), 2.8% reported feeling pressured to undertake unwanted sexual behaviour regularly, this was similar in females and males.

Sex education

Since September 2020, Relationships Education has been compulsory for all pupils receiving primary education and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) for all pupils receiving secondary education. In 2012 only 67.5% of pupils said the *Healthy relationships and sex education (RSE)* they had received was helpful, this had increased significantly in 2024 to 82.9% of pupils.

The proportion of pupils reporting the information received about *Sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including Chlamydia and HIV* was helpful

has also significantly increased from 60.4% in 2012 to 74.8% in 2024.

Females were more likely to say they found sex education helpful than males and three quarters (75.3%) of pupils say they found information around *Contraception, including emergency contraception* helpful.

A quarter (24.4%) of primary pupils in 2024 reported they need to know more about *Friendships and relationships*, this reduced as pupils aged to 12.8% in FE pupils.



24.0% of primary pupils said they needed to know more about *How your body changes as you get older*, the proportion was similar in Y4, Y5 and Y6.

There was no significant difference in wanting to know more about *How your body changes as you get older* across the districts.

