

Personal, Social, Health and Economic education

From Theory to practice - Summary

What is the purpose of this briefing paper?

This paper summarises the 10 principles for best practice in PSHE education. It is based on evidence from a wide range of sources, summarised in a companion document: 'PSHE education: From Theory to Practice'.

The aim of this paper is to improve the quality of teaching and learning in PSHE education.

Who is this document for?

This paper has been written for all those with an interest in promoting the 5 outcomes of Every Child Matters, but particularly for:

- PSHE education teachers and co-ordinators
- Healthy school co-ordinators
- Senior managers with responsibility for curriculum design and management
- Teacher educators, preparing for the transition to PSHE education as a statutory subject
- Governors and parents.

What is PSHE education?

PSHE education is Personal, Social, Health and Economic education. From 2011 PSHE education will be a statutory subject in schools in England. In secondary schools PSHE education comprises two programmes of study 'Personal wellbeing' and 'Economic wellbeing and financial capability'. Together, these programmes of study ensure that young people are able to learn about a wide range of issues which affect their everyday lives, their health, their safety, and their social and economic wellbeing. The two programmes of study are linked by a single concept: risk.

<http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/key-stages-3-and-4/subjects/pshe/index.aspx>

In primary schools, PSHE education will be explored through the programme of learning 'Understanding physical development, health and wellbeing'. In both primary and secondary school what children and young people learn in PSHE education will contribute to their personal development.

Why is PSHE education important?

PSHE education helps children and young people to identify, celebrate, and manage the many personal, economic and social challenges they face, while they are at school, and in the future. Through PSHE education children and young people

should acquire and extend the knowledge and skills they need as they, and their communities, grow and change, so that they can be safe, healthy and economically secure.

What can PSHE education be expected to achieve?

Effective PSHE education facilitates learning, so that children and young people can draw on their talents and skills, and on the resources provided by their families and communities. PSHE education enables children and young people to develop the knowledge, attitudes, skills and understanding to:

- be healthy,
- stay safe,
- enjoy and achieve,
- make a positive contribution
- achieve economic well being.

(Every Child Matters, 2004)

As this paper demonstrates, PSHE education is not the only aspect of school which impacts on these important outcomes.

What can PSHE education *not* be expected to achieve?

The aim of PSHE education is not to determine how people should behave or what lifestyle or financial choices they should make. PSHE education is about the provision of information and the development of skills and attitudes which enable children and young people to make effective choices and take opportunities which will help them to live happy, successful, healthy lives, now and in the future. Making effective choices includes young people being able to recognise and assess risk and act on their best intentions, even when under pressure to make a quick decision, so PSHE education is about influencing young people's attitudes and skills as part of their personal development.

What does PSHE education have in common with other school subjects?

PSHE education has a body of knowledge, is based on well known and understood concepts, and includes a clear set of skills and competences. PSHE education can be differentiated according to a child's abilities and needs. It can be assessed in a range of ways, depending on what is being taught.

How does PSHE education relate to other school subjects?

PSHE education provides the opportunity for pupils to reflect on the personal and social elements of some topics which are taught in other areas of the curriculum. For example substance misuse may be part of science, the effects of exercise may be part of physical education, calculating the cost of a loan may be taught in mathematics and safety and enterprise are important elements of design and technology.

While the science curriculum describes the physiological effects of, for example, smoking, PSHE education provides an opportunity for children and young people to reflect on what this information means in their lives, what influences people to start smoking and how smoking affects them, their friends and families and their communities. PSHE education also encourages young people to think about the personal financial aspects of smoking and the alternative uses for the money spent on tobacco.

In PSHE education children and young people have opportunities to bring together skills developed elsewhere in the curriculum, which are transferable to other aspects of their learning. For example weighing up the costs and benefits of a holiday may involve deciding whether to pay with a credit card, with cash or take out a loan, but also to consider what the health risks and benefits of a holiday might be.

Importantly, PSHE education also provides an opportunity for pupils to reflect on issues which do not arise as part of the formal curriculum, for example managing challenging relationships in and out of school, understanding their personal response to risk and recognising the contribution they make to the wider community.

How is PSHE education different from the other school subjects?

PSHE education deals with real life issues which affect children, young people, their families and their teachers. It engages with the values, experience, attitudes and emotions they bring to their education as well as their knowledge and understanding. Because of this, it is often said that PSHE education starts where children are.

Some of the topics such as drugs, sex and relationships, careers and financial capability education may have a moral, social or political context, which is not as apparent in other subjects such as maths or French. However, teachers of English, Religious Studies, geography and history also have to deal with important and complex moral and political issues. What is unusual in PSHE education is that the moral and political is also personal; personal for teachers, parents and carers and also for the children and young people. This means that what is learnt in PSHE education can have an immediate application in the lives of children and young people. It also means that some aspects of PSHE education can be challenging and exciting for teachers.

What is the relationship between PSHE education and Healthy Schools?

This may seem obvious, but it is important to remember that PSHE education is only one part of what schools do to help children and young people to be healthy and stay safe. Being a Healthy School establishes a policy framework within which PSHE education is most likely to be effective. It is easier to make healthy, safe choices if the choices are available and the social environment supports those choices. In particular Healthy Schools encourages everyone to have a voice in how their school

promotes the personal development of pupils and staff, and supports positive relationships with families and the wider community.

What is the relationship between PSHE education and Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL)?

SEAL recognises that children and young people need to be emotionally and socially healthy if they are to be able to learn. The SEAL programme has been designed specifically to help teachers introduce social and emotional aspects of learning into their teaching. The SEAL materials are designed to help children and young people develop skills and attitudes which will enable them to understand their own emotions (intrapersonal skills) and those of others, communicate their needs clearly and to enjoy the relationships they develop in and out of school (interpersonal skills). PSHE education provides a curriculum context for the social and emotional skills developed using SEAL resources, helping children and young people to apply what they have learned to a range of situations in and out of school. SEAL does not replace PSHE education in schools.

Principles of PSHE education

We can distil what we know about child and adolescent development, the development of economic understanding and about health related behaviour into some 'principles' which apply to the whole of PSHE education, in both primary and secondary schools.

- 1 Start where children and young people are: find out what they already know understand, are able to do and are able to say. For maximum impact involve them in the planning of your PSHE education programme.
- 2 Plan a 'spiral programme' which introduces new and more challenging learning, while building on what has gone before, which reflects and meets the personal developmental needs of the children and young people.
- 3 Recognise that the PSHE education programme is just one part of what a school can do to help a child to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and understanding they need to fulfil their potential. Link the PSHE education programme to other whole school issues such as healthy schools, to pastoral support, and provide a setting where the responsible choice becomes the easy choice¹. Encourage staff, families and the wider community to get involved.
- 4 Offer a wide variety of teaching and learning styles within PSHE education, with an emphasis on interactive learning and the teacher as facilitator.
- 5 Encourage young people to reflect on their learning and the progress they have made, and to transfer what they have learned to say and to do from one school subject to another, and from school to their lives in the wider community.
- 6 Provide opportunities for children and young people to make real decisions about their lives, to take part in activities which simulate adult choices and where they can demonstrate their ability to take responsibility for their decisions.

¹ Milio 1986 cited in Naidoo and Wills

- 7 Take a positive approach which does not attempt to induce shock or guilt but focuses on what children and young people can do to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic wellbeing.
- 8 Provide information which is realistic and relevant and which reinforces positive social norms.
- 9 Provide a safe and supportive learning environment where children and young people can develop the confidence to ask questions, challenge the information they are offered, contribute their own experience, views and opinions and put what they have learned into practice in their own lives.
10. Embed PSHE education within other efforts to ensure children and young people have positive relationships with adults, feel valued and where those who are most vulnerable are identified and supported.