

Understanding Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education: guidance for parents

What is PSHE education?

Our children are growing up in the most rapidly changing period in our history. This creates complex challenges and new opportunities.

PSHE education deals with the real life issues affecting our children, families and communities. It is concerned with the social, health and economic realities of their lives, experiences and attitudes.

PSHE education helps all children and young people – the highest achievers as well as the vulnerable and excluded – to achieve their fullest potential.

Why is PSHE education so important?

Because it:

- Promotes independence and responsibility, preparing children and young people for future roles as parents, employees and leaders.
- Improves employability by developing the personal and social skills demanded by commerce and industry.
- Contributes to health and wellbeing, encouraging individual responsibility for health (ultimately reducing cost to the National Health Service).
- Contributes to the safety and protection of our children and young people.

What does PSHE education provide for our children and young people?

Opportunities to learn about:

- **Relationships:** developing and maintaining positive relationships; dealing with negative relationships (which may include bullying and sexual violence); how to communicate effectively.
- **Health:** healthy lifestyles; healthy eating and exercise; mental and emotional health; drug, alcohol and tobacco education.
- **Personal finance:** savings, debt management and budgeting.
- **Risk:** financial and careers choices; personal safety; internet safety and violent incidents.
- **Career choices:** enterprise, business and finance.

PSHE education raises academic achievement.

It helps to address barriers that prevent children and young people from learning.

Research shows that students are more likely to do well in GCSEs if they:

- Believe in their own ability.
- Believe that events result primarily from their own behaviour and actions.
- Recognise that school is worthwhile. (They might not always have a positive experience but can still know that it is worthwhile.)
- Aspire to further/higher education or training.
- Avoid risky behaviour, smoking, cannabis use, anti-social behaviour, truancy, suspension and exclusion.
- Do not experience bullying.

What is actually taught in PSHE education?

Like other subjects PSHE education gradually builds key concepts and skills through topics that are relevant to children and young people's age and stage of development.

For example:

- *Learning the importance of the safe use of medicines and chemicals in the home gradually leads to learning about the risks associated with alcohol and drug misuse.*
- *Learning the skills of fairness and turn taking with toys gradually builds to developing the skills of negotiation and assertiveness.*
- *Learning that as we physically grow we have new opportunities and that those opportunities bring new responsibilities. This underpins the work on understanding puberty and eventually, becoming a parent.*
- *Learning to work cooperatively and to respect one another underpins learning that enables young people to understand and manage a wide range of different types of relationships.*
- *Understanding the roles of different people in our community and how they help us underpins subsequent careers education and choices.*
- *Understanding the concepts of 'borrowing and returning' and 'recognising that our actions have consequences' when combined with gradually developing numeracy skills underpins learning about the consequences and management of debt.*

Is PSHE education compulsory?

All schools must, by law, provide 'a broad and balanced curriculum' that 'prepares young people for the opportunities and responsibilities of adult life'.

How they do this is left to the individual school but there are national programmes of study for PSHE education to guide them. Some aspects **must** be taught:

- In maintained schools parts of **sex education** are statutory as part of national curriculum science. Maintained secondary schools are also required to teach about HIV, AIDS and sexually transmitted infections.
- All secondary schools must provide a programme of careers education and guidance to all pupils in Years 7-11 (age 11-16).

As a parent, how can I support my children's PSHE education?

The personal, social, health and economic development of our children is achieved through partnership between school and the family. To support your children you could:

- Go to information events for parents about the schools approach to issues such as drugs or safety that are part of PSHE education.
- Talk with your children about the issues explored in PSHE education.
- Consider joining your school's 'healthy schools' task group if there is one.

If you have any concerns about PSHE education or are worried about your child, do speak to their teacher.

This guide is endorsed by:

Parentchannel.tv: www.parentchannel.tv is an online service designed to support and encourage parents and carers of children aged 5-19, with a collection of videos addressing day-to-day questions and concerns spanning wellbeing, behaviour and learning. Relevant videos include: Boyfriends, girlfriends already / Mixing with older kids / Young love / Understanding early teens / Is my teen in an abusive relationship? / Changing families / Anxiety/Struggling to cope / Stress and depression.

Mumsnet works with the PSHE Association to engage parents in issues covered by their children's personal, social health and economic education. Visit the Mumsnet Campaigns page (<http://www.mumsnet.com/campaigns>) for more information.

Sue Atkins is the founder of 'Positive Parents' and author of publications such as 'Raising Happy Children for Dummies'. <http://sueatkinsparentingcoach.com/>