

Effective teaching

Best practice principles for teaching PSHE education

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PSHE lessons should equip young people with strategies that can keep them healthy and safe. Lessons should balance teaching about negative, risk-based messages with more positive aspects of health and relationships.

Lessons should develop knowledge and understanding, but pupils also need opportunities to develop or rehearse essential skills (e.g. risk assessment, managing influence) and attributes (e.g. confidence, self-worth), through engaging participatory activities, to help them manage situations in real-life settings.

The purpose of PSHE education is to support pupils to make safe, healthy, informed, autonomous decisions about their lives. It is therefore essential that information shared with pupils is well-evidenced, up-to-date, balanced, and factually accurate. It is unethical for PSHE lessons to set out to unduly influence pupils by presenting biased viewpoints on issues.

Assumptions about what pupils already know, believe, and can do, in relation to PSHE topics, cannot be made based on age or year group. To make sure teaching is developmentally appropriate and builds on prior learning, complete a baseline assessment to identify existing knowledge, understanding, beliefs and misconceptions. For more information, see our [Guide to assessment](#).

PSHE lessons, speakers, and materials can sometimes unintentionally glamourise harmful behaviours, such as gang involvement, or drug use. Resources and teaching approaches must also be reviewed to ensure they do not unwittingly give pupils details about how to carry out, or mask, unhealthy behaviours such as self-harm.

Fear or shock-based approaches, such as sharing 'worst case scenarios' or gory images, and approaches that induce guilt or shame, do not promote behaviour change and can have serious detrimental effects, including retraumatising young people who have been affected by the issue, 'message-blocking', and delaying seeking help.

It is essential that all pupils receive PSHE education and are able to access learning that helps them to keep themselves healthy and safe. Differentiate and adapt lesson activities to ensure all pupils can achieve the intended lesson outcomes. For more information, see our [Planning Framework for pupils with SEND](#).

When assessing learning in PSHE education, it is important to assess the progress pupils have made from their individual starting points, for example by revisiting baseline assessments and adding new learning. Provide opportunities for feedback throughout lessons to check understanding. For more information, see our [Guide to assessment](#).

Provide pupils with an opportunity towards the end of the lesson to individually reflect on how they might apply what has been learnt to their own lives. This can help to embed learning and, where appropriate, promote behaviour change. It is often more appropriate for this to be done privately and not shared with others.

Evidence suggests that when myths are presented as factual statements (e.g. in a true/false quiz) over time, pupils struggle to remember which statements are myths. Myth-busting activities should therefore be handled with care or avoided, so that inaccurate information is not reinforced.