

Perfecting



PSHE



The IOE's **Juliet Desailly** offers guidance to those coordinating the multi-faceted world of personal, social and health education...

PSHÉ is a huge area to coordinate. To begin with, just how many letters do you have in your job title? Just PSHE? Or is there a C (for Citizenship), or even another E (for Economic)? Even with just personal, social and health education to oversee it can be a challenge – but it's also a great opportunity.

PSHE is unlike any other area, as it sits both within the taught curriculum and within the whole ethos of the school. The previous government planned to make it a statutory subject last year, but the necessary legislation was never passed, meaning at present primary schools don't have to teach it. As a coordinator, one of your most challenging tasks may be to convince other teachers that PSHE more than deserves its place in the taught curriculum and should not be allowed to fall by the wayside for lack of time.

Divide and conquer

Probably the best way to deal with your role as PSHE coordinator is to divide it into its constituent parts. Most people find that the personal and social learning go together well,

but that health education, whilst having many overlaps, needs to be considered separately. You may also want to differentiate between how your subject is covered both in the taught curriculum and through the broader curriculum.

Let's start with the taught curriculum and personal and social education. Firstly, it's important that everyone is on board with why personal and social skills are so important, both within school and beyond, preparing children for a lifetime as learners, friends, colleagues, partners and parents themselves.

We know from research that emotional health and wellbeing are necessary to being a good learner. Daniel Goleman in his book *Emotional Intelligence* wrote, "Students who are anxious, angry or depressed don't learn; people who are in these states do not take in information efficiently or deal with it well." Dr Maurice Elias, a leading child psychologist, says that emotional wellbeing is "dramatically and positively predictive not only of academic achievement, but also of satisfactory and productive experiences in the world of work and marriage, even of better physical health."

Sharing quotes such as these with other staff can help to raise the profile of PSHE, and a staff meeting that reinforces the belief in the importance of building these skills and attributes can refresh teachers' enthusiasm and commitment.

It's now clearly recognised that personal and social skills need to be taught, not just 'picked up'. Some teachers will tell you that they deal with issues 'when they crop up', but this misses the point that by teaching in a systematic and progressive way children can learn to deal with issues themselves or prevent problems from occurring in the first place. It also means that children can learn in a rounded and comprehensive way. If you only dealt with friendship issues when children had fallen out, some would be feeling upset and unable to take issues on board successfully and others might well wonder, "What has this got to do with me?"

PSHE can be greatly enhanced by the use of good children's books. Audit what books you have in school and where they are – it's best to have them in general use while making sure staff know where they can find them

Over the last six years many schools have been using the National Primary Strategy SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) materials to teach personal, social and emotional skills. At its best this is a whole school programme, including assemblies and lesson ideas on themes that offer progression and coverage of key skills and ensure that everyone in the school is working together. Using the SEAL materials is probably the easiest and best way to ensure coverage and progression, and the lesson ideas can be used even if the whole school is not using the half-termly themes.

If you choose not to use the SEAL materials then it is important that there are schemes of work in place that ensure the same coverage and progression.

Cross-curricular PSHE

Aside from being taught discretely in a designated 'lesson', many PSHE skills and concepts can be discussed and highlighted through other subjects. This not only makes best use of curriculum time but also allows children to see issues in 'real life' situations and make links and connections. Why not organise a staff meeting where teachers work together to find the social, emotional and personal learning within their curriculum?





In terms of the broader curriculum, children will be learning many personal and social skills in all their daily interactions. It's worth including all school staff in training, including teaching assistants, midday meal supervisors, and office and premises staff. Think about training for staff and children in restorative approaches, peer mediation and playground games. The way staff interact with children will either strengthen or counteract the teaching in class, and affect the way people talk to each other and deal with frustrations and problems.

Self-esteem and a sense of responsibility and autonomy can be greatly enhanced by the activities children are involved in school-wide. School councils, monitors, celebratory assemblies and involving children in activities in the wider community all build personal and social skills. This is all part of broader, whole-school agendas, and the PSHE coordinator should be liaising with senior management, inclusion managers or SENCOs to ensure a seamless understanding and provision.

Health education sits partly in the science curriculum and partly in PSHE. What is taught from a scientific point of view needs extending

with consideration of feelings, relationships and moral considerations. The constituent parts of health education need to be consolidated year on year, even if some years there is a lighter touch. Coordinators will need to ensure that there's progression and continuity in teaching about drugs, alcohol and tobacco; sex and relationships; healthy eating; personal safety, including road and sun safety, and stranger danger; and exercise and fitness.

Healthy schools advisers are the best people to help make sure you have the appropriate coverage and progression, and there are many other professionals who can come into school to provide input, including school nurses, firefighters, police and railway safety officers.

There are strong crossovers between health and social and emotional teaching. For example, self-esteem and being assertive play a big part in children's ability to deal with peer pressure and make responsible decisions about drugs or sexual relationships. These skills are learned progressively, and links and connections need to be made where necessary.

Finally, and above all, be a strong advocate for the importance and value of PSHE. Make it

visible around the school in displays. Make sure it features strongly in policies and every day practice. Don't let it be sidelined – it's far too important to all our futures!

Juliet Desailly is PGCE tutor in primary education at the Institute of Education, London

Expand your knowledge

NEW PSHE COURSES FROM THE IOE...

BIRDS, BEES & BABIES – BIRTH/SEX EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Date: 4th November, 2010

Price: £190

Visit: www.ioe.ac.uk/study/PRIMARY_DC770-10A1.html

CHILD DEVELOPMENT: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR THE CLASSROOM?

Date: 22nd November, 2010

Price: £190

Visit: www.ioe.ac.uk/study/PRIMARY_DC711-10A1.html

To find out more, visit www.ioe.ac.uk **or email** enquiries@ioe.ac.uk