



Understanding
**Personal, Social, Health *and*
Economic Education *in* Primary Schools**

Mike Boddington | Adrian King | Jenny McWhirter

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SAGE Publications Ltd
1 Oliver's Yard
55 City Road
London EC1Y 1SP

SAGE Publications Inc.
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320

SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd
B 1/I 1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area
Mathura Road
New Delhi 110 044

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte Ltd
3 Church Street
#10-04 Samsung Hub
Singapore 049483

Commissioning editor: James Clark
Editorial assistant: Rachael Plant
Production editor: Nicola Marshall
Copyeditor: Gemma Marren
Indexer: Martin Hargreaves
Marketing manager: Catherine Slinn
Cover design: Naomi Robinson
Typeset by: C&M Digital (P) Ltd, Chennai, India
Printed in Great Britain by Henry Ling Limited, at
the Dorset Press, Dorchester, DT1 1HD



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First edition published 2014

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2013946791

British Library Cataloguing in Publication data

A catalogue record for this book is available from
the British Library

ISBN 978-1-4462-6875-9 (P)
ISBN 978-1-4462-6874-2

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This book is dedicated to Noreen Wetton, practitioner, researcher and friend, whose memory inspired the writing of this book.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Starting his career as an art and mathematics teacher working in both primary and secondary schools in north London, **Nick Boddington** joined the Advisory Service where he specialised in the teaching of sensitive issues including SRE, HIV, bullying and drug education. One of the first Ofsted Inspectors to be trained, he left the Advisory Service as Lead Senior Adviser for Children's Wellbeing for Essex to take up his current position as Subject Adviser with the national PSHE Association. Nick is committed to a model of PSHE that places children's individual and unique understanding of their world and their own enquiry at the centre of learning. He is co-author of a number of government documents, academic texts and teaching resources committed to improving the quality of PSHE education. He has spent over 25 years championing the importance of placing high quality PSHE at the centre of the school curriculum.

Adrian King has been a teacher in both primary and secondary schools and was Health Education Co-ordinator for Berkshire Local Authority from 1985 to 1998. Since then he has been an independent consultant, trainer and author. In 2004 Adrian was the consultant engaged to write *Drugs: Guidance for Schools* for the Department for Children, School and Families. He has been Membership Secretary of the National Health Education Group since 1986 and has also been an elected official for both the Drug Education Forum and the Drug Education Practitioners' Forum. Adrian is committed to improving the quality of PSHE education for young people, working to ensure it addresses their needs, and respects both their rights and their responsibilities.

Dr Jenny McWhirter is the Research Associate for the PSHE Association and has been interested in the health and wellbeing of children and young people since working as a part-time youth worker in the 1980s. She has been researching effective approaches to PSHE education for more than 25 years. At Southampton University she managed an MSC

in Health Education with Health Promotion and developed a special study in PSHE and Citizenship for the secondary PGCE programme. Her research includes many aspects of PSHE education, including personal finance, asthma and drug education. After leaving academia in 2003, Jenny worked for DrugScope and later RoSPA, as an education advisor. Jenny has been Chair of the Drug Education Forum and the Drug Education Practitioners' Forum. She was a member of the NICE Programme Development Group 'Strategies to prevent unintentional injuries among the under-15s'. Jenny's current research includes effective responses to drug and alcohol hidden harm.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our thanks to: Celia Allaby, pfeg; Mike Ashton, Editor of Drug and Alcohol Findings; Andrew Brown, Mentor UK; Eleanor Formby, Sheffield Hallam University; Andrew McWhirter, Claudia Pridmore and Lucy Hills (critical friends); staff and children of Banyan and Palm classes, Brindishe Green Primary School, Lewisham; Nicola Overland, Justine Mathews, Jacqui Tyler, and members of the Student Council of Moulsham Junior School, Essex; Nicola Speechly-Watson (formerly Curriculum Development Adviser with Essex Local Authority); Katherine Weare, Emeritus Professor, School of Education, Southampton University.

Also, our thanks to the following organisations: Elsevier; the PSHE Association; and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents.

Finally, we would like to thank the editorial staff at Sage Publications for their help and support.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Aim

To introduce PSHE education.

Learning objectives

Through reading and reflecting on the content of this chapter you will begin to:

- understand PSHE education and how it relates to the rest of the curriculum
- recognise the contribution PSHE education makes to children's personal development
- have an opportunity to reflect on your personal experience of PSHE education to date and consider how you can develop as an effective practitioner.

Introduction

This book has been written for students in primary teacher education and newly qualified teachers (NQTs).

It aims to give you a general grounding in the theory underpinning Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education, some practical approaches, and the evidence that supports these approaches. You will find some chapters that deal specifically with effective approaches to teaching, learning and assessment in PSHE education, plus some chapters that deal with particular topics for which you may feel underprepared – and what are sometimes called ‘sensitive issues’, such as sex and relationships education and drug education – and also safety education and personal finance education. Each chapter will encourage you to consider the evidence for effective practice, and to reflect on what you observe and how you are putting this into practice in *your* classroom.

As you embark on your professional career you may have a good idea about what you will be teaching: English (and possibly Welsh), maths, science, geography, history, religious education, perhaps French or another modern foreign language and physical education. You know you will be a class teacher, with responsibility for the safety and well-being of the children in your class while you are teaching, and with some responsibility, with more senior colleagues, for their pastoral care.

It’s possible you already have some understanding of how children develop, and some of the different ways they learn. You will develop teaching skills which will help you to maximise the learning for the children, according to their different needs. Importantly you will learn how to assess their learning needs and plan for the next steps. This book will help you understand how Personal, Social, Health and Economic education fits into all this. It will help you to see how PSHE education makes a link between all the different parts of your responsibilities as a primary school teacher and the personal and social development of the children in your care.

Getting started

We believe PSHE education is an exciting and challenging part of a primary school teacher’s role. It may be that your training has not included a great deal about PSHE education so far, or you might be thinking like some of these students we asked about PSHE education:

Is that the same as SMSC?

I remember that was the only lesson when we got to say what we thought about things that were happening to us.

PSHE – that was a waste of a lesson when I was at school.

I didn't get much from my training in PSHE – luckily my mentor was really into it. In my first school I helped plan a health week.

We also asked some experienced primary school teachers what they thought about PSHE education:

At first I was unsure about teaching some of PSHE education like sex and relationships and 'economic' education ... I didn't even know what that was!

I am not a fan of PSHE ... I am not a counsellor – my job is to teach!

We have a PSHE theme each term, focusing on a different aspect all through the school.

I use PSHE education to get my class ready to learn.

Ask some of your fellow students and colleagues what their experience of PSHE education has been – and keep an open mind while you read on.

So what is PSHE education?

Before answering this question it's important to recognise that this subject has different acronyms in different schools. You will meet PSHE teachers, Personal and Social Development (PSD) teachers, teachers of Personal, Social, Cultural, Moral, Spiritual and Citizenship (PSCMSC), Lifeskills teachers and even Personal, Economic, Social and Health Education (PESHE) teachers. We have chosen to use the term 'PSHE education' to refer to the subject (and occasionally PSHE if the terminology becomes especially cumbersome). This recognises recent developments principally in England's curriculum for ages 11–16 years which identify common concepts underpinning both personal wellbeing and economic and financial wellbeing. The PSHE Association has developed a programme of study which includes economic education for children in full-time education, and for this reason we have followed their lead.

PSHE education is a planned programme of learning through which children and young people acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills they need to manage their lives now and in the future. As part of a whole school approach, PSHE education develops the qualities and attributes pupils need to thrive as individuals, family members and members of society. (PSHE Association, 2013)

Taking a closer look at these statements we can see that PSHE education is – and should be – *personal*. For a student or recently qualified teacher this can seem one of the most daunting aspects of the subject. You may wonder if this means you are expected to take on the personal issues for every child in the class. How do you keep your own personal views about such issues as drugs or sex and relationships apart from your teaching? What do parents expect of a curriculum which is intended to develop personal understanding, attitudes and skills?

What *personal* means in the context of PSHE education is 'relevance to the *person*'. Starting from where children are (see Chapter 4) you can make the teaching of the most sensitive issues appropriate and relevant to the children you are teaching this year – who will, of course, be different from

the children you will teach next year and every year thereafter! *Personal* also emphasises the importance of identity to children and their health and wellbeing. Learning to know oneself is an important psychological task, beginning in childhood and continuing beyond adolescence, into adult life.

PSHE education plays an important part in developing children's *intra-personal* skills and attributes so that they are resilient in the face of adversity, can manage change, and have a realistic sense of their own worth and capability.

And finally, *personal* means drawing on the children's existing knowledge and experience, so that they can relate what they are learning in the classroom to their real lives, real families and real communities. One of the most important parts of any lesson in PSHE are those moments where children have the opportunity to reflect on what they have learned to do or say, perhaps as part of a group activity, and think about what it means to them *personally*, as individuals.

PSHE education is also *social*. This means it is fundamentally about relationships, whether with friends and staff at school, or with family members. Relationships between people underpin every aspect of our lives, for good and bad. Some relationships can always be relied upon to be strong and nurturing, some may be fun but brief, and others, sadly, may have the potential to damage children's health and wellbeing. The relationships children develop with their peers during primary school may last a lifetime; they may get children into trouble by encouraging dangerous risk taking or be a real source of support and encouragement in difficult circumstances. The attitudes, understanding and *interpersonal* skills they can develop through effective PSHE education will help them to enjoy the best and deal with the worst of life's challenges.

The skills children develop in PSHE education can also prepare them for the relationships they will make in the adult world, including the workplace. Where else in the curriculum can they learn to negotiate, co-operate and take responsibility for their own decisions? These so-called 'soft skills' are as much sought after by employers as academic or technical qualifications.

Health provides some of the most complex and interesting content for PSHE education. What can be more relevant to a primary school child than how their body works, why they are growing so fast, what is happening on the inside that no one can see? Of course, there are strong cross-curricular links here with the biological aspects of the science curriculum. But in PSHE education health is so much more than biology. It's about what goes on your body and in your body; about what you can do today that you

couldn't do before, and the responsibility this brings; it's about how you feel about your body growing and changing and about whom you can talk to about those feelings.

This is a good moment to ask 'What is health?' For some, health is simply the absence of disease, for others it is about achieving your full potential, whatever your physical, mental and emotional capabilities and limitations might be. There are clearly many factors which contribute to a person being healthy: biological, environmental, mental and emotional, as well as social and financial. These factors can contribute to real health inequalities: where those who grow up in poverty and in workless families – or whose diet is inadequate, or who have jobs where they have little or no control over their activities, or where class, gender or race prevent access to the best of health care – live shorter, less healthy lives than others.

In Chapter 4 you will find some suggestions for finding out what the children in your school think about being healthy – and about whose responsibility it is to keep them healthy.

Economic education is a relative newcomer to PSHE practitioners and has clear links with the maths curriculum among others. However, those primary teachers who have included personal finance and economic education in their PSHE curriculum have soon recognised children's enthusiasm for learning which goes beyond arithmetical knowledge and understanding. They have discovered children's thirst for learning about money and what money means in their lives.

You may ask why economic education is included in PSHE education and not just in maths. But the link with feelings is just as great as it is with sex and relationships education. How do you feel just before you open your credit card bill? Or when you get an unexpected gift of money? The decisions we make about our personal finances are linked to our feelings – and our identities as risk takers – as well as our capability in arithmetic.

And finally ... *education*. The word 'educate' comes from the Latin homonym 'I lead forth' or 'I raise up'. From this you can see that while education is the means by which knowledge, skills, culture and values are passed from one generation to another, it is not a passive process. It is often said that children do not come to school *tabula rasa* or as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge. Just as children are not empty vessels, they are not sponges – they do not simply absorb information, but make sense of it in relation to what they already know and understand (for more on this constructivist view of education see Chapter 2). By the time they arrive at school they have four (or more) years of

experience on which to base their understanding of the world. That experience may lead them to draw some surprising (sometimes amusing!) conclusions about school and other new things they encounter. From a teacher's point of view this may seem like 'non-sense', but it is never, ever, 'nonsense'!

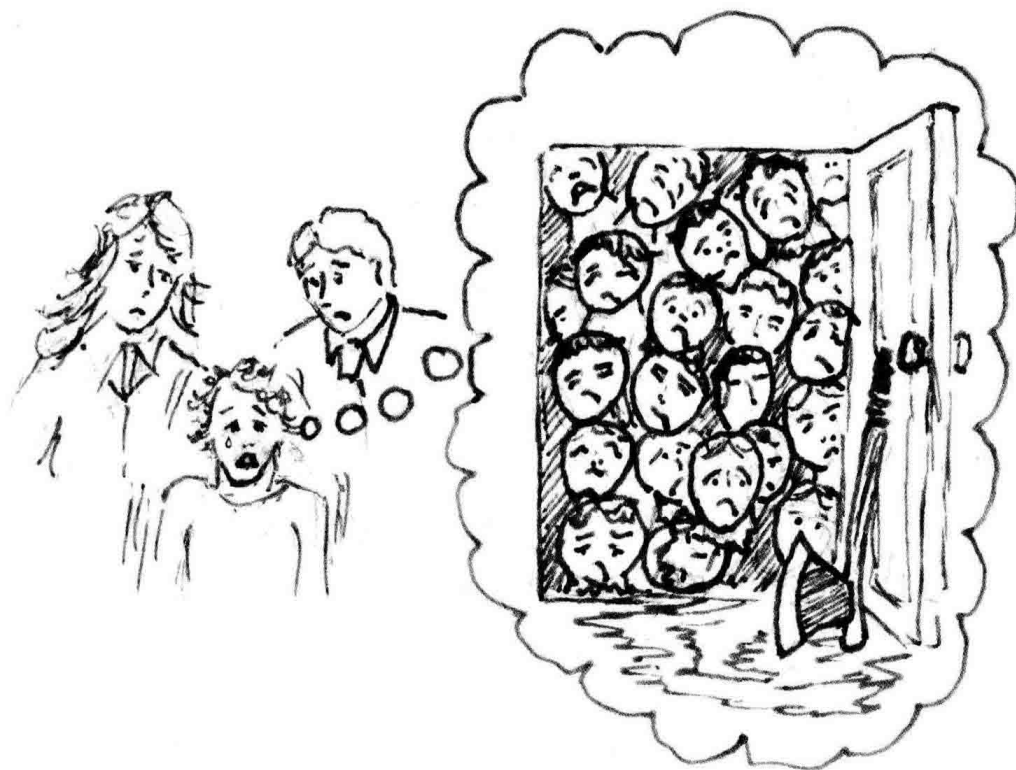


Figure 1.1 'I don't understand – all I did was ask him to come with me to the Head's room'

So, everything you learn about children's cognitive and emotional development, everything you discover about how children learn and how to teach and assess their learning, applies to PSHE education. However, there are some approaches to teaching and learning which are particularly important in PSHE education, which you may not use as frequently in other aspects of the curriculum. These will be explored in more depth in Chapters 2 and 6.

The other thing which is important to recognise about education is that it is happening all the time: not just in lessons, but in assembly,