

Guidance for school governors

Five questions to ask about drug and alcohol education in your school

This guidance aims to support school governors to discuss, with confidence, the provision of drug and alcohol education in their school. Drug and alcohol education plays a vital role in the whole school approach to drug and alcohol prevention, and in delaying first substance use, reducing harm, and preventing the development of harmful patterns of substance use in adulthood. It is taught as part of Health education, a statutory component of Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education. For details on its importance and the evidence base for best practice, please visit: pshe-association.org.uk/d&a

What should we ask our school leadership team?

1. How does our PSHE education programme equip pupils to stay healthy, safe and manage risks in relation to alcohol and other drugs?
2. Are we covering statutory content in relation to alcohol, tobacco and other drugs?
3. How does effective drug and alcohol education contribute to school inspection evidence?
4. How does our drug and alcohol education support the pastoral system and whole school policies?
5. How can school governors best support this area of school life?

1. How does our PSHE education programme equip pupils to stay healthy, safe and manage risks in relation to alcohol and other drugs?

PSHE education is a school subject through which pupils develop the knowledge, skills and attributes they need to manage their lives, now and in the future. It helps children and young people to stay healthy and safe, while preparing them to make the most of life and work. When taught well, PSHE education also helps pupils to achieve their academic potential.

A successful PSHE education programme gives pupils relevant, up to date, factual knowledge, but also builds skills and attributes which they can use to manage substance-related risks. The role of schools and PSHE education in developing confidence and resilience in young people was identified in the government's 2017 Drugs Strategy². Protective factors that can build pupils' resilience and help to prevent substance use are also developed through a number of other topics within PSHE education, such as mental health and emotional wellbeing, healthy lifestyles, forming and maintaining positive relationships, and personal safety. Therefore, it is important that drug and alcohol education is taught as part of a comprehensive PSHE education programme, to ensure that teaching on alcohol and other drugs is enhanced by, and enhances, the wider PSHE education curriculum. This should be through a spiral curriculum, through which prior learning is revisited, reinforced and extended in age- and developmentally-appropriate contexts.

2. Are we covering statutory content in relation to alcohol, tobacco and drugs?

The Department for Education (DfE)'s statutory guidance³ for Health Education requires that key stage 1 and 2 pupils be taught the facts and risks associated with drug, alcohol and tobacco use.

At key stages 3 and 4 this extends to the facts, laws, risks and consequences associated with drug, alcohol and tobacco use, and the dangers of drugs that are prescribed but that still present serious health risks. It also includes the benefits of smoking cessation and how to access support in relation to this.

However, teaching should go beyond the knowledge contained in the statutory guidance to also develop the skills, attitudes and attributes that equip children and young people to be able to respond safely and effectively to any substance-related situations they may encounter. Lessons should also include work on help-seeking and finding reliable sources of information, to ensure pupils have access to trustworthy sources of support. Information-only approaches or those based solely upon mass media campaigns do not equip pupils with the relevant skills to navigate situations involving substances in the real world.

School leaders should ensure the drug and alcohol education needs of all pupils are being met, including those pupils with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) or additional needs. This will require that teaching is differentiated to ensure that content is accessible and appropriate for learners.

3. How does effective drug and alcohol education enhance school inspection evidence?

During Ofsted inspection, the intent, implementation and impact of the curriculum, which includes PSHE provision, will be assessed, and high-quality drug education programmes also provide clear evidence for the Personal Development judgment. Drug and alcohol education provides the opportunity for students to 'develop their character – including their resilience, confidence and independence', ensuring that they 'know how to keep physically and mentally healthy', as well as helping them to 'reflect wisely, learn eagerly, behave with integrity and cooperate consistently well with others'⁴.

Independent schools are also judged on their ability to promote young people's personal development. 'Inspectors will evaluate the extent to which pupils...develop their self-esteem, self-confidence and resilience' and 'know how to stay safe and understand how to be physically and mentally healthy'⁵. Independent school inspectors will assess pupils' achievements by reflecting on pupil outcomes and 'their attitudes to learning'.

Teaching pupils how to manage social influence, pressure and risk in relation to alcohol and other drugs is vital in promoting their ability to navigate the situations in which they may encounter substances. So drug and alcohol education, as part of a wider PSHE curriculum, is key in ensuring pupils know how to keep themselves healthy and safe. This is one way that schools can evidence they are meeting statutory safeguarding expectations. In addition, competent delivery of all school subjects, including PSHE education, contributes to the evaluation of the quality of education at a school. It is therefore important that all staff teaching drug and alcohol education are trained, understand how to teach the topic safely, have strong subject knowledge and good understanding about how to incorporate assessment into their teaching.

4. How does our drug and alcohol education support the pastoral system and whole school policies?

Governors should seek evidence that the school's drug and alcohol education:

- **Is part of a whole school approach** – Effective teaching about alcohol and other drugs through PSHE education is one key element of prevention work. However, in order to achieve its aims of supporting pupils in delaying first substance use, reducing harm, and preventing the development of harmful patterns of substance use in adulthood, this teaching should be implemented as one aspect of a wider whole-school approach. An effective whole school approach sees the school's values and ethos reflected in its whole-school policies, modelled by staff, and supported by the curriculum and pastoral system. Additionally, if the school chooses to work with external visitors, they should ensure that their contribution to the drug and alcohol education programme is in line with the whole school ethos. And any external input must be in line with best practice principles, for example avoiding any input that sets out to induce shock or fear, or which (however unintentionally) glamorises or provides instruction in drug use⁶. It can also be helpful if schools inform parents about the topics being taught, in case pupils come home with questions or wish to discuss these issues

further. Whilst health education is statutory, with no right of withdrawal, your school should have an agreed approach to how it will respond to any concerns raised by parents in relation to the curriculum.

- **Supports, and is supported by, relevant whole-school policies** – It is good practice for schools to have a drug and alcohol policy. This should explain how effective drug and alcohol education supports the prevention of substance-related incidents in school alongside, for example, responses to substance-related incidents and the sanctions in place for use of, or possession of, all types of alcohol and other drugs. As with all whole school policies, the drug and alcohol policy should be kept under regular review, including ensuring that it reflects curriculum developments in drug and alcohol education. Links should be made in relevant whole-school policies, such as the safeguarding and child protection policies, and the school's drug policy, to the contribution that drug and alcohol education makes to supporting these policy areas and how it is, in turn, supported by those policies. Schools do not have to have a health education (or drug and alcohol education) policy, although many schools find it helpful to have a PSHE education policy that includes health education and the non-statutory elements of PSHE education, such as careers education, economic wellbeing, personal safety and media literacy, as well as the statutory Relationships education/Relationships and Sex education (RSE) policy.
- **Ensures safeguarding of pupils** – Statutory safeguarding guidance states that 'Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure there are appropriate policies and procedures in place in order for appropriate action to be taken in a timely manner to safeguard and promote children's welfare'⁷. Pupils will have a range of experience and understanding of legal and illegal drugs, and some may have families that have been affected by substance use. Schools should ensure that safeguards are in place, such as: alerting and liaising with relevant pastoral and safeguarding staff prior to teaching about alcohol and other drugs, a chance to withdraw from the lesson if appropriate, and signposting sources of support to staff and pupils. Some pupils may have increased vulnerability to experiencing stigma in relation to their family circumstances. Therefore, these pupils may be offered a chance to withdraw from the lesson; however, to avoid increasing any stigma, this should be handled with care.

5. How can school governors best support this area of school life?

Having a governor with responsibility for PSHE education can help to ensure that this area of the school curriculum receives adequate recognition and support, particularly as the majority of PSHE education, including Health education, is now compulsory in all schools. A PSHE education link governor can provide information to the governing body regarding progress on identified PSHE priorities in the school development plan by, for example, meeting regularly with the PSHE lead; being part of a working party on reviewing policies; attending governor curriculum committee meetings; and ensuring familiarity with relevant documentation.

For more information on all elements of PSHE education, including training for teachers leading, planning or teaching PSHE education, please visit www.pshe-association.org.uk.

For specific information and resources on drug and alcohol education, please visit pshe-association.org.uk/D&A.

References

1. Health education became statutory in all state-funded schools in September 2020. PSHE education is statutory in independent schools, although they are not required to adhere to the statutory Health Education guidance when planning their provision.
2. HM Government (2017) 2017 Drug Strategy, Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/628148/Drug_strategy_2017.PDF (Accessed: 6 October 2020).
3. Department for Education (2019) Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education, Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/908013/Relationships_Education__Relationships_and_Sex_Education__RSE__and_Health_Education.pdf (Accessed: 6 October 2020).
4. Ofsted (2020) The education inspection framework, Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/801429/Education_inspection_framework.pdf (Accessed: 6 October 2020).
5. ISI (2019) Inspection framework, Available at: <https://www.isi.net/support/publications/isi-inspection-framework> (Accessed: 6 October 2020).
6. PSHE Association and NPCC (2019) Police in the classroom: a handbook for police and PSHE teachers, Available at: <https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/policing>. (Accessed: 6 October 2020).
7. Department for Education (2020) Keeping children safe in education, Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/912592/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_Sep_2020.pdf (Accessed: 6 October 2020).



The PSHE Association is the national body for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education – the school curriculum subject that supports pupils to be healthy, safe and prepared for modern life. PSHE education incorporates health education, relationships education/RSE and economic wellbeing and careers.

A charity and membership organisation, the Association works to improve PSHE education standards by supporting a national community of teachers and schools with resources, training and advice.

Find out more and become a member at www.pshe-association.org.uk