

PSHE EDUCATION

A guide for parents and carers educating children at home

PSHE (personal, social, health and economic) education is a school curriculum subject through which children and young people learn to stay safe, healthy (physical and mentally) and prepared for life, and work, in the modern world.

As a parent/carer you are your child's first educator and play a vital role in their personal and social development. Therefore, PSHE education should always be a partnership between schools and parents /carers. This guide will support you to contribute to your child's PSHE education outside of school or through home learning. This guidance is relevant at any time, but particularly in times when children and young people are being taught remotely.

What is taught in PSHE education?

PSHE education covers many topics, which are usually organised into three themes: 'health and wellbeing'; 'relationships', and 'living in the wider world' (which focusses on careers, media literacy and economic wellbeing).

Topics in school PSHE lessons include age-appropriate teaching about healthy lifestyles (e.g. diet, fitness and maintaining good mental health); relationships, including friendships and families; personal safety (including online); growing and changing; sex education; study skills; media literacy and digital resilience (including how to recognise fake news); managing risk and personal safety; money, careers and preparing for the world of work. You'll notice that many of these topics – such as mental health and maintaining relationships – are particularly relevant in times of social distancing and isolation.

If your child is receiving PSHE lessons, then the school website's curriculum information should include details of what is covered and an outline of the planned PSHE education curriculum for each year group. This will give you an overview of what your child is being taught, and what is considered age-appropriate for them to be learning in PSHE education.

Our [Programme of Study](#) for PSHE education provides a guide to what might be taught from key Stage 1 up to key stage 5. Although this document is primarily meant for schools to help them develop their curriculum, it will give you a sense of what can be covered at different ages. Please also see our [Guide for PSHE Leads during school closures](#) for information on topics which might not be safe or appropriate for home learning.

What role can parents and carers play?

Your child's school will be delivering live lessons and providing work for them to complete during school closures, and this may include learning in PSHE education.

As a parent or carer you will already have talked to your child about (or had to support them with) many of the topics and issues covered in PSHE education, so you may also wish to supplement this learning with further discussions of your own.

Sometimes PSHE education conversations with your child will arise incidentally, when you playing or cooking together, when you are watching television or films, or through news stories. In such cases we cannot always control the stimulus for the question or conversation, only how we manage it. Other times, you may wish to initiate a conversation about a topic you feel is important to approach.

The following principles apply to teaching PSHE education in school, but can also apply when covering this content or supporting your child’s learning at home:

- It can be helpful to start talking about a PSHE topic using a stimulus — such as a storybook, film, news article, scenario or case study. It is important that any stimulus is chosen very carefully. Always ensure that the story/article/scenario you are using does not:
 - include content which might upset, shock or frighten children/young people, such as graphic, violent or gruesome images, videos, websites or documentaries (for example, some TV shows with gritty themes may explore issues sensationally and prove more instructional or damaging than supportive).
 - focus on extreme behaviours by providing worst case scenarios. This tends to make young people think ‘that will never happen to me!’
 - unwittingly instruct young people in unhealthy or unsafe behaviour, for example, providing descriptions of self-harm, or details of potentially harmful social media ‘challenges’.
 - encourage children to explore topics online, which if unsupervised might lead them to inappropriate or harmful websites/platforms.

Instead, any stimulus you choose should:

- provide positive messages about how children and young people can stay healthy and safe, for example helping them to develop strategies for staying healthy while self-isolating during the coronavirus situation, or how to safely stay connected with friends online.
 - be accurate, non-biased and balanced, for example only using reliable sources for information, such as the BBC education site, NHS website and Public Health England.
 - reflect modern day society and actively seek to address or challenge stereotypes.
- PSHE education is not therapy or counselling. In order to engage safely with the subject matter, it is important that neither you nor your child feels ‘put-on-the-spot’ or expected to share personal stories or experiences. Some tips:
 - Develop ground rules together and agree to adhere to these during PSHE discussions e.g. *“We will talk openly but we will not ask each other personal questions.”*
 - Help your child to explore a situation through the lens of a fictional person. You could use a character from a children’s storybook, film or young adult novel or videogame. Rather than “What **would you do** in this situation?” instead ask “What **could this character do** in this situation?” / “What could someone do if this happened to them?” In PSHE education we call this ‘distancing the learning’. It enables children and young people to engage objectively with the

subject matter, without embarrassment or emotional upset from being asked to imagine themselves in (or relive) a stressful experience.

- It is a good idea to find out what your child already knows, thinks and feels about a topic or issue before discussing it with them. This helps you to work out how best to pitch the conversation appropriately. You don't need to be an expert on every topic; be guided by your child's starting point and be prepared to do some research of your own should you feel unsure about a topic or question.
- PSHE education is about children and young people developing the knowledge, skills and attributes they need to manage their lives, now and in the future, so PSHE lessons provide opportunities for children and young people to rehearse how to deal with everyday situations in which they might find themselves.

Some activities that can help this might include:

- 'Card sort' (e.g. sorting or prioritising statements/ideas etc. on cards) or brainstorm — *"Which of these things help someone's physical health and which support mental health? Do any help both?"*
- Risk continuum (e.g. placing activities along a line from least to most risk) — *"If someone was going to do x... what do you think the level of risk would be? Why do you think that? What might make the situation less risky? Why do you think this is riskier than that?"*
- Zone of relevance (write a word/idea/person's name etc. in the middle, draw concentric circles around it — like a target — then ask them to write their ideas in the appropriate zones/rings from most to least relevant/useful/important etc. — *"What would be most important for someone to know in this situation? What would be less important?"*)
- Advice for a character — *"What would you suggest the character should do in that situation?" "If you could talk to the character, what advice would you give them?" "What might help them the most?"*
- Children and young people should also know where to go for additional safe and age-appropriate advice. As well as reminding your child that you are there to help them and that they can always ask you, help them recognise how to access other trusted sources of support too. For older children this will include online advice such as ChildLine (www.childline.org.uk). Unfortunately, it is all too easy for young people to find unscrupulous advice online, so be sure to provide them with the exact links and remind them that not everything they read is true.
- In PSHE education, we welcome young people's questions and want them not to be afraid to ask things they may think are silly or too difficult to ask. It is likely that your child may have already asked you a question on a PSHE education topic, and very probable that this happened when you least expected it or in a situation where giving an on-the-spot answer was not appropriate. It is a good idea to have a plan for managing questions that arise from such discussions.

For example, you might:

- Praise and respond, remembering that most young people like short, simple, factual answers. If they want more information they will usually ask more questions.
"Thank you for asking that question... here's what I would say..."

- Find out what they think first.
“Good question! What do you think about that?”
 - Delay, take time to stop and think or check information before going back to your child, but make sure you do respond.
“That’s a great question! Let me have a think about how best to answer. I will come back to you later.”
 - Provide opportunities for open questions.
“Today we talked about... can you write down a question you still have about this so we can talk about it another time?”
 - Pre-empt the type of questions they might ask. Discuss what you feel would be age-appropriate answers with friends or family. Prepare a response. Always aim to try to give a response where possible, whatever your child’s age. If you feel it is something you really cannot answer, be honest about that and explain.
“I really like that you were able to ask me that question, but you know what, that’s a question that will be answered when you are older, right now it’s not something to worry about.”
- Issues approached through PSHE education can include controversial topics on which people may have strong views and opinions — part of PSHE education is about enabling young people to reflect on these and develop their own thoughts and ideas. As parent-educators you may find that you are having to explain different points of view or that your child’s view is different or in conflict with your own. It is important to listen — be open to hearing your child’s views, explain others’ as best you can and accept that at times, we have to agree to disagree.

Staying connected

Your child’s school may be taking different approaches to home learning and may have already created some learning activities for pupils, either through online learning or home resource packs. Keep in contact with your child’s teachers through the school website or other channels they have established, such as emails, newsletters or a Virtual Learning Environment, and in the first instance support them in completing this work.