



CIOS PSHE Curriculum Module Six Sensitive and Challenging Topics

Aim

To identify sensitive and challenging topics and issues in PSHE

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the training participants will;

- Be better able to identify which are sensitive and challenging topics in their school in relation to PSHE and what makes them sensitive and challenging
- Describe an increase in knowledge in relation to challenging and sensitive issues and the importance of establishing clear boundaries in PSHE lessons, answering children and young people's questions and framing sensitive and challenging topics



Which topics and issues are sensitive in PSHE?

Sensitive issues

What is sensitive or likely to give parents or teachers cause for anxiety may vary according to the context of the school.

- What do you anticipate would cause anxiety in relation to PSHE?
- How would you normally handle sensitive issues in your school?

Sensitive issues

Following discussions with teachers these are some of the topics that they have found sensitive and challenging

- LGBT+ topics and inclusivity
- Teaching about sex and relationships, pleasure, sexual activity, pornography sex and the law and abortion in particular
- Mental health
- Alcohol and drugs
- Online risk and the positive use of technology

Why are the topics sensitive

It may be because:

- There are a variety of religious, cultural and moral views or objections to an issue or topic which are challenging to resolve along with a lack of confidence and skill in resolving and managing the range of views
- There is a fear of getting things wrong and as a result getting into trouble and making things worse
- Teachers require training and support to increase their knowledge, skill and confidence to teach some topics

Why are the topics sensitive

Taking time to explore and understand why a topic or issue is sensitive and challenging will help to find the most constructive way forward.

Ways forward

Schools may want to take time to frame the sensitive issues and to ensure parents and carers are clear about how these issues will be taught – review the lesson plans in the CIOS curriculum

Sharing how the topic will be taught with parents and carers, explaining teaching materials, may be helpful to address concerns and increase parental support and understanding

The DFE have suggested that sample teacher scripts may be used to give parents and teachers confidence in an approach to a specific topic

Religious considerations

In all schools the religious background of all pupils must be taken into account

Schools with a designated religious ethos may teach their faith perspective on any topic but should ensure that the content set out in Statutory Guidance is covered and that schools meet their duties under the Equality Act.

Creating a script

The aim of a script on a specific PSHE topic is to provide a clear framework for how a topic, or aspect of a topic is approached and taught which can be consistently communicated to everyone in the school community.

- Develop them as a team – allow enough time
- Take time to understand and address the issues
- If it is a particularly sensitive topic - create a draft, pilot and refine it – get feedback from everyone
- Use and evaluate its impact and usefulness



Sample scripts from the DFE

Puberty

“As you start to grow up, your body starts to change (physical changes) and your feelings start to change (emotional changes). This is called puberty. Different people start puberty at different ages, and it can take some time for all these changes to happen. The age at which you start puberty is not important and has nothing to do with the kind of adult you will become. It is ok to have questions or worries about puberty and you can talk about anything that is on your mind with a teacher, parent or with other trusted grown-ups.”

Mental wellbeing and sleep

“Recent evidence shows the importance of sleep for mental health, physical health, eating, attentiveness during the day. Lack of sleep can affect your everyday functioning. What works best to manage this? Some people build ‘wind down’ time before bed, putting aside electronic devices. What does the evidence show about the importance for sleep to be uninterrupted by phones and other things? Here is what the evidence tells us about the indicative amount of sleep needed e.g. for a 6 month-old baby, a 7, 10, 15 year old and an adult to ensure good health.”



LGBT + inclusion

Statutory Guidance on LGBT+ inclusivity

- schools should ensure that all of their teaching is sensitive and age appropriate in approach and content.
- ensure that LGBT+ content is fully integrated into the programmes of study for this area of the curriculum rather than delivered as a stand-alone unit or lesson.
- Expectation that all pupils will have been taught LGBT+ content at a timely point as part of this area of the curriculum

Exemplar script LGBT and Faith

Many different religions include specific teaching about family and marriage for example, some may believe that marriage and sex should be reserved for male-female couples. The law in this country allows and respects the right of people to make these choices and live their lives according to these beliefs.

Exemplar script LGBT and Faith

The law also gives people the right to make other choices. All adult citizens of this country under the law may if they wish form intimate relationships with other adults of the same or different sex, and may marry the person of their choice regardless of that person's sex and, if they wish, bring up children together.

Exemplar script LGBT and Faith

We will come across a diversity of families and relationships in our society. We respect the rights of other people to enter into relationships which may be different, or those of the faith or community we identify with, and we should value the freedoms which this country's law allows to all individuals, including us.”

Teaching stretch and panic topics

- Allow time for preparation for the lessons in the CIOS curriculum
- Seek help and support from colleagues
- Consider accessing additional specialist training – details of additional training opportunities is available from Healthy schools, Brook, Headstart and other providers
- Consider inviting specialist organisations to deliver aspects of the topic
- Discuss any topics that could be potentially controversial with senior leaders

General points

- Refer to Module 3 – think about who's in your class, their needs and likely responses to PSHE topics
- Refer to module 7 working with parents and carers – it's helpful to inform parents and carers of how a topic will be taught and what resources will be used, giving them sufficient time before a topic is taught to ask questions etc

Some tips for teaching

- **Prepare** know the topic, the lesson plan, resources, key messages and activities
- **Reiterate boundaries** and ground rules to ensure a safe learning environment for the topic
- **Use the PACE framework and Emotion Coaching skills to empathise with young people and support difficult emotions** empathy, understanding before problem solving limiting behaviour
- **Pastoral and student support** signpost and refer
- **Build your confidence** to answer questions

DofE Guidance – Answering Questions

- Teaching in these subjects should allow appropriate opportunities for pupils to ask questions to check and test their understanding
- Most questions will be relevant to what the teacher has explained, and generally questions should be welcomed – children and young people should not feel penalised or censored for asking sensible or relevant questions, even if they are occasionally awkward

DofE Guidance – Answering Questions

- If a question asks for personal information or personal views from the teacher, it may often be appropriate to direct the focus back to the topic and examples given.
- Where questions arise outside of these lessons relating to sex education, and the teacher knows there are pupils in the class whose parents do not wish them to receive sex education in school, particular care should be taken about answering in front of the whole class.

Tips for answering tricky questions relating to sex and relationships

- Don't laugh!
- Try not to show any embarrassment or discomfort
- Give a simple, honest, age-appropriate answer
- Don't give more info than asked for
- Judge whether the question should be answered
- If you do not feel it is appropriate explain why (perhaps it is a different topic, not age-appropriate, makes people feel uncomfortable), and speak to the individual at the end

Still Unsure?

- Young people appreciate honesty, if you are unsure how to answer say you will get back to them
- Have a 'whole schools' approach about answering questions
- Collect anonymous questions at the end of the session and answer them during the next session – this gives you time to check how you might answer and run anything you're unsure about by a colleague

Module 6

Teaching Sensitive and Challenging Subjects

The LGBT Consortium - Link to Factsheets

<https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/lgbt-consortium>

Stonewall and PSHE Association Best Practice Guidance

<https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/stonewall>

The Proud Trust –LGBT+ Training and Resources

<https://www.theproudtrust.org>