

PSHE Association: How PSHE Can Promote Emotional Wellbeing

Pupils can be educated about how to look after their emotional health

PSHE lessons can be used to actively promote emotional wellbeing and positive mental health. This can be done directly using schemes of work designed to provide pupils with the skills and knowledge they need to increase their emotional resilience. A [DfE-funded 2007-2010 study](#) of emotional resilience programmes in 22 UK schools, known as the UK Resilience Programme, mostly delivered through PSHE lessons, found improvements in anxiety and depression levels, and increased attainment and attendance.

Education can lead to decreased stigma and bullying

Informing and educating pupils about common mental health and emotional wellbeing issues such as self-harm, eating disorders and depression, can reduce the stigma associated to these conditions¹. Reducing the stigma associated to mental health and emotional wellbeing can better enable young people to seek the support they need to overcome such issues². Also, reducing stigma can in turn reduce related bullying. Bullying is a factor which commonly contributes to the development and maintenance of poor mental health and emotional wellbeing³ and is often covered in PSHE lessons. [A 2011 DfE survey of over 1,000 schools' anti-bullying strategies](#) found that, without exception, PSHE lessons were reported to have had a positive impact.

PSHE lessons can inform pupils about what is and isn't acceptable

PSHE lessons provide an opportunity to educate pupils about issues related to consent and healthy relationships. This can help them to develop healthier relationships, and where necessary, to exit from relationships which may be damaging to their emotional wellbeing. For example, pupils can be taught very clearly about the different types of domestic abuse including psychological, emotional and physical abuse and that there is never a situation in which it is appropriate to be abused in this way whether it is by a family member or partner. Additionally, pupils can be taught about full, informed consent, giving them the skills and knowledge they need to participate in healthy, consensual relationships. The PSHE Association recently teamed with Brook and the Sex Education Forum to develop comprehensive guidelines for schools about how to [teach sex and relationships education in the 21st Century](#).

Pupils can gain the skills and language they need to overcome difficulties

In addition to teaching pupils about issues such as abuse and consent, PSHE lessons can also be used to develop the skills and language pupils need to ask for help if they are in need of support due to concerns of a child protection, mental health or emotional wellbeing nature.

PSHE lessons can usefully signpost sources of support

Whilst PSHE teachers are not counsellors, and a PSHE lesson is never the appropriate time for pupils to make disclosures of a personal nature, PSHE lessons can very usefully signpost sources of support for pupils. They can also make it very clear to pupils what is likely to happen if they choose to make a disclosure, reassuring them that they will be listened to

¹ Penn, D. L., & Couture, S. M. (2002). Strategies for reducing mental health stigma World Psychiatry, 1(1), 20.

² Bowers, H., Manion, I., Papadopoulos, D., & Gauvreau, E. (2012). Stigma in school-based mental health: perceptions of young people and service providers. Child and Adolescent Mental Health, 18(3) 165-170.

³ Anti-Bullying Alliance (2014) Bullying and Mental Health in Children and Young People

non-judgementally, taken seriously and offered appropriate support. This will increase the likelihood of pupils choosing to make a disclosure and therefore getting the support they need⁴.

Case studies that focus on how schools are implementing PSHE can be found on the PSHE Association website - <https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/content/resources-and-curriculum>

More information can be found on the The PSHE Association website - <http://www.pshe-association.org.uk/> but they recommend the following resources to help schools develop and implement an effective PSHE curriculum.

- PSHE Education Programme of Study (Key stages 1-4)
http://www.pshe-association.org.uk/resources_search_details.aspx?ResourceId=495&Keyword=&SubjectID=0&LevelID=0&ResourceTypeID=3&SuggestedUseID=0
- Creating a PSHE education policy for your school
http://www.pshe-association.org.uk/resources_search_details.aspx?ResourceId=520&Keyword=&SubjectID=0&LevelID=0&ResourceTypeID=3&SuggestedUseID=0
- Guidance on eating disorders
<https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/common-misconceptions-about-eating-disorders>
- Talking to pupils when they make mental health disclosures
<https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/talking-pupils-when-they-make-mental-health>
- Sex and relationship education for the 21st Century
<https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/sex-and-relationship-education-sre-21st-century>

⁴ Knightsmith (2012) unpublished research following consultation with 800 school pupils.