

The Place of PSHE in Catholic Schools (1)

Report of the Meeting of Lasallian Headteachers, June, 2001.

Twelve schools were represented at the meeting and several other schools sent written reports of their views, experiences and practices relating to PSHE. In spite of the bewildering variety of nomenclature for the subject, several important themes were developed in the course of the discussions. Most of the Heads believe that PSHE is an important aspect of the school curriculum, because it facilitates consideration, by staff and students, of some important issues beyond the National Curriculum. They also believe that it is in line with the Church's convictions about educating the whole person. It is increasingly important in the light of the many contemporary challenges to an integrated and holistic view of life and society. The Heads, however, were concerned about identifying the underlying values behind PSHE delivered in Catholic Schools, about the meaning, attitudes, morality and spirituality that are conveyed by the subject matter itself, and about the delivery of the content. Whilst the examples considered showed a certain overlap of values, most of the Heads felt that the development of a clear statement of expectations for PSHE for Catholic schools would be helpful.

A diversity of staffing responsible for delivering the subject area was also apparent - these included class tutors, subject specialists, RE departments, co-ordinators for cross-curriculum delivery. Serious concern, however, was expressed that in several cases the subject was seen as an "add-on" by staff, or beyond their personal competence or training, outside their personal interests or desire. This was inevitably to the detriment of the standard of professional delivery by some staff and the quality of reception by students. Which raises important issues about the quality education we wish to offer.

The Heads were also aware that sometimes there is a tension between the Church's teachings and the lived experiences of many of the students (and staff), especially in the areas of personal relationships and education in sexuality. As a consequence, the discussion seemed to be moving towards a preference for trained specialists or a limited team of providers of the subject matter, whilst trying to safeguard collective responsibility for the Catholic ethos of the whole school

A number of practical questions were broached though not necessarily answered:

- 1) The amount of time given to PSHE varies among the schools, ranging from 1 hour per fortnight to 50 minutes per week. What is appropriate?
- 2) Recognising that Citizenship will be a legal requirement from next year, the meeting considered how this and the many issues addressed in PSHE might be better integrated into the wider school curriculum?
- 3) How can PSHE be better assessed and evaluated?
- 4) What role can community awards (e.g. as developed in Liverpool with Lord Alton) play in the delivery and raising esteem of the subject?
- 5) What resources and activities are available for the more effective delivery of the subject matter of PSHE?
- 6) Exchange of good practice or compilation of good resources in this area would be of great value to the Network.

Looking to the future development of PSHE in the schools, the Heads felt that there will probably be some significant movement in this area in the next few years in response to the needs of society. They considered that in the short term, the subject might better be delivered on the basis of more active involvement,

reflecting the needs of our young people. Finally, they felt that it would be helpful to consider how PSHE might also be better integrated with retreat programmes, service opportunities, development of self-esteem and community development as essential elements of a Catholic school. The discussion of this topic itself was felt by all to be extremely relevant, rich and worthwhile. In one sense however, the Heads' reflections raised more questions than clear answers, but this reflects the special nature of this subject for Catholic schools. The Heads looked forward with interest to the results of the next LACE weekend in October, which would be addressing this topic.

The Place of PSHE in Catholic Schools (2)

The LACE Weekend, October 2001

Terry Collins began proceedings by setting the topic in the twin contexts of recent developments and of Lasallian history. In recent government literature, we have seen an increasing amount of attention paid to PSHE and Citizenship in secondary schools, although the position at Form 6 level is less clear. In this literature, the emphasis is placed on the "knowledge, skills and understanding" which will produce "independent, healthy and confident people". However, spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues also are expected to be addressed, which raises questions about the feasibility of such an ambitious programme. It also raises the question as to the underlying values present in the programmes. Why are we doing it? Much of what is aimed at in PSHE used to be considered the whole substance of what was meant by the rich word "education". Today's rush for target setting, measurable goals of achievement and verifiable marks of progress have led to a mechanistic view of education without much soul. The move towards PSHE can be seen as a recognition of this fact and an attempt to replace what has been lost. The danger is that instead of being an integral part of the whole educational work of a school, PSHE will be just an "added-on" element, and salvation will be sought in devising the "right programme", as though there were some magic formula waiting to be invented.

In this context, it is worth taking time to compare the values accompanying the National Curriculum syllabus for PSHE with those which underly De La Salle's views on education in good manners as set out in his book entitled *Règles de la Bienséance* - "The Rules of Good Manners". Both De La Salle and the Department for Education and Skills agree that the aim is to ensure success in life. The real question is: what is meant by "success"? (The text of Terry's analysis of De La Salle's work is printed elsewhere in this issue of LACE.)

Gerry Murphy presented the programme for PSHE which he has developed in Saint Joseph's College Beulah Hill, where it is integrated into the tutor programme and thus is integrated into the whole school project and directly related to the school mission statement. Gerry explained the philosophy behind the way PSHE is to be situated within the Pastoral Curriculum. (An outline of the Beulah Hill programme is printed below.)

Martin Brown presented the programme he has introduced into Saint Illtyd's, Cardiff, explaining the differences in the approach adopted in Wales, where they do PSE rather than PSHE. He referred us to the document from Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment authority for Wales entitled "Personal and Social Education Framework: Key stages 1 to 4 in Wales". This states:

"In the school context, PSE comprises all that a school undertakes to promote the personal and social development of its pupils. This includes all the planned learning experiences and opportunities which take place not only in the classroom but also in other areas of school experiences which are features of the ethos and community life of the school"

From this it follows that it is important to audit PSE in every aspect of the school's life, creating a curriculum map for it which will enable the links to be seen. It includes, mentoring, court experience, a pastoral

team, buddy system, careers, business link, collective worship. PSHE fills in the gaps. Mapping the content enables a check to be made on individual students' entitlement. It facilitates evaluation and review in order to keep things up to date.

The Place of PSHE in Catholic Schools (3)

Conclusions of the LACE Weekend

General considerations of philosophy

PSHE is not an "add-on" for a Christian School. It is an integral part of the school's ethos and educational project. It is a subject in its own right. As far as the relationships between RE and PSHE are concerned, the right formula is "RE in PSE, not PSE in RE". They are two separate subjects. From a Christian viewpoint, the values underlying PSHE are based on the fact that we are all Children of God and as such we respect others and we respect ourselves. The aim should be to develop people who are outward looking rather than inward looking. Since PSHE is concerned with the conveying of complex human qualities, we question whether it is really possible to "teach" it as an informational subject, especially as the DfEE guidelines now include "spirituality" in the requirements. It is even more doubtful whether such a process can be effectively tested. A better approach is one that uses the imagery of a garden and the fostering of growth in students in terms of the skills and knowledge which enable them to flower.

(Ideas on how to develop spirituality in a school can be read in the report of the LACE Conference of May 2001, printed further on in this issue.)

Organisation and Planning of PSHE

There are several models for the delivery of PSHE and you need to decide which one would best suit the context and meet the needs of your school.

- a) Timetabled at the same time for the whole school. This has the advantage of enabling everybody to be involved in delivery. It is essential to involve SMT members in delivery to give status to the subject. The main problems are that this system depends mainly on tutors and the specialist knowledge needed is very thinly spread. One way of overcoming this is by asking people to develop particular areas so that different teams can be used to operate a CAROUSEL system.
- b) As a subject in its own right, using Specialist teachers. This can operate very well if the other structures in the school are seen to support PSHE (i.e. it is not isolated). Specialist staff are not easily available and few schools are prepared to advertise or dedicate posts specifically for PSHE. However, existing staff who are interested or willing (or who can be persuaded!) soon find that it is not a demanding subject once they have operated for a time. A carousel is essential for this model but there can be timetabling difficulties, e.g. finding a slot, timetabling staff from several different departments as a block.
- c) As part of RE. This was not felt to be a good model and was firmly resisted at the conference. However at St. Helens the seven members of the R.E. Department teach PSHE (called EPR) as a separate subject so that each staff member has 2/3 of a timetable for R.E. and 1/3 for EPR.

Student Grouping In most schools pupils are taught in tutor groups. Work must be prepared to suit the ability range i.e. depending on whether there is mixed ability, banding or setting. Where PSHE is a timetabled subject and blocked)setting is an option. Setting has many implications for teaching and learning and for equal opportunities (entitlement).

Training This is vital if PSHE is to be seen as valued and worthwhile. Without it teachers lack knowledge in PSHE non-specialist issues and the confidence to "handle the personal". Non-specialists often do not possess the range of teaching methods necessary to deliver. INSET days are useful to "kick-start" training or to evaluate but the main training needs to be regular, focused and based on the needs of year or topic teams, i.e. done in school in small groups. With regular and frequent training and support from SMT teachers are much less unwilling to take on PSHE and the status of the subject is enhanced.

Ethos of the School PSHE must never be seen as an isolated subject which is the responsibility only of the PSHE co-ordinator and of those teaching the subject. Other activities such as assemblies, student councils, daily routines, charity and community projects must all be part of the PSHE provision. These elements of ethos must be the responsibility of the whole school community and the monitoring of these should not be the specific responsibility of the PSHE co-ordinator.

Assessment Assessment is desirable but can go against the promotion of PSHE if it is seen as a further burden to teachers already over-stretched. Time and training are essential.

- You should be clear about what is to be assessed, and when. how and where this is to be reported.
- One school (St. Helens) reports on skills levels only (these are standardised for several subjects throughout the school) .There are formal assessment schemes (e.g. ASDAN) but they can be expensive and require a sophisticated framework.
- Certificates are always valued by pupils.
- Self-assessment has been advanced as a desirable way of minimising work for teachers. An element of evaluation of PSHE could be built into this process.
- The fact that Citizenship will have to be reported on from September 2002 may well provide ideas of how to introduce assessment for PSHE.
- Links with other Curriculum Areas. For obvious reasons, it is essential that there is good communication between PSHE and other areas such as individual Faculties/Departments, Citizenship, Careers etc

Status; this is crucial. Many of the problems associated with PSHE stem from the lack of status it enjoys in the scheme of things. The Government says it values PSHE but how is this manifest in terms of provision of real resources or insistence on certain standards? OFSTED treats the subject in a rather "woolly" way and we found no evidence of any specialist PSHE inspectors. Too much depends on the good will of teachers.

PSHE will have status only where it is taken seriously, where the SMT (particularly the Head) are committed, and where adequate training and resources are provided. The introduction of Citizenship, which will be statutory for Secondary Schools, may show us the way forward.

Practical Delivery of PSHE

Discussion focused on the essential components of a Sex Education Programme, and it was agreed that the three keys concepts needed in the whole programme are Responsibility, Respect and Love. The programme needs to be tailored to the local situation and must constantly be revised in response to the needs of young people, individual differences, changing society, a changing Church. It is important to be INFORMATIVE rather than PROMOTIVE when dealing with these issues. There is a need for parental involvement. Students must be given opportunities for personal questions. The programme must be devel-

oped in close connection with SMT and Governors. A balance needs to be maintained between the values embodied in Church, Society and School on one hand and the needs of students on other. The aim is to develop emotional intelligence and informed consciences.

PSHE at Saint Joseph's College, Beulah Hill, by Gerry Murphy

INTRODUCTION

St Joseph's, as a Lasallian Catholic School, must place particular emphasis on Christian care for the individual and for the community. The school must provide for more than what has been called, up to recently, the "academic curriculum".

"Schools should be places where the gifts of every child and young person are recognised and developed. Everyone in our school should have a sense of achievement, and self-worth; those who seem least gifted ("the poor") as well as the rest."

The aims of the College and the requirements of recent legislation place great emphasis on the need to educate the whole person. St Joseph's has always had a strong pastoral tradition. Generations of students and parents recall dedicated Brothers, inspiring Year Masters, Heads of Year and Form Tutors; men and women of incredible energy in their care and concern for their pupils.

The trend recently has been to examine the curriculum and to identify and define what the ethos of the school is. The feeling is that it is not enough to say that pastoral care is implicit in the values of the school, that it is subsumed in everything we do. The need is rather to ensure that what we do conforms to our values, ethos and policies, which should be realistic, should work in practice and should reflect the need of all members of the school to know themselves, to develop their potential and to play their part in an ever-changing society.

THE IDEAL

In the long term I do not see the Tutorial Programme as a separate "bolt on" entity. It is essential that the development of the student as a Christian person and as a Christian member of society is fostered in every subject and area of school life.

Subject based teaching (in departments) is part of the personal and social development of our students, and every classroom experience should, both in process and content, do something to advance this development. We should look for continuity and reinforcement, whilst avoiding unnecessary duplication or repetition.

It has to be said that initiatives to promote cross-curricular themes have not succeeded, because of the shift of focus under the National Curriculum towards more independent subject teaching in departments and a consequent fragmentation of the students' experience.

The new (1998) emphasis on the promotion of PSHE including Citizenship should go some way to restoring a more balanced and integrated curriculum. In any case the tutor will be the person best placed to be the central guide and monitor of the individual student who enjoys entitlement to the full curriculum, and who is learning to take responsibility for his or her own learning and development.

THE DIFFICULTIES

The anxiety of tutors about schemes of "PSHE" are well known. Many of the issues are couched in abstract language. The traditional, subject-based curriculum was seen to be concerned with instruction rather than education, initial teacher training has until recently done little to prepare teachers for "PSHE", and the IN-SET programmes in most schools concentrated mainly on subject-based areas.

The responsibility for the education of the whole person is seen as an extra by many teachers, who already feel hard-pressed by the demands of their subjects. They resent what they see as the imposition of extra responsibilities to do something for which they are neither trained, appointed nor remunerated.

This is an understandable view, but it proceeds from a traditional perspective rather than from the requirements of the job that needs to be done. The pastoral aspects of teaching any subject are neither separate nor extra since we are in the business of educating people rather than imparting knowledge and there is a need to counter this attitude by showing that the pastoral dimension complements, supports and fulfils subject teaching.

Some teachers feel that "PSE" is already covered in what they teach and in the way they teach and that there is no need for a separate extra programme. This is an attractive view, but not yet one which is substantiated with evidence from programmes of study in departments. However, there is a need to ensure that what is being covered is explicitly stated and is part of a whole school planned programme.

Society has changed dramatically in recent years. Children need values, guidance and care as well as instruction, and in many cases the only place where they can get this stable base is in school. Teachers often underestimate their own skills as helpers and carers. The intuitive counselling ability of many teachers often goes unrecognised, even by themselves. Nevertheless, teachers have valid fears and anxieties about taking on the wider role. There is a big need for INSET, particularly in informal teaching methods and class management. This is not a need confined to the demands of tutor periods only, however. We must endeavour to develop a range of delivery modes right across the curriculum.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

While many of the problems mentioned above remain, there has been considerable improvement in practice. There is an increasing acceptance of the tutorial programme among the staff, and there is more confidence among tutors. The encouragement of a team approach and the provision of more varied materials and forms of delivery have led to gratifying developments from within the College. More use of video and of visitors means that there is less of a burden on tutors. There is a growing realisation that support, collaboration and the sharing of good practice within the College are the best ways of moving forward, and Heads of Year are encouraged to use their Year Team meetings for discussion and preparation of the programme.