

FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON P.S.H.E. IN A SCHOOL

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Organisation and Planning

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. PSHE 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 LACE Conference participants. However, at St. Helen's 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 how this is 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

e.g. individual Faculties/Departments, Citizenship, Careers. It is essential that there is good communication between these areas for obvious reasons.

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 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.