

DRUGS AND THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

Report By: Liam Kernan, Drug Education Development Officer

Purpose

1. To update the Health & Care Partnership Board on the current situation with regard to Drug Education in Schools

Introduction

2. The whole approach to drugs education in schools has changed significantly over the past fifteen years. It has evolved from a 'Just Say No' message to being more mindful of what works and what the students want. The abstinence message, 'Just Say No' was not successful – seeming to encourage students towards more risky behaviour with drugs rather than steering them away from it. Students would either discount one substance, because they had been told to say no to it, but concentrate their efforts on another substance not covered in school - or they would try it anyway, find out that it did not kill them, tell all their friends, and this might then lead to teachers appearing to be discredited and all their substance use lessons then being ignored.
3. A different approach has been developed over recent years. Now there is a whole new ethos. To provide students with the information, understanding, skills and attitudes, in a credible way, to make informed decisions about their drug use, and other peoples. Whilst being very different from 'Just Say No', this still has the same values underpinning it. Nobody wants to see young people becoming damaged drug addicts of the future. This approach is all about talking about the good and the bad of drugs, preparing them for real-life situations they will find themselves in, allowing them to form their own attitude and informed opinion; all in a credible, teacher led way.
4. There is less emphasis on having a Police Officer, Customs Officer, Prison Guard or reformed addict in to talk about the harms of 'drug abuse'. The lessons are teacher led and focus on making decisions about personal risk, whether or not the student, as an individual, can see all the consequences of taking / not taking a particular substance. That is not to say the Police and other agencies don't play a part. Any teacher delivering a scheme of work can incorporate them in the lesson to bring their message to the students. Each agency is asked to deal with their own area of knowledge or expertise and not to stray outside of this.
5. When this document refers to 'drugs' or 'substances' it means - caffeine, 'over the counter' medicines, prescription medicines, alcohol, tobacco, solvents and illegal substances.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from -

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The National Curriculum

6. Statutory & Non-Statutory

The National Curriculum breaks school down into Key Stages. Key Stage 1 is years 1-2, 5-7 year olds. Key Stage 2 is years 3-6, ages 7-11. Key Stage 3 is years 7-9, ages 11-14. Key Stage 4 is years 10-11, ages 14-16.

Drugs education is not, in itself, a National Curriculum subject. Some of it is covered in Science, which is a National Curriculum subject, and is statutory. Below is a table of where drugs education comes into science - SC2 Life processes and living things;

Key Stage 1	Humans and other animals	2d; about the role of drugs as medicines
Key Stage 2	Humans and other animals	2 Health g; about the effects on the human body of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs, and how these relate to their personal health
Key Stage 3	Humans as organisms	2 Health m; that the abuse of alcohol, solvents, and other drugs affects health
Key Stage 4	Humans as organisms	2 Health m; the effects of solvents, alcohol, tobacco and other drugs on body functions

7. This is the science component, and covers the 'how and where' of drug education. It does not go into the why, possibly the most important part. Following the National Curriculum orders for science, a young person would know how the drugs work, what they do and all the damage that they cause. This essentially covers the health component. They might never get into the personal and social reasons behind substance use. Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) is where these areas would be found. PSHE is non-statutory, and is not a National Curriculum subject. As the PSHE curriculum is a programme of guidance only for schools they do not have to deliver it. Consequently, although schools endeavour to deliver these areas they are not always able to cover them as well as they would like.
8. Drug service workers write and promote packs of work, to achieve all the science orders, to be delivered in a PSHE setting. Drugs education and other subjects, such as sex education and relationships and anti-bullying, also fit into PSHE. There are elements of Citizenship (statutory at Key Stages 3 & 4), English (statutory) and many other National Curriculum subjects in all these packs - but they fit best within PSHE. This poses a problem for some schools, in establishing where best to fit this work. However, the packs always have other applications, so that schools can adapt how they are used to fit with other subject areas. The packs never go out to schools without training, to help the school see where they might fit them in and how they will approach

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delivery of this sensitive issue, whilst remaining credible and approachable to the students.

Key Stage 1	Just One Spoonful	A big book approach to whole class teaching and learning, this pack concentrates on the issue – all medicines are drugs, but not all drugs are medicines . This pack deals with literacy and health education in one go. Seen as a nice way in, it is not very explicit due to the age of the students - talking mostly about medicines. This pack will be reviewed in the spring term.
Key Stage 2	Taking Drugs Literally	A big book/interactive whiteboard approach to whole class teaching and learning, Taking Drugs Literally satisfies the Literacy Strategy, whilst delivering key health education messages. The pack is versatile and enables teachers to go as deep as they feel comfortable - only brushing on the topics, yet satisfying the national curriculum or going more deeply into the issues surrounding substance use. Again age specific - this pack concentrates mostly on legal drugs, alcohol, and tobacco but does go into cannabis.
Key Stage 3	Eastcorrie Neighbours	A harm reduction, drama approach to teaching and learning, this pack is soap based and will be launched in November/December. Harm reduction has abstinence at its core, but is pragmatic about the whole drug / drug use situation. This pack concentrates on alcohol, but brings in smoking, teenage pregnancy, legal issues and touches on domestic violence and family issues.
Key Stage 4	Balance	A video based approach to teaching and learning, this is the ' Rachel's Story ' pack. Breaking the video down into 3 lessons, Balance looks at stereotyping, managing risk and support networks. It has been in schools for nearly two years and is continually well received.
Pupil Referral Units	STONED	Straight Talking On Nearly Every Drug is a harm reduction / personal game approach to teaching and learning; focussing on those students most at risk from drugs, those in Pupil Referral Units. It is a one to one approach and encourages young people to take a good look at their own drug use through a third party.

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9. Further to these packs of work, support is given to students, teachers and parents through the website - www.drugsfaqs.org - which is available to all on the Internet. It has two sections - facts and faqs (frequently asked questions). The facts are all you need to know about substances, what they do, what they look like, the legal situation, and there is a glossary of terms. The faqs section contains the ability to ask questions and read the answers to previously asked ones. It is all anonymous and well used. The site is maintained and updated regularly.
10. There is also some free training available to schools through MerciaNet South, a training organisation set up in conjunction with Herefordshire Community Safety & Drugs Partnership and Worcestershire Substance Misuse Action Team. This training is available to any professional in Herefordshire or Worcestershire that may come into contact with substances and their use. (Contact details at the end of this document).

Drugs: Guidance for Schools

11. DfES Guidelines for schools were published earlier this year about drug education and drug incidents procedures. Broken down into several chapters, this document supersedes all previous guidance, and has updated and amalgamated it all. The most frequently used chapters are –

The context for drug education – which sets the scene, discusses the aim of drug education, its evidence base, what pupils want, and a whole school approach to the key drugs;

- Alcohol
- Tobacco
- Cannabis
- Volatile Substances (aerosols, glue, lighter fuel)
- Class A drugs (heroin, cocaine, crack, ecstasy, etc.)

Planning and teaching of drug education – issues to consider when planning and teaching;

- Trends
- Existing knowledge
- Vulnerable pupils
- Curriculum organisation

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It goes on to discuss – teaching and learning, real-life impact, peer education, external contributors, assessment, training, OFSTED and many others.

Good management of drugs within the school community – issues such as; Management responsibilities, confidentiality, role of the Police, drugs in schools, disposal and detection – including a section on sniffer dogs, encouraging schools *not* to use them.

Responding to drug incidents – this is the biggest section and the one schools need the most help with. This section includes discussion around; defining drug incidents, medical emergencies, a range of responses, parents / carers, staff conduct and drugs and recording an incident.

The school drug policy – sets the context, gives a purpose, policy development, involving the whole school, recording and disseminating, reviewing and updating, working with the media.

12. A conference was held on 20 May 2004 to disseminate these new guidelines to schools and about a third of our maintained schools attended. A few more have responded to a letter offering documents prepared on their behalf.
13. These guidelines are non-statutory and schools are not obliged to follow them. However, many schools have and it is encouraging working with so many, to make sure they get the drug message right and drug incidents are dealt with in a coherent and consistent way.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Members note the contents of this paper and support the ongoing drug education work in schools.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Drugs: Guidance for Schools DfES March 2004
- MerciaNet South Training Courses Val Comley 01432 845739
- Any of the education documents are available on the number below.

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