



TEACHER GUIDANCE

Drug and alcohol education

This guidance has been written to accompany the PSHE Association suite of drug and alcohol education lessons for key stages 1-4 developed for Public Health England. **Please read this guidance carefully before teaching any of the lessons.**

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Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE)'s statutory guidance for Health Education at primary phase requires that pupils be taught the facts and risks associated with drug, alcohol and tobacco use. At key stages 3 and 4 this extends to the facts, laws, risks and consequences associated with drug, alcohol and tobacco use and the dangers of drugs that are prescribed, but still present serious health risks. It also considers the benefits of smoking cessation and how to access support in relation to this¹.

Alongside the statutory requirements, teaching about how to manage social influence, pressure and risk is vital in promoting pupils' ability to navigate the situations in which they may encounter substances. It also contributes to safeguarding, by providing pupils with the knowledge, understanding, attributes, skills and strategies to keep themselves healthy and safe.

Teaching about drugs and alcohol should be integrated within a planned PSHE education curriculum, where it will enhance – and be enhanced by – teaching in other topic areas. For example, lessons on mental health and emotional wellbeing will include teaching healthy coping mechanisms and the importance of seeking support and help, which will feed into lessons on alcohol and other drugs and vice versa.

All children and young people have a right to effective drug and alcohol education that not only teaches them the facts about substances and their effects but also equips them with the skills, strategies and attributes to manage their lives in a substance-using society. For some children and young people this might mean the additional challenge of balancing religious or cultural beliefs or expectations that prohibit drug and alcohol use with different societal norms and influences. All PSHE education teaching should be inclusive and accessible for all, so it is important to be sensitive

to this throughout these lessons, allowing space for discussion, and avoiding approaches or language that imply that all young people will use alcohol or other drugs at some point, or that fail to recognise the importance of religious or cultural beliefs and expectations for many young people in relation to substance use.

Safeguarding

Pupils will have a range of experience and understanding of legal and illegal drugs, and some may have families that have been affected by substance use. Always prepare for and teach all lessons on the basis that there will be at least one member of the class who is personally affected by the lesson content. Making the lesson safe for that pupil will help to ensure the learning is safe for everyone.

Safeguards to put in place include:

- Alerting relevant pastoral and safeguarding staff about the topic you will be covering and encouraging them to discuss the lesson content with any pupils who are accessing support for related issues. It can be helpful to inform parents too, in case pupils come home with questions or wish to discuss these issues further.
- Giving the pupil(s) a chance to withdraw from the lesson if appropriate (without being asked to justify their absence to their peers). Consider how to follow up the missed lesson with the pupil(s), as this learning may be especially relevant to them.
- Signposting sources of support before, during and after the lesson.

¹ Department for Education, 2019. Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: Statutory Guidance for Governing Bodies, Proprietors, Head Teachers, Principals, Senior Leadership Teams, Teachers.

Creating a safe learning environment

A safe learning environment helps pupils feel comfortable with sharing their ideas – without attracting negative feedback, and avoids possible distress and disclosures in a public setting. It also helps teachers to manage discussions on sensitive issues confidently.

It is good practice to:

- work with pupils to establish ground rules about how they will behave in PSHE education lessons, such as;
 - ◇ Everyone has the right to be heard and respected.
 - ◇ We will use language that won't offend or upset other people.
 - ◇ We will use the correct terms, and if we don't know them, we'll ask the teacher.
 - ◇ We will comment on what was said, not the person who said it.
 - ◇ We won't share our own, or anyone else's, personal experiences.
 - ◇ We won't put anyone on the spot and we have a right to pass.
 - ◇ We won't judge or make assumptions about anyone.
- make a box or envelope available in which pupils can place anonymous questions or concerns, to avoid having to voice them in front of the class.
- provide balanced information and differing views to help pupils clarify their own opinions.
- be sensitive to the needs and experiences of individuals – young people will have a range of experience and understanding of legal and illegal drugs and alcohol.
- distance the learning from pupils to keep the learning environment safe and to discourage personal disclosures in the classroom.
- make pupils aware of sources of support, both inside and outside the school.

- link PSHE education into the whole school approach to supporting pupil wellbeing.
- always work within the school's policies on confidentiality, safeguarding and child protection – be aware of the procedures you should follow if a pupil confides in you or gives you cause for concern. Do not promise confidentiality if information is disclosed which suggests a pupil is at risk.

Signposting

Although it is important that pupils make personal disclosures in an appropriate, safe setting and not during the course of the lesson, appropriate support must be signposted in the lesson. This means:

- being familiar with (and sharing appropriate parts of) the school's safeguarding, or other relevant policies such as the school drug and alcohol policy. Before doing this, ensure that the policy has been updated recently – see our evidence briefing for further guidance on policies as part of a whole-school approach to alcohol and other drugs.
- reassuring pupils that they will always be taken seriously, listened to and never judged, if they make a disclosure
- making sure pupils know how to access support and – especially with younger pupils – what they might say to someone to get the help they need.

For further guidance for KS3/4 pupils on alcohol, tobacco and other drugs visit:

www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/you-your-body/drugs-alcohol-smoking/drugs

www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support

www.nhs.uk/smokefree

www.nacoa.org.uk

www.talktofrank.com

www.riseabove.org.uk/tag/drinking-smoking-drugs

For further information and support for KS2 pupils:

www.childline.co.uk – 0800 1111

Identifying and addressing common misconceptions about substances

Pupils will have a range of beliefs about substance use; some of which may be inaccurate. A range of activities is embedded within the lessons to tackle misconceptions, however some may arise within your lesson and need to be addressed or discussed further. These misconceptions may present during a discussion in the classroom or may be highlighted in the baseline activities that pupils complete at the start of each lesson. For this reason, it is essential that pupils have adequate time to complete these baseline assessments and that they are not given any examples or prompts when completing them, so that they can demonstrate what they already know and believe without teacher or peer influence on what should be included.

Below are five commonly held misconceptions that you may encounter.

If someone takes any substance once it will kill them

Pupils, especially in younger years, are particularly susceptible to polarised thinking. For example, believing that a single cigarette will inevitably cause lung cancer. If this type of belief is not addressed it may lead to children and young people not appreciating the value of cessation, as they believe the damage is already done. They may also feel worried about family members who smoke or drink. Ensuring that pupils learn that some effects of substances develop over time and that there is a benefit to cessation can help to provide a more useful understanding of commonly used substances.

All drugs are really addictive

Pupils may not differentiate between how addictive or hazardous different substances may be. If this misconception is reinforced or left unchallenged, children and young people may reject the messages they are given in lessons, especially if they see evidence to the contrary via their friends, family or their own experience. Pupils may benefit from understanding that different substances interact with the body in different ways and can be more or less addictive, this includes legal drugs such as alcohol and nicotine. Further to this, pupils should be made aware that even if a substance is not addictive, there

are risks in its use; and even though one person might not become addicted to a substance, another person might.

Everyone is drinking alcohol/smoking/using drugs, or will use them at some point

Based upon media reports and varied experiences within their families, pupils may feel that when it comes to drinking alcohol and using drugs that 'everyone is doing it.' The 2019 Key Data on Young People from the Association for Young People's Health² and NHS Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use surveys³ show that this is not the case and that most young people are making healthy decisions. Young people's perception of their peers' behaviour is often a very powerful influence on their own behaviour, so sharing these positive social norms with pupils can help them to make healthier choices by reassuring them that they are in the majority if they choose not to use substances. Several opportunities to share positive social norms are embedded within the lesson activities. It is, however, important to be aware that pupils may have differing experiences with substance use in peer groups or in the home and that there might be some peer or friendship groups, where substance use is normalised and a number of members use substances. Therefore, it is important to handle discussions carefully, ensuring that activities about norms do not exclude or shame higher risk pupils, as this may reduce their likelihood of engaging with the lessons or seeking support.

Only certain groups or 'types' of people use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

Pupils may stereotype people who use drugs, as a result of their prior experience, what they have been told by family or friends, or the influence of the media. Pupils should understand that a wide range of people use drugs, and that their use is not limited to particular age groups, cultures, or socio-economic groups. This is in order to avoid making assumptions about other individuals and to avoid a false sense of security about who is at more or less risk.

² Association for Young People's Health, 2019. Key Data on Young People 2019.

³ National Health Service, 2018. Smoking, Drinking and Drug use among young people in England.

People who are addicted to drugs are 'bad' people

As with stereotypes regarding the groups of people who may use drugs, pupils may have developed polarised attitudes towards people who use illegal drugs or alcohol. Such attitudes may include a misconception that people who use such substances are inherently 'bad.' Some pupils may have encountered drug or alcohol use within their own families and may consequently feel upset or hurt by peers expressing such views.

Using 'visitors' in the classroom to support teaching about substances

Visitors to the classroom can bring expertise that a teacher may not have, that can enhance lessons about alcohol and other drugs. Visits from professionals such as police officers can also build trust and can help to establish a first contact, should pupils need to approach officers for support. Additionally, the novelty of a visitor can add to the memorability of a session. As the teacher, you should ensure that you are present at all times, take responsibility for classroom management and that the external visitor is only asked to deliver parts of lessons in which they have expertise.

PSHE education best practice principles still apply to external visitors, so causing shock, fear or shame should still be avoided. Additionally, always meet with external visitors and work to ensure that the visitor's input will not provide instruction, or inspiration to engage, in the risky behaviours they are aiming to prevent. For example, the visitor should avoid giving too many details (such as how to access or use a substance), or unintentionally glamorising experiences.

Ensuring that pupils are aware of the visitor attending the school before the lesson will enable them to generate questions in anticipation of the visit. And always embed the learning after the visit, for example through a follow-up lesson.

Further guidance on [working with external visitors](#) is available from the PSHE Association.

Additional guidance for teachers and police officers on ensuring [police input](#) in PSHE lessons is safe and effective is also available from the PSHE Association.

Some students may raise concerns regarding police stop and search procedures either whilst discussing the law in class or if a police officer visits the school. It may help to use [government guidance](#) to explain people's rights while being searched. Additional advice on how to manage a stop and search can be found at:



[release.org.uk/law/stop-and-search](https://www.release.org.uk/law/stop-and-search)

[y-stop.org](https://www.y-stop.org)

Building teaching about drugs and alcohol into a planned PSHE education programme

A note about Covid-19

At the time of publishing, in the UK and worldwide, people are living with the Covid-19 pandemic. Whilst all aspects of drug and alcohol education are important to include in a school PSHE education curriculum, we recognise that schools may be adapting their curriculum in the light of the pandemic and recent school closures, especially during the first part of the Autumn term.

PSHE leads and teachers will need to consider carefully whether some lesson content is appropriate to teach at this time. For example, Y5-6, Lesson 1 includes information about infections, how they spread and vaccinations, which you may feel is too sensitive to teach in the early part of autumn 2020. Although the lesson does not mention Covid-19 as an example, be aware that pupils might raise questions about it during this lesson.

Baseline assessments will be essential to determine the key issues for pupils in the aftermath of lockdown and reconfigure the curriculum in the short-term if need be. With the possibility of continued or additional school closures in the future, PSHE leads should consider what is and isn't appropriate teaching for home learning – please see [further guidance](#) here.

CORONAVIRUS HUB
guidance and resources to help you and your pupils meet the challenges the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak poses
www.pshe-association.org.uk/C-HUB

Effective planning in drug and alcohol education

Drug and alcohol education should not be delivered in isolation. The knowledge, understanding, skills, strategies and attributes needed to stay healthy and safe, and to manage situations involving alcohol and other drugs should be developed throughout the PSHE education programme. These lessons focusing specifically on drug and alcohol education should be integrated into wider learning within a spiral PSHE education curriculum where prior learning is revisited, reinforced and extended in developmentally-appropriate contexts.

Ideas for differentiation have been included in the lesson plans, however you should adapt the lesson activities according to the needs of your pupils and amend lesson timings if necessary or appropriate in your context.

The lessons have been designed to address all the explicit drug and alcohol education included in the [PSHE Association Programme of Study](#) and the [DfE statutory guidance for Relationships Education/ Relationships and Sex Education \(RSE\) and Health Education](#). Teachers who deliver lessons about alcohol and other drugs must feel confident in teaching these topics and should be supported in accessing training and support.

The tables below (fig. 1 and 2) map the lesson plans against the relevant learning opportunities from the PSHE Association Programme of Study’s core themes at each key stage, which are met by these lessons. They also identify where content from the DfE statutory guidance for Relationships Education/ RSE and Health Education is addressed through the lessons.

Figure 1. Learning opportunities from the PSHE Association’s Programme of Study and content from the DfE statutory guidance addressed through the key stage 1 and 2 lessons.

KS1-2	
Lesson title and objective	Learning opportunities from PSHE Association Programme of Study – Key Stage 1
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); background-color: black; color: white; padding: 5px; font-weight: bold; margin-right: 10px;">Year 1-2</div> <div style="flex-grow: 1;"> <p>Lesson 1 <i>Keeping safe: Things that go into and on to bodies</i></p> <p>Pupils learn about the things that go into and onto bodies and how this can make people feel</p> </div> </div>	<p>Health and wellbeing: Healthy lifestyles</p> <p>H1. about what keeping healthy means; different ways to keep healthy</p> <p>H6. that medicines (including vaccinations and immunisations and those that support allergic reactions) can help people to stay healthy</p> <p>H10. about the people who help us to stay physically healthy</p>
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); background-color: black; color: white; padding: 5px; font-weight: bold; margin-right: 10px;">Year 1-2</div> <div style="flex-grow: 1;"> <p>Lesson 2 <i>Keeping healthy: medicines</i></p> <p>Pupils learn about medicines and the people who help them to stay healthy</p> </div> </div>	<p>Health and wellbeing: Keeping safe</p> <p>H29. to recognise risk in simple everyday situations and what action to take to minimise harm</p>
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); background-color: black; color: white; padding: 5px; font-weight: bold; margin-right: 10px;">Year 1-2</div> <div style="flex-grow: 1;"> <p>Lesson 3 <i>Keeping safe: medicines and household products</i></p> <p>Pupils learn rules about keeping safe around medicines and other household products</p> </div> </div>	<p>H31. that household products (including medicines) can be harmful if not used correctly</p> <p>H33. about the people whose job it is to help keep us safe</p>

Year 1-2	—	<p>Health and wellbeing: Drugs, alcohol and tobacco</p> <p>H37. about things that people can put into their body or on their skin; how these can affect how people feel</p>
Lesson title and objective		Learning opportunities from PSHE Association Programme of Study – Key Stage 2
Year 3-4	<p>Lesson 1 Safety rules and risks: medicines and household products</p> <p>Pupils learn about the safe use of medicines and household products</p> <p>Lesson 2 Safety rules and risks: alcohol and smoking</p> <p>Pupils learn that caffeine, cigarettes, e-cigarettes/vaping and alcohol can affect people’s health</p>	<p>Health and wellbeing: Healthy lifestyles (physical wellbeing)</p> <p>H1. how to make informed decisions about health</p> <p>H3. about choices that support a healthy lifestyle, and recognise what might influence these</p> <p>H4. how to recognise that habits can have both positive and negative effects on a healthy lifestyle</p>
Year 5-6	<p>Lesson 1 Managing risk: medicines</p> <p>Pupils learn how the correct use of medicines, and how vaccinations and immunisations, can help to maintain health and wellbeing</p> <p>Lesson 2 Managing risk: legal and illegal Drugs</p> <p>Pupils learn about some of the risks and effects of (legal and illegal) drug use</p> <p>Lesson 3 Managing risk: influences and pressure</p> <p>Pupils learn about the reasons why people use drugs; managing situations and peer influence</p> <p>Lesson 4 Managing risk: drugs and alcohol in the media</p> <p>Pupils learn that mixed messages about drugs use in the media exist and that these can influence opinions and decisions</p>	<p>Health and wellbeing: Keeping safe:</p> <p>H10: how medicines, when used responsibly, contribute to health; that some diseases can be prevented by vaccinations and immunisations; how allergies can be managed</p> <p>H40: about the importance of taking medicines correctly and using household products safely (e.g. following instructions carefully)</p> <p>Health and wellbeing: Drugs, alcohol and tobacco</p> <p>H46: about the risks and effects of legal drugs common to everyday life (e.g. cigarettes, e-cigarettes/vaping, alcohol and medicines) and their impact on health; recognise that drug use can become a habit which can be difficult to break</p> <p>H47: to recognise that there are laws surrounding the use of legal drugs and that some drugs are illegal to own, use and give to others</p>

H48. about why people choose to use or not use drugs (including nicotine, alcohol and medicines)

H49. about the mixed messages in the media about drugs, including alcohol and smoking/vaping

H50. about the organisations that can support people concerning alcohol, tobacco and nicotine or other drug use; people they can talk to if they have concerns

Relationships:

R28. how to recognise pressure from others to do something unsafe or that makes them feel uncomfortable and strategies for managing this

Living the Wider World: Shared responsibilities

L1. to recognise reasons for rules and laws; consequences of not adhering to rules and laws

Content for KS1-2 from the Department for Education's statutory guidance for Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education

Topic: Physical health and fitness

- how and when to seek support including which adults to speak to in school if they are worried about their health

Topic: Health and prevention

- about personal hygiene and germs including bacteria, viruses, how they are spread and treated, and the importance of handwashing

Topic: Drugs, alcohol and tobacco

- the facts about legal and illegal harmful substances and associated risks, including smoking, alcohol use and drug-taking

Figure 2. Learning opportunities from the PSHE Association's Programme of Study and content from the DfE statutory guidance addressed through the key stage 3 and 4 lessons.

KS3-4	
Lesson title and objective	Learning opportunities from PSHE Association Programme of Study – Key Stage 3
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); background-color: black; color: white; padding: 5px; font-weight: bold;">Year 7-8</div> <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>Lesson 1 <i>Understanding drugs</i> Students learn about substance use and the risks and effects of caffeine consumption</p> <p>Lesson 2 <i>Nicotine: risks and influences</i> Students learn to understand and manage influence relating to tobacco and nicotine product use</p> <p>Lesson 3 <i>Alcohol and risk</i> Students learn about the risks and consequences of alcohol use</p> </div> </div>	<p>Self-concept:</p> <p>H5. to recognise and manage internal and external influences on decisions which affect health and wellbeing</p> <p>Drugs, alcohol and tobacco:</p> <p>H23. the positive and negative uses of drugs in society including the safe use of prescribed and over the counter medicines; responsible use of antibiotics</p> <p>H24. to evaluate myths, misconceptions, social norms and cultural values relating to drug, alcohol and tobacco use</p> <p>H25. strategies to manage a range of influences on drug, alcohol and tobacco use, including peers</p> <p>H26. information about alcohol, nicotine and other legal and illegal substances, including the short and long term health risks associated with their use</p> <p>H27. the personal and social risks and consequences of substance use and misuse including occasional use</p> <p>H28. the law relating to the supply, use and misuse of legal and illegal substances</p> <p>H29. about the concepts of dependence and addiction including awareness of help to overcome addictions</p> <p>Managing risk and personal safety:</p> <p>H30. how to manage risks to personal safety in increasingly independent situations, including online</p> <p>H31. ways of assessing and reducing risk in relation to health, wellbeing and personal safety</p>
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); background-color: black; color: white; padding: 5px; font-weight: bold;">Year 9</div> <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>Lesson 1 <i>Exploring attitudes</i> Students learn about drugs and young people's attitudes and behaviours regarding drug use</p> <p>Lesson 2 <i>Drugs, the law and managing risk</i> Students learn about the potential legal consequence of using illegal drugs</p> <p>Lesson 3 <i>Drugs and their effects: Alcohol and cannabis</i> Students learn about the short and long-term effects of alcohol and cannabis use on individuals</p> <p>Lesson 4 <i>Managing influence</i> Students learn how to manage peer and other influence in relation to substance use</p> </div> </div>	

Forming and maintaining respectful relationships:

R16. to further develop the skills of active listening, clear communication, negotiation and compromise

R20. to manage the influence of drugs and alcohol on decision-making within relationships and social situations

Social influences:

R42. to recognise peer influence and to develop strategies for managing it, including online

R43. the role peers can play in supporting one another to resist pressure and influence, and access appropriate support

R44. that the need for peer approval can generate feelings of pressure and lead to increased risk taking; strategies to manage this

Lesson title and objective

Learning opportunities from PSHE Association Programme of Study – **Key Stage 4****Lesson 1 Substance use and assessing risk**

Students learn about the impact of substance use on risk-taking and personal safety

Lesson 2 Substance use and managing influence

Students learn how to manage influence in relation to drug and alcohol use

Lesson 3 Help seeking and sources of support

Students learn about the support available for individuals with problematic substance use, including addiction and dependency

Self-concept:

H4. strategies to develop assertiveness and build resilience to peer and other influences that affect both how they think about themselves and their health and wellbeing

Health-related decisions:

H14. about the health services available to people; strategies to become a confident user of the NHS and other health services; to overcome potential concerns or barriers to seeking help

Drugs, alcohol and tobacco:

H19. the consequences of substance use and misuse for the mental and physical health and wellbeing of individuals and their families, and the wider consequences for communities

H20. wider risks of illegal substance use for individuals, including for personal safety, career, relationships and future lifestyle

H21. to identify, manage and seek help for unhealthy behaviours, habits and addictions including smoking cessation

Managing risk and personal safety:

H22. ways to manage risk and personal safety in new social settings, workplaces, and environments, including online

H23. strategies for identifying risky and emergency situations, managing these and getting appropriate help, including where there may be legal consequences (e.g. drugs and alcohol, violent crime and gangs)

Social influences:

R35. to evaluate ways in which their behaviours may influence their peers, positively and negatively, including online, and in situations involving weapons or gangs

Content for KS3-4 from the Department for Education's statutory guidance for Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education

Topic: Drugs, alcohol and tobacco

- the facts about legal and illegal drugs and their associated risks, including the link between drug use, and the associated risks, including the link to serious mental health conditions.
- the law relating to the supply and possession of illegal substances.
- the physical and psychological risks associated with alcohol consumption and what constitutes low risk alcohol consumption in adulthood.
- the physical and psychological consequences of addiction, including alcohol dependency.
- awareness of the dangers of drugs which are prescribed but still present serious health risks.
- the facts about the harms from smoking tobacco (particularly the link to lung cancer), the benefits of quitting and how to access support to do so.



The PSHE Association is the national body for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education – the school curriculum subject that supports pupils to be healthy, safe and prepared for modern life. PSHE education incorporates health education, relationships education/RSE and economic wellbeing and careers.

A charity and membership organisation, the Association works to improve PSHE education standards by supporting a national community of teachers and schools with resources, training and advice.

Find out more and become a member at www.pshe-association.org.uk