

Effective safety education: a briefing paper for all those involved in helping children and young people to stay safe

What is this briefing paper about?

Every child matters: The aim of children's services throughout England is to ensure that all children, whatever their background or circumstances should have the support they need to:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

Some children are more vulnerable than others: children in Social Class V are 3.5 times more likely to be killed or seriously injured in a road accident than children in social classes I-III (DfT, 2006).

This paper provides a summary of the evidence for effective safety education. The evidence has been drawn from work carried out mainly in schools, for children and young people aged 5-16 years and is summarised as 10 principles. Each principle is accompanied by a brief description to guide you in your choice of resources for safety education, or to help you when you are developing resources.

The principles have been derived from a review of evidence and evaluated by practitioners in a wide range of organisations and by members of the PSHE Association.

The review is available on the PSHE Association website
<http://www.pshe-association.org.uk/resources/safety.aspx>

An audit framework, based on the principles is also available on the PSHE Association website. <http://www.pshe-association.org.uk/resources/safety.aspx>

The framework has been tested with a wide range of resources including: print, DVD and multi-media resources for the classroom; policy documents; Theatre in Education; outdoor and adventurous activities and community based safety events (such as Crucial Crew or Junior Citizens).

Who is the briefing paper for?

This paper has been written to help teachers and other practitioners who work with children aged 5-16, mainly, but not exclusively, in schools. It has also been written for those with responsibility for co-ordinating safety education at a school level, at local or regional level, including Local Safeguarding Children's Boards and for those who have responsibility for

choosing and purchasing resources for schools. Those working with children in informal settings such as youth and community groups may also find some of the principles helpful.

The paper has also been written for all those who develop resources to help children and young people to stay safe.

What is safety education?

In this review we have included two different aspects of safety, which are important to children and their families: injury prevention (sometimes known as accident prevention) and personal safety.

Personal safety includes bullying, prevention of child abuse and abduction and violence prevention.

How can I use the principles?

You can use the principles to help you decide which are the most appropriate resources to help children and young people to stay safe. You might use the principles to update your school policies on child safety or to review your existing programmes of study. You can also use the audit framework, available on the members' section of the PSHE Association website* to carry out a detailed review of any resources you are already using, or are considering using and to identify gaps in provision, whether in the curriculum, at a whole school level or in the wider community.

Although the principles have been provided as a list, it is clear that there are many overlaps between the principles. For example, a resource that encourages or reinforces a whole school approach should also include ways of working in partnership with other agencies and parents. Equally, an approach that encourages children to be involved in making real decisions about their safety, must first assess their learning needs.

In safety education, resources come in all shapes and sizes, so it is important to make sure that anything designed to help children and young people to stay safe (for example a community safety event for Year 6, a whole school anti-bullying programme, or a visit from a road safety officer for Year 1) meets as many of the principles as possible. However, it is also important to recognise that very few, if any, resources can deliver all 10 principles. Some resources will be designed to focus on some aspects more than others. By using a variety of resources in and outside the classroom you are more likely to develop an approach which can help children and young people to stay safe.

The role of teachers

It is clear that external providers cannot deliver effective safety education based on all the principles outlined below, although they play an important role as partners, who can enrich and add value to a whole school approach. Effective safety education requires strong leadership and good co-ordination across a whole school.

Principles of effective safety education

A review of the evidence for effective safety education has suggested that resources should address 10 principles:

1. Encourage the adoption of, or reinforce, a whole school approach, within the wider community

Resources may deliver all or part of whole school approach and should encourage or reinforce a whole school approach. A whole school approach encompasses the formal and informal curriculum, policy (both as written and as implemented) and the relationships among staff, pupils, parents, carers, with other agencies and with the wider community.

2. Use active approaches to teaching and learning (including interactive and experiential learning)

Active approaches to teaching and learning include all strategies in and out of the classroom where the learner:

- *seeks out information for him or herself,*
- *develops a physical skill,*
- *engages in discussion about a topic in pairs or groups (interactive learning),*
- *is engaged in problem solving independently or in a group,*
- *adopts a role, or considers an issue from someone else's viewpoint.*

Active learning may draw on the learner's personal experience (experiential learning.) A resource should describe how to manage the classroom climate e.g. using ground rules, using distancing techniques.

3. Involve young people in real decisions to help them stay safe

Involving young people includes young people's participation in real decisions about keeping themselves safe, in and out of the classroom. Young people may be involved in designing or participating in surveys, participating in their school council, choosing which activities they want to take part in outside the formal curriculum, in peer education projects, in mentoring or peer support. Activities for young people should include identification of hazards, participating in risk assessment (e.g. assessing whether risks are trivial, tolerable or intolerable) and being part of actions to control or manage risk to themselves and others.

4. Assess children and young people's learning needs

Local and national evidence can help to identify factors that suggest children of a particular age or group are at risk. Teaching and learning strategies to address these needs should reflect the age and developmental stage of the learner, take account of social and cultural needs and the effects of gender on safety related behaviour and learning. Strategies to assess learning needs can involve open ended forms of questioning, whether through informal discussion, mind mapping, brain-showers and circle time. They may also include more structured formats, such as surveys, focus group discussions, interviews or 'draw and write' activities.

5. Teach safety as part of a comprehensive personal social and health curriculum

A comprehensive personal social and health curriculum helps children and young people learn how to keep themselves healthy and to stay safe. It provides opportunities to learn specific and transferable skills and knowledge in a wide range of circumstances, but with attention to feelings, skills, attitudes, values and attributes. Topics should be introduced in the early years at school and extended and revisited throughout the key stages, introducing more specific language, knowledge and skill as the child develops (spiral curriculum). A comprehensive personal social and health curriculum will offer pupils a specific time and place to learn about being healthy and staying safe (such as dedicated PSHE time) but will also be cross curricular, drawing on different programmes of study (e.g. maths, English, science, drama) to help young people access and use relevant information.

6. Use realistic and relevant settings and resources

Real life data and examples (but not those designed simply to shock) help to engage young people and to challenge misconceptions e.g. 'bullying is acceptable behaviour among children' or 'accidents just happen' where necessary. (Using data in this way is also known as a normative approach).

7. Work in partnership

Develop links with supporting agencies such as police, fire and rescue, local authorities, and educational charities where these add value to work carried out in schools and other settings. Work with parents/carers and members of the wider community by seeking their views, providing information and guidance and involving them in developing and implementing solutions.

8. Address known risk and protective factors

Risk and protective factors can be anything that is associated with a greater or lesser probability of a child or young person experiencing harm. Risk factors are not static and can be divided into several domains:

- *individual (e.g knowledge or skill)*
- *school (e.g. policy)*
- *peer group (e.g. attitudes)*
- *family e.g. (parental rules) and*
- *community (e.g. crime).*

An understanding of risk and protective factors can help those designing and delivering safety education resources to focus on wider aspects of injury prevention and personal safety.

9. Address psychosocial aspects of safety e.g. confidence, resilience, self esteem, self efficacy

Psychosocial risk and protective factors are individual characteristics that may predispose children to injury, or to being a victim of bullying, violence or abuse. Psychosocial aspects of behaviour operate dynamically with environmental factors, reinforcing the importance of incorporating individual protective factors (such as confidence, resilience, self esteem, self efficacy) within a whole school, whole community approach.

10. Adopt positive approaches which model and reward safe behaviour, within a safe, supportive environment

It is helpful to identify the short and long-term benefits of maintaining safe and healthy behaviour, and of modifying behaviour that is harmful to health. Children and adults learn from observing and modelling the behaviour of others, including peers, and generalise their expectation of positive outcomes across different domains.

Finding a balance

In researching and writing this briefing paper we talked to a large number of people who were concerned about young people's safety, but also concerned not to discourage children from being physically active and enjoying challenge. It seemed that as well as the list of principles of effective safety education people also wanted to be sure that safety education reflects the values which underpin safety education, and which include respect for:

- all human life,
- the rights of children and young people to live safely and confidently in a changing world,
- the rights of children and young people to have a say in the decisions which are made about their safety
- the rights of children to make informed choices about the risks they take

and the responsibility of families, schools and communities to provide:

- opportunities for children to make informed choices
- opportunities for children to discover their physical and emotional capabilities through play and exploration
- a safe, secure environment in which children can grow and develop.

Resources

As part of the development of this briefing paper members of the PSHE Association used the principles to review examples of resources for safety education. These resources represented the different kinds of resources available, including activity centres, print and electronic resources, Theatre in Education and national guidance. Some of the examples, which covered several principles, are listed below, in alphabetical order. This list is not intended to be comprehensive. You will be aware of many more resources that are available to you, which can be reviewed using this process.

- Bowles Outdoor Activity Centre: Kent
A centre offering outdoor and adventurous activities for all age groups
<http://www.bowles.ac/>
- Health for Life (1 and 2): A guide for primary school teachers to PSHE and Citizenship, based on research with children
<http://www.nelsonthornes.com/wps/portal/Teachers/Primary/pshe/healthforlife>
- Miss Dorothy.com: A multi-media safety education programme which includes a website, DVD and work books for children <http://www.missdorothy.com/>
- The Lifeskills Centre, Bristol: Offers opportunities for children and young people to learn about safety by experiencing risk in a controlled setting <http://www.lifeskills-bristol.org.uk/>
- Risk Watch: A comprehensive approach to safety education for primary schools, supported by training for teachers from the fire and rescue service <http://www.notts-fire.gov.uk/internet/NottsFR/NottinghamshireFireAndRescue.nsf/Outer?OpenFrameSet&Frame=Inner&Src=/internet/NottsFR/NottinghamshireFireAndRescue.nsf/0/f67b7acbee40f3bb80257171002a2e35?OpenDocument>
- Safety Education Guidance (DfES, 2001): Non-statutory guidance on safety education developed to support teachers in all phases of compulsory education
<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=3111>
- 'Wasted': A Theatre in Education production by the Walking Forward Theatre company about road safety for pre-drivers <http://www.walkingforward.co.uk/>

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