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## Joleen A. Lewis

### Promoting positive PSHE - Our approach at Lostock College

At some point in your career you may have been called upon to deliver PSHE and RSE content but PSHE and RSE can often evoke feelings of embarrassment and uncertainty. I have vivid memories of my own secondary school form tutor, nervously rambling through a lesson on 'reproduction' and looking as if he wanted to dissolve into the floor beneath him. At that time, my classmates and I, sensing fear, perhaps contributed to his feelings of dread toward the subject; however, since becoming an adult and ironically a PSHE and RSE educator, I empathise with him, and apologise profusely.

The thing is, teachers are busy professionals and are expected to have expertise in several areas (Walker & Milton, 2006). PSHE being one of them, but, for many educators, PSHE and RSE are rarely first-choice subjects and are often delegated to others (Alldred & David, 2007), because of anxieties towards the subject.

#### Our approach

At Lostock College, our curriculum needed quality PSHE, RSE and Citizenship and so we not only have PSHE lessons for 1 hour a week, but, in 2015 we also decided to implement whole school 'Super Learning Days' (SLDs). These SLDs occur approximately once every half term (5 each academic year) and as the name suggests, provide our students with an opportunity to explore PSHE and take part in learning beyond the usual constraints of a classroom. We also implemented 'British Values' within the SLD themes to support preparing young people for life in modern Britain.

#### Planning

Before each SLD at Lostock College staff are expected to meet in their SLD teams; the Senior Leadership team have allocated time on the

school calendar for 'prep meetings', this enables staff to plan meaningful and effective sessions and activities.

#### What is involved?

For each SLD, the whole school timetable is collapsed and not only students, but staff too can work in cross-curricular teams with colleagues they may not usually get the chance to work alongside; this brings a variety of specialisms and expertise to each team.

The SLDs are usually delivered by staff and are taught on a rotating timetable to a specific year group who focuses on a PSHE theme, for example for our Autumn 2017 SLD:

- Year 7-Relationships (Anti-bullying and Peer Pressure)
- Year 8-Being a good citizen
- Year 9-Personal health (Substance abuse)
- Year 10-RSE (Sex and the law)
- Year 11-RSE (Healthy relationships and guest speaker from Stonewall)

As a staff body we recognise that there are some areas of PSHE that we are less equipped to deliver, and for that reason we sometimes seek expertise from multi-agency professionals, this is to ensure our young people are receiving the highest quality PSHE and RSE information possible.

External agencies such as St Johns Ambulance, Barclays Bank, Stonewall and our local PCSOs are just an example of some of the experts who have been scheduled onto our SLD timetable. Students also get the opportunity to enhance their PSHE learning off site, PSHE visits have included; the Apprenticeship Road show, the Museum of Science and Industry, and Manchester and Trafford Town Halls.

## Assemblies

At Lostock College we take pride in our weekly assemblies, they are another way in which we approach PSHE and RSE at our school. Our assemblies have a strong focus on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and incorporate PSHE themes and British Values. Recently we have even had assemblies delivered by some of our own young people on topics such as LGBTQ awareness and tolerance for others.

## Feedback

Each term, students are asked to review their experiences of the SLD sessions they have attended, their feedback is available for staff to view, take on board and implement future changes if necessary. Completing an anonymous online questionnaire allows students to give their honest opinions on whether they liked or disliked their SLD sessions, although, as I am sure you can imagine, they are usually very forthcoming with honesty to my face whether they are asked for their opinion or not.

Figure 1. (below) show some of the responses taken from the 'Winter 2017 pupil questionnaire' SLD.

## Relationships and Sex Education

This Spring, my year 8 PSHE class were looking at the topic of relationships, and for one lesson we focused on identifying signs of healthy and unhealthy relationships amongst young couples. I battled with the idea that teaching 12 and 13-year olds about intimate relationships was too young and I even had a moment of uncertainty as I stood at the front of the class Period 5, the last lesson on a Friday afternoon, ready to deal with giggling students and inappropriate comments, none of which happened.

I believe that this uncertainty stems from my

own cringe-worthy experiences of sex education, and unfortunately, within the British culture, sex and relationships are still not spoken about sensibly; there are still misconceptions, myths, stereotypes and prejudices (Blake, et al., 2012). Despite my insecurities, I delivered the lesson, enjoyed it and sent my students off for the weekend with a homework task which required them to write a response to a fictional letter from a 'confused teenager' who was in an unsafe relationship. I was not sure what to expect, but a week later, 21 out of 25 pieces of homework were returned.

Twenty-one practical, mature and sensitive responses (Figure 2. below) from 12 and 13-year olds; these students were certainly not too young to show empathy and understanding.

Figure 2. Responses from the homework task

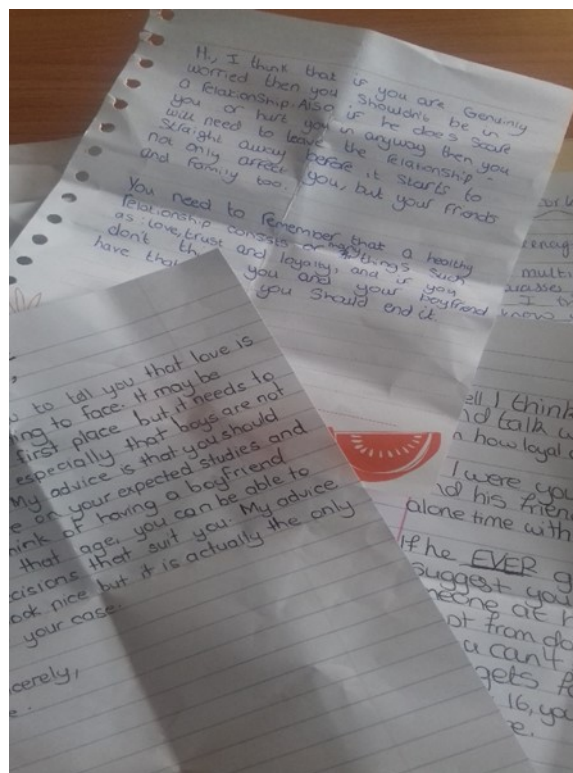


Figure 1. Responses from the Winter 2017, Super Learning Day Pupil Questionnaire

'I enjoyed SLD because' ...

- 'The lessons were delivered in an engaging way which allowed us to interact.'
- 'I enjoyed it because you learn things you don't learn in normal lessons.'
- 'I enjoyed most of the Super Learning Day sessions because they were teaching us about some very relevant topics.'
- 'Because sometimes you can go on school trips and learn with different teachers that haven't taught you.'

## Our vision

At Lostock College, through our Super Learning Days, assemblies and PSHE lessons, we aim to confront several of the social issues that are relevant in our student's lives; being mindful that quality PSHE and RSE supports young people, not just during their adolescence but throughout their lifetime.

## References

- Allred, P. & David, M. (2007). Get real about sex. *The politics and practice of sex education*. Buckingham: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Blake, S., Beal, S., Handy, L. & Muttock, S. (2012). *Assessment, Evaluation and Sex and Relationships Education: A Practical Toolkit for Education, Health and Community Settings*. London: Jessica Kinglsey Publishers.
- Walker, J. & Milton, J. (2006). Teachers' and Parents' roles in the sexuality education of primary school children. *Sex Education Journal*, 6(4), pp. 415-428.

## Education and Health

The journal, published by SHEU since 1983, is aimed at those involved with education and health who are concerned with the health and wellbeing of young people. Readership is worldwide and in the UK include: primary; secondary and further education teachers; university staff and health-care professionals working in education and health settings. The journal is online and open access, continues the proud tradition of independent publishing and offers an eclectic mix of articles.

**Contributors** (see a recent list) - Do you have up to 3000 words about a relevant issue that you would like to see published? Please contact the Editor

## Education and Health Archive

Each issue of the journal, published since 1983, is available via the archive. There are several simple indices that help to identify articles by keywords; year/issue number; author surname and article title. It can be seen that some contributors have had a number of articles published and there are a range of topics that have been covered over the years. Sometimes a contributor will update their article or develop points raised by another contributor. The pages on the website, that have been provided for the Education and Health journal, usually have the highest number of 'reads' across all pages on this Internet site.

## SHEU

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*"The (SHEU survey) helped us to prioritise where we needed to be in terms of PSHE education. We delivered assemblies based on the evidence as well as curriculum development, and dealt with whole school issues – particularly in regard to pastoral care. The answers received to the question on the survey Who are you most likely to approach if you needed help worried staff as teacher was not a popular answer. Subsequently the staff asked themselves why this had happened and what needed to be done to address the issue. There was more emphasis on wider aspects of PSHE education delivery, which needed more attention. To summarise, the (SHEU survey) allows the PSHE department to assess the impact of teaching and learning and modify future lessons accordingly. It allows our school to look at whole school issues such as the extent to which the pastoral care system is meeting the needs of our pupils. It helps us to do need analysis of our pupils. It helps to provide important evidence for SEF / the extent to which we are meeting wellbeing indicators / National Healthy School standards."* Secondary School Head

For more details please visit <http://sheu.org.uk>