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A school's programme for Social and Personal Education

Part 1 of this article, based on work done in a co-educational school, aroused widespread interest, and Sue Sissons found her work reported in the national press and even on television. However, the tone of such comment as we have seen and heard was not very profound, and seemed to concentrate almost exclusively on the amount of washing reported by her pupils!

Part 2 follows up the research reported in the last issue of *Education and Health*, and is based on a document circulated to school staff by the Social and Personal Education team, of which she is co-ordinator. — Ed.

A team was formed in this large co-educational school in February 1981 with the aim of reviewing work already going on in the field of Social and Personal Education (SPE). This was to be followed by curriculum planning for the implementation of a co-ordinated programme. The purpose of SPE may be defined as making available information on social and personal matters that will enable pupils to:

- (a) Explore and consider the implications of various courses of action in relation to themselves and others;
- (b) Make decisions about their own actions.

In this article, I propose outlining the SPE team's definition of Social and Personal Education (see next page), as well as listing the general aims of the course and outlining the priorities for each year. A starting-point for implementation will be identified, and the place of SPE in the curriculum considered. The methods of teaching thought most suitable will also be outlined.

Year 1

This is an introductory year and should

include work related to helping pupils to settle in a new school situation; getting to know each other; the layout of the school; who's who; what we must, and must not, do; interpreting the timetable and preparing for each day; homework.

In addition, it should include:

- Work which helps pupils understand their own body and its functioning — change and physical growth related to the changes at puberty; menstruation and how to cope with it.
- Work related to caring for the health of their own bodies — personal hygiene.
- Work which helps pupils recognise that they do have choices which will influence their present and future health, e.g., food choices; choices related to safety — home, road, and school.

Year 2

This should be a continuation year, and should include:

- Work which helps pupils come to terms with the physical, social, and emotional changes taking place within themselves and their peers.
- Work related to caring for the health

THE AIMS OF SOCIAL AND PERSONAL EDUCATION

To give pupils the opportunity to discuss health related behaviour using their own and given knowledge.

To provide an opportunity for young people to clarify their attitudes and values related to social and personal matters.

To help pupils accept the normality of individual differences.

To help pupils form relationships and get on with other people.

To help pupils become aware of their choices in controlling their own destiny.

To help pupils know themselves.

To develop empathy.

To help pupils lead full and happy lives.

To encourage pupils to take an interest in aspects of life which can affect their own futures e.g. local and central government.

To make available the opportunity to share and develop the knowledge and feelings pupils have of themselves.

To increase pupils' knowledge of Social and Personal matters.

of their own bodies – e.g., smoking.

- Work which helps pupils to understand the importance and responsibilities of friendship; to help them exercise empathy when conflict arises; and to resolve such conflict in their developing relationships with family, friends, and authority.
- Work which helps pupils to develop a scheme for leisure – this might take the form of project work on leisure, which could include their own interests and hobbies. Some work could also be done on environment and community provision, with a view to increasing an awareness of, and use of, facilities available. A local register could be drawn up.
- Work which awakens and clarifies the pupils' awareness of the effects of advertising, and which introduces them to the rights of the consumer.

Year 3

At this age, choices are widening considerably for most pupils. They may be taking on part-time jobs (and so have more money to spend); they may be forming boy/girl relationships; and they make their option choices for future courses of study.

- Work should therefore include the building-up of an awareness of the choices that are available, and consideration of the effect such choices may have on their future life. It is important, that pupils of this age appreciate that patterns of behaviour established now will have implications for the future.
- Work including the assessment of the risk involved in behaviour, such as smoking, should encourage pupils to accept that they have choices and are capable of making them.
- Work on relationships started in the second year could be extended to include further consideration of relationships with their peers. This would include clarification of sex roles and consideration of choices of sexual behaviour available to them, together with the implications of these choices. Contraception might be introduced here.
- Work on skills to be developed for effective study, e.g., revision planning and techniques, examination tactics.
- Work on the choices available related to their future education.
- Work related to money management both now and in the future: bank

accounts, forms of saving.

Year 4

Pupils should be encouraged to look to the future and consider the way their choices and responsibilities are likely to change. This could include work done in careers.

- Work done must look outward to society and should include helping students to make decisions regarding their own health-related behaviour and consideration of specific issues, e.g. alcohol.
- Work which helps pupils cope with the management of stress. It could include specific references to management of study time, examinations, interviews, etc.
- Work should be included which broadens students' social awareness, and how public decisions can influence a person's health, e.g., health services, fluoridation, and attitudes to physical and mental handicap. Students should be made aware of the role they will, in future, be able to play in these decisions, e.g., local and central government.

Year 5

This is a "short" year, and should include work which further develops aspects covered in years 1-4, e.g., self-image (portraying one's image in public), consideration of the part played by good grooming, and communication skills – both written and oral.

Further work on leisure would seem desirable, in view of the rising unemployment problem.

Fitting SPE into the curriculum

At the present time, due to staffing and timetabling difficulties, it is not possible to allot a single spot for SPE. It must, therefore, take the form of an integrated programme, and such a method of implementation requires careful planning and co-ordination. The team is, initially, seeking the co-operation of form teachers and the careers, home economics, maths and

science departments.

In view of the overwhelming task of implementing a full five-year course at one time, the team is in favour of identifying one year for a full course, with smaller objectives in other years. It is felt that year 1 is the best place for the full course, for the following reasons:

- (a) Much of the work identified as being important to that year is already being done in science and "home and family" lessons, and could be further developed;
- (b) First-year pupils would accept the inclusion of this type of work as normal;
- (c) A firm foundation would be established for the development of the course in future years.

It is anticipated that the first section of the course outlined for year 1 in this document will be implemented by form teachers using the "active tutorial" model. The second section will be covered by the science department, and the third and part of the fourth in "home and family" lessons. It is hoped that form teachers will undertake the road-safety aspect of the fourth section.

Some areas of work in years 2 and 3 will also be implemented at once, but a full programme will not be attempted in these years at this stage.

Teaching methods appropriate to year 1

There should be an emphasis on group work (e.g., discussion skills and role play) to establish methods of working in SPE.

- Simulation games can be used to increase pupils' knowledge and aid retention.
- Interviewing develops communication skills and question formulation. If these are taped, they help to build listening and language skills.
- Observation: noticing and perceiving, preferably in a structured way: e.g., observing pedestrian/cyclist behaviour at a spot they may have identified as dangerous on the way to school.
- Creative/artistic work could be encour-

aged through a campaign, e.g., road safety.

- Experimentation: testing and validating, e.g., using a Colgate pack with disclosing tablets to identify plaque.
- Using visitors to develop social behaviour and awareness.
- Field trips/visits: involvement in large and small groups, awareness of the image portrayed by a group.
- The use of handouts or leaflets to provide basic information.
- Creative writing and reporting.

Conclusion

The team ended by making the following recommendations:

- (a) An integrated, co-ordinated approach to SPE;
- (b) Acceptance of year 1 as a starting-point for implementing the course;
- (c) Adoption of the techniques of teaching outlined above, with a view to a high degree of pupil involvement in their own Social and Personal Development.