

*Personal, Social and Health Education in the National Curriculum is supported through initiatives which help to integrate Information and Communications Technology into the classroom.*

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## Lyn Dawes

# ICT and Health Education

The use of Information and Communications Technology has much to offer to the teaching and learning of PSHE.

**H**ealth Education is often undertaken as a component of Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) in the National Curriculum, with children's life experiences used as a starting point.

An aim of the PSHE curriculum is to provide pupils with a practical approach to dealing with what happens to them, so that young people are able to make informed choices about health issues, and to accept responsibility for their decisions. PSHE can enable young people to live healthily and deal with the spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues they face as they approach adulthood.

### Information and Communications Technology

What can Information and Communications Technology (ICT) offer to Health Education?

The integration of ICT into UK classrooms is proceeding under the National Grid for Learning (NGfL) initiatives, bringing new opportunities for teachers of PSHE. The use of ICT has much to offer to the teaching and learning of PSHE. Ensuring that young people have the ability to gather and understand information is a central aim of PSHE teaching, especially in the area of Health Education in schools.

ICT can contribute to the teaching and learning of PSHE, and specifically Health Education, through:

- ✓ **Enabling access to information:** previously inaccessible information can be accessed, and there are

opportunities for interrogating and cross checking sources.

- ✓ **Allowing communication with others across distances and times:** the ability to understand and learn from and with others through collaboration and communication is crucial to the development of informed and independent young people.
- ✓ **Providing support materials for current issues:** the use of ICT supports the provision of information from social interest groups, such as the police and health education groups.
- ✓ **Allowing ideas and opinions to be tested in different contexts:** e-mail, chat rooms and online debates enable pupils to test and discuss ideas with others outside their immediate circle. Use of computer simulations and other interactive materials let children ask 'what if' questions and test consequences. Simulations permit safe exploration of scenarios which are hazardous or unavailable to children in real life.

### The Internet

Use of the Internet offers great advantages to support Health Education. The immediate advantage is access to up-to-date, relevant and comprehensive information. One of the main uses of the Internet globally is to access information about personal health.

The skills to both find and then make meaning of web based information are usefully taught in schools. The classic phenomenon of people searching through the medical encyclopaedia and becoming convinced they are exhibiting terminal symptoms of every illness described can be readily replicated electronically!

Classroom use of Internet sites presents

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somes specific problems:

- ⇒ Sifting through sites to locate appropriate resources is time consuming, particularly for a large topic such as drug education. Finding high quality classroom-friendly resources can be difficult. Some useful links are included below
- ⇒ The use of filtering software can be problematic when teaching a subject such as 'sex education'. Students should have access to sites with clear information and resources, but filtering software can block useful sites as well as inappropriate sites. Sites which are NGfL badged (such as those on the Virtual Teacher Centre) have content which has been assessed as suitable for school use. A link to the DfEE site dealing with aspects of Internet safety is included below
- ⇒ Information on the Internet may not be accurate. Critical evaluation of a range of web sites can help young people to understand this

### Web Links

<http://vtc.ngfl.gov.uk/docserver.php?temid=190>  
PSHE resources on the Virtual Teacher Centre

[http://www.qca.org.uk/ca/subjects/citizenship/citizenship\\_PSHE.asp](http://www.qca.org.uk/ca/subjects/citizenship/citizenship_PSHE.asp)  
QCA PSHE Guidance for schools

<http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/>  
The Wired for Health site links to the sites below and offers further information for teachers

<http://www.welltown.gov.uk>  
Developed by the DoH and DfEE to promote health issues for Key Stage 1 pupils aged 5-7 years. NGfL badged

<http://www.galaxy-h.gov.uk>  
Similar to above and aimed at Key Stage 2 pupils aged 7-11 years. NGfL badged

<http://www.lifebytes.gov.uk>  
Aimed at Key Stage 3 pupils aged 11-14 years. NGfL badged

<http://www.mindbodysoul.gov.uk>  
Aimed at Key Stage 4 pupils aged 14-16 years. NGfL badged

<http://www.hda-online.org.uk/>  
Health Development Agency main site

[http://www.d-2k.co.uk/index\\_flash.html](http://www.d-2k.co.uk/index_flash.html)  
Trashed: NHS site aimed at older children dealing with serious themes to help reduce drinking/drug use

<http://www.nrgize.co.uk/>  
Sites aimed at children to encourage fitness

<http://www.netdoctor.co.uk/directory/authorities>  
Provides a searchable directory of all Health Authorities

**Teachers may have little time to trial software, making it difficult to assess the potential and then justify purchase from a limited budget.**

<http://safety.ngfl.gov.uk/>  
The DfEE Superhighway Safety Website gives both background and technical information on many aspects of internet safety

<http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/closet>  
Games and information for children about their health. US Site

<http://search.britannica.com/search?ref=A01001&query=health&exact>  
Information about health in the Encyclopaedia Britannica

<http://www.ixquick.com>  
Fast search engine with good matches for your queries

### CD ROMs

CD ROMs are an invaluable format for interactive content, and can provide simulations and models of otherwise unavailable situations. CD ROMs are a robust format for electronic information, and coursework can be planned and built around their content.

Pupils can use re-writable CD-ROMs to produce multimedia storyboards involving consequences and decision branches. There are some disadvantages in the field of Health Education: some CD ROMs are aimed at a broad range of ages, and therefore may seem too basic for older students. CD ROMs and their licenses can be expensive, while their content may date rapidly. Teachers may have little time to trial software, making it difficult to assess the potential and then justify purchase from a limited budget. Some help with evaluating software is included below:

<http://www.becta.org.uk/technology/software/curriculum/evaluation1.html>  
Evaluation of software for schools

<http://www.teem.org.uk>  
Teacher evaluation of software

<http://www.superkids.com>  
Provides software reviews.

<http://besd.becta.org.uk/>  
The Becta Educational Software Database contains up-to-date information about educational software titles.

### E-Mail

E-mail allows pupils to communicate their ideas with others nearby and at a distance, to discuss issues and to contribute to debates. The speed of e-mail can be used to support meaningful dialogue with experts in different aspects of health education. E-mail is extremely motivating because of the level of personal

involvement required, and because sending messages and receiving rapid replies holds a great deal of interest.

The main difficulty with e-mail use is ensuring that e-mails sent and received by pupils are appropriate. The options for schools include such measures as providing e-mail access via a local authority server, keeping e-mails in a 'holding area' for content checking, and making pupils aware of safety issues such as not giving personal details online. Teaching pupils to use electronic mail responsibly can be an aim of both ICT and Health Education. The problem for teachers is that their duty to protect students from inappropriate e-mails must be balanced with encouraging the use of e-mail for educational purposes.

E-mail exchanges can be disappointing, with little interaction between schools either in the U.K. or in other countries. However e-mail can also provide young people with rewarding collaborative projects, so it is worth persisting. Links to help establish suitable partnerships are included below:

<http://vtc.ngfl.gov.uk/docserver.php?docid=723>  
One way to initiate and sustain e-mail projects, and links with suitable partners.

<http://www.eun.org>  
The European Union Website which has lots of partnership opportunities.

### New uses of ICT

The use of DVD to deliver interactive video, background information and activities can extend and develop the current use of videotapes for Health Education in classrooms. Video conferencing can be a useful tool for arranging interactive 'expert' seminars and developing discussions to supplement those undertaken by e-mail. Interactive whiteboards

are very useful for encouraging participation in whole class debates.

As the range of hardware and software develops, so new educational uses are found for these resources. In the field of education, it is always important that teaching and learning objectives are put first. That is, in a school context, technology is employed to support teaching aims, and is not used simply because it is available. Teachers and Health professionals, with their knowledge of curriculum requirements and health issues, are best placed to create, evaluate and disseminate good practice in use of emerging technology in Health Education. The PSHE area of the Virtual Teacher Centre has links to educational resources, organisations, and to teachers working in this area.

<http://vtc.ngfl.gov.uk/docserver.php?docid=2158>  
The PSHE area of the Virtual Teacher Centre

<http://www.becta.org.uk/teaching/pedagogy/technologies/suppliers.html>  
New technology for teaching and learning

### Support

ICT can support the teaching and learning of Health Education in a variety of ways. Its main advantages for teachers and learners are access to comprehensive, up-to-date information, and speed and ease of communication. An awareness of the advantages and disadvantages associated with ICT can ensure that expectations for its use are realistic, and that ICT supports rather than dominates teaching and learning.

As the technology is evolving, so teachers and health professionals are in the process of generating good practice in ICT use in Health Education. ICT provides a medium for sharing such new knowledge.

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