

'The Extra Guest': not just another alcohol video!

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'Alcohol education' can easily become information-based, negative, and prescriptive. When the Schools Health Education Unit was offered the chance of evaluating and developing teaching materials for a new 'alcohol' video called *The Extra Guest*, it was soon realised that here was a rich resource for general social education. The video is attractive, absorbing, and raises a multitude of issues that are relevant to PSE work with secondary pupils.

Some three years ago I attended a meeting where representatives of the police, health & welfare, and social services professions reviewed some 'alcohol education' materials for use in schools. They were not very cheerful viewing – fifth-formers sitting around in an empty classroom explained why it was foolish to drink, and a white-coated medic with a skull on the desk exhibited a jar containing an addled liver.

The solemn messages conveyed by these videos went down quite well with the audience, an officer from the drugs squad commenting that he had found the one with the skull was the best, and he used it all the time. I have a feeling (or is it a hope?) that a group of practising teachers might have given the videos a merrier passage, given the evidence that social behaviour is strongly affected by social rather than cognitive forces.

I wonder what that audience would have made of *The Extra Guest*, which begins with crates of drink being loaded into a youth club, and birthday boy's Dad telling him to "keep the nippers off

the booze" before clearing off and leaving them to it? One thing is clear – it is going to be a good party, and plenty is going to happen before the 28 minutes are up!

As you would expect of a resource funded by the drinks industry, the theme is sensible drinking, not abstinence. However, it is the hidden messages that emerge from the characters and situations that make it a first-class teaching resource. The value I already saw in it at my first viewing has increased enormously as a result of repeated viewings, experience of its use in the classroom, and the insights of other teachers.

What the video does

The stated objectives of the video and accompanying materials are to help pupils in the following ways:

1. To be aware of the physical, social, and emotional effects of alcohol misuse.
2. To understand laws relating to alcohol use.
3. To recognise the pressures and

- influences which can lead to alcohol misuse.
- To identify situations where these pressures may be applied.
 - To develop the confidence and assertiveness skills to resist these pressures.
 - To be able to make informed decisions about their drinking or non-drinking behaviour.

However, the extent to which the issues raised by the video exceed the limited brief of orthodox 'alcohol' education' may be seen by the following checklist of some of the issues, comments, and criticisms that were raised during its pilot use in secondary schools:

- Under-age drinking*
- Parental responsibility*
- Titch [a very young boy] should not have been there*
- Don't mix drinks*
- Off-licence: drinks easily available*
- Publican on the ball*
- Bringing additional drink to the party*
- Spiking drinks*
- Resisting pressure*
- Unsociable behaviour (Andy's neglect of Jane, Bob on machine)*
- Spacing of drinks*

- Food*
- The 'goody-goody' group*
- Dave relaxes - increases in confidence*
- Vodka in kitchen*
- Confidence/lack of control*
- Relating to known characters (Grange Hill)*
- Lack of discussion of long-term effects*
- Concern for Titch*
- Was break-up of party due to drink?*
- Host leaving party*
- Driving*
- Sex stereotyping*
- Morality of individual characters*
- Lack of smoking*
- Lack of swearing*
- Not enough mess*
- Being hooked on machines*
- Limits (units of alcohol)*
- Turning to alcohol for solace - when Jane was rejected*
- Turning to alcohol for courage - Eddy bighead - sexual*
- Party collapsed when things went wrong - 'friends' disappeared*
- Age limit for that sort of party*
- Does this film really promote sale of alcohol?*

Support materials


The Unit was contracted to develop materials to support the use of *The Extra Guest* in the classroom. The use of the

Characters, key lines, and notes

- MR STEVENS (Nick's father) . . . "Don't act like one."
"Keep the nippers off the booze."
- MRS STEVENS (Nick's mother) . "There's time for that later."
- NICK (his party) "I'm not a kid."
"What the hell's happened?"
- JANE (Nick's sister) Tries to get Andy to dance.
Dances with Eddy.
- ANDY (DJ) Preoccupied with playing records.
Ignores Jane.
- CHRIS Calls Dave a "lovesick parrot."
Takes Titch home after he collapses.
- BOB Boy with car who's just passed his test.
Plays space invaders.
"I'll break the record even if it kills me"

Fig. 1. Some of the labels attached to each character in 'The Extra Guest'.

Fig. 2. One of the study scales used to promote discussion about characters in 'The Extra Guest'.



Please write SEX..... SM4
CLASS.....
DATE.../.../...

Character study scales:
Andy, Dino, drink mizers, Chris

CHARACTER: ANDY (DJ). Preoccupied with playing records.

Remember	Not at all									Easily
Like	Dislike									Like
True to life	False									True
Character	Weak									Strong
Behaviour	Not approve									Approve
Would you like this person as a friend?	Not at all									Very much

CHARACTER: DINO. Drinks whisky...Throws up..."I feel awful."

Remember	Not at all									Easily
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video and the development of supporting materials and their methods of use were studied in two separate projects in Devon and Somerset, altogether involving 45 teachers and 2500 pupils in 37 schools. The work proved the material to be stimulating and relevant for pupils between the ages of 13 and 19, as well as for their parents - the older pupils often said that it was not really for their age groups, but were nonetheless enthusiastic about examining, from their own experience, the issues raised.

The realisation that its scope was much wider than the makers may have intended is reflected in the range of activities presented in the final version of the materials. In addition to knowledge about and attitudes towards alcohol consumption, there is a substantial section devoted to character-study. To help discussion, distinguishing labels can be attached to each character using the list shown in Fig. 1, and the pupils' feelings about each one may be examined and recorded using the grid in Fig. 2.

Teaching strategies for PSE

One of the general aims of health education is to encourage individuals to take responsibility for themselves and their

responsibility for themselves and their behaviour. The most effective approach for achieving this is for the teacher to do the following:

- To act as a 'facilitator' of children's learning, directing them to the sources of information, rather than handing it to them on a plate. The teacher does *not* have to be the fount of all knowledge.
- To share the control with the class. This leads to children being able to take some responsibility for themselves and their own learning, whilst the teacher is there for support.
- To accept that in spite of all the information, attitude work, and skills considerations, pupils may form opinions and behave in ways of which the teacher disapproves.

In association with Sue Plant, formerly Senior Advisory Teacher for Health Education in Devon, a list of appropriate teaching strategies have been derived. As well as being suitable for use with the video, they will prove valuable for any PSE course: one example of a teacher's worksheet is reproduced in Fig. 3. The important point is made in the materials, and repeated here since it applies to all experiential work in the classroom, that

Fig. 3. Part of a worksheet from 'The Extra Guest'. Most of the strategies described in these materials are appropriate for general group work in PSE.

<p>TS8 Attitudes</p>	<p><i>AB 15 mins</i></p>
<p>Social norms and attitudes related to drinking <i>Drinking Choices</i></p> <p>With regard to alcohol <i>Alcohol Education Syllabus 11-16</i></p> <p><i>Technique</i></p>	
<p>In order to look at attitudes and values in relation to those of others, good methods are to ask pupils...</p> <p><i>Either to stand on an imaginary line which has an opposite point of view at either end;</i></p> <p><i>Or to go to different corners of the room according to how strongly they feel about the statements.</i></p> <p>Discussion takes place between people at different areas or parts of the line, and pupils can move to different places as they begin to think again about the issue.</p> <p>This is a most effective technique, which is well worth persevering with until the teacher and the class feel at ease with it. Both teacher and class will need to learn to organise themselves and co-operate in the task — PE and drama teachers are often well equipped to carry out this activity, and</p>	

many of these activities may be seen by pupils as inconsequential games unless the teacher (1) is clear as to the purpose of the activity (in other words, has established clear aims and objectives), and (2) allows time to examine the outcome of the activity in a debriefing session. This will ensure that the 'process' of learning is complete. Such questions might well be...

How did that feel? And why?

How does it apply to me?

What have I learned from the experience?

How can I use what I have learned?

Parents can be invited to see the video and discuss the programme prior to the children receiving it, thus providing information, allaying fears, and establishing channels for dialogue between parent and child. Under such conditions children will, it is hoped, receive maximum sup-

port. This can be very helpful for parents in clarifying their position with respect to their children's use of alcohol: the video also provides a productive agenda for debate at parents' meetings.

The first edition of the video and support materials was published in 1987. The package has been completely revised and reprinted, and consists of teachers' notes and photocopiable worksheets, as well as the 28-minute video.

The Extra Guest package was sponsored by the Portman Group (a drinks industry initiative against alcohol misuse), and has been produced with the support of the Health Education Authority. It costs £12.50 including postage and packing, and copies are available from the HEA Schools Health Education Unit.
