

Parent/Carer & Governor Information

What is “Drug Education” in primary schools?

Drug Education is well established in primary schools in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. But you may not always find it called that. Many schools will include drug education within wider and important areas such as “Me and My Body” and “Keeping Myself Safe”. What you won’t find is young children being “fed facts” about illegal drugs. The excellent work being done by teachers in our schools will encourage children to understand and marvel at their bodies and how they work. They will learn how important it is to look after their bodies and how to understand and deal with risks that they will face in their lives. As part of this, they will learn that many drugs, used correctly, can be helpful for them. But as they get older, they will also understand that legal drugs used carelessly and illegal drugs can be dangerous and even life threatening.

It is not just knowledge children will gather and understand. They will be helped to develop important skills to enable them to “keep themselves safe”. This will include resisting pressure from others and being able to make their own decisions. This is known as the “Life

Skills” approach to Drug Education. In this way, Drug Education is not a separate “subject” in schools but a part of what is called Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE).

Do schools have to include Drug Education in their work?

Yes they do. Drug & Health Education includes understanding how the body works and how it can be affected. The importance of healthy relationships with family and friends and how to manage these, is another key component. Effective Drug & Health Education also encompasses developing an understanding of the importance of mental health, alongside physical health.

The statutory guidance for **Relationships Education and Health Education** (which form part of PSHE) and **National Curriculum Science** state the knowledge, understanding and skills which are appropriate for primary aged pupils. (See links on reverse.)

Surely primary school children are too young to learn about drugs?

It would be reassuring to believe that young children are protected by their innocence. Unfortunately, we know this is not so. Although very few primary age children will experiment with legal or illegal drugs, they are increasingly hearing about drug use through the media and sometimes through older



children. We know that although very young children will have no awareness of the word “drug”, as children get older they rapidly acquire further knowledge. A very few older children will show that they have a level of knowledge and “street language” which indicates a personal association with the drug culture of older teenagers. A lot of knowledge that is acquired haphazardly by children in this way can be “half knowledge” – not fully understood and sometimes dangerously inaccurate. Looking ahead we know that very many teenagers will, by the time they are sixteen, either be offered an illegal drug or will know someone who has used illegal drugs.

The most widely used drugs are nicotine and alcohol, and these are often misused by young people. We cannot afford to wait until they are teenagers to offer them protection. We can be reassured that most primary school children will recognise that drugs carry real dangers and will say that they will never “say yes” to drugs. But we know the real difficulty teenagers face is



Did you know?

- ◆ Life Education operates in 9 countries and in the UK reaches nearly 1 million children every year.
- ◆ Life Education in the UK is part of Coram, the UK’s first children’s charity.
- ◆ Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Life Education began in 1999 and visits 35-45 schools per year reaching over 10,000 young people, over 1000 parents/carers and many school staff.

“saying no”. We, as adults, cannot be constantly at their shoulders to advise them. If they are to be enabled to make healthier and safer choices, we must equip them with the skills, knowledge and understanding they need – and this must start in the primary school.

What is Life Education?

Life Education started in Australia and debuted in Britain in 1986 with one of its avowed aims being to “give children a sense of awe and wonder about their bodies”. It was launched in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough in 1998 thanks to the energetic and committed fund raising of the Life Education Trust supported by Rotary Clubs, businesses and individuals across our region.

It is now operated as a fully traded service within the Cambridgeshire PSHE Service, Cambridgeshire County Council. Over 250 primary schools have now been visited.

How does the Life Education Mobile Classroom help?

The principles upon which the Life Education approach is based are wholly

supportive of existing work in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough schools. It is not about “scaring children” about drugs but developing the knowledge, skills and self-esteem, early in their lives to enable them to be safer when risky decisions have to be made. It brings a really exciting resource to enrich the work of teachers in our schools. Children love the multi-media approach and the imaginative ways in which they learn actively about their bodies and keeping themselves safe. Our “educator”, Louise Augarde, is a qualified and experienced primary school teacher, working with children in the mobile classroom and helping schools to gain maximum advantage from Life Education visits. We are immensely grateful to the hard work and determination of Rotary Clubs and their members in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough that enable us to use this wonderful resource in our schools.

How can you get more information about Life Education in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough? Please contact: Louise Augarde: 01480 376256 louise.augarde@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

If you would like to know more about **Drug and Health Education in Cambridgeshire**, please contact: The PSHE Service: 01480 376256 pshe@cambridgeshire.gov.uk



Useful links

Relationships & Health Education requirements: [Relationships and sex education \(RSE\) and health education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education)

National Curriculum Science [National curriculum in England: science programmes of study - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-curriculum-in-england-science-programmes-of-study)

Coram Life Education (nationally) [Coram Life Education](https://www.coramlifeeducation.co.uk)

