



# PSE and participatory learning

"In every lesson children gained in knowledge, and there were challenges to their prejudices and attitudes. This will clearly affect their behaviour." *HMI 'good practice in PSE' inspection, 1998*

"You are allowed to have an opinion and know that your opinion will be listened to, and even acted upon." *Year 11 PSRE pupil*

"Education for sustainability is about developing pupils' skills and confidence as informed and active citizens. It has to involve pupils and take learning beyond the classroom to show that they can change things for the better." *Cross-curricular co-ordinator*

A major part of raising achievement at Royton and Crompton School is improving pupil participation and self-esteem. A lot of the dynamism for this has come through the PSE curriculum (also known as PSRE at this school – see page 4) in conjunction with the school's Education for Sustainability project.

Royton and Crompton is an 11–16 comprehensive of about 1,200 pupils with an increasingly wide and disparate catchment area. It has been recognised that the curriculum – in its broadest sense – needs to counter increasing pupil disaffection with formal education and prepare pupils for the changes and challenges of the 21st century. Education for sustainability is seen as a means of providing a framework in which to do this.

## How we began to develop education for sustainability

An HMI inspection in 1991 found that although there was evidence of good practice in PSE, the programme lacked coherence. It was decided to put money into developing the PSE curriculum and cross-curricular themes.

When we won the WWF CMAS award, it became clear to us that education for sustainability could embrace all the cross-curricular themes and go beyond the curriculum into the management and ethos of the school. A policy was adopted to reflect this, co-ordinators were appointed, and each faculty tried to embed Education for Sustainability into the curriculum as they saw fit.

### Skills

- co-operative working
- critical thinking
- negotiation
- problem solving
- reasoned debate
- informed decision-making
- creativity – an ability to envision alternatives

### Knowledge

- how their own lives and actions connect with the lives and actions of others – locally, nationally and globally; past, present and future
- how the processes of decision making work and how to take part in them.

### Values and attitudes

- a desire for social justice
- empathy and awareness of the points of view of others
- an understanding that quality of life is not just dependent on standard of living
- an understanding of the place of individual and collective rights and responsibilities
- a desire to participate
- a belief that, working with others, they can make a difference
- a belief in a positive future.

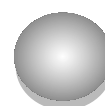
#### Education for sustainability and the PSE curriculum

Unlike other curriculum areas there is, to date, little demand on PSE time in terms of National Curriculum legislation. This, together with total Senior Management Team support, has enabled the PSE team to play a major role in curriculum change.

"PSE is important in general for any school, but there are two areas in particular where it contributes positively to the development of our pupils.

Firstly, it provides a framework for allowing pupils to reflect on a wide range of issues. Pupils may not readily find the opportunity to do this elsewhere.

Secondly, PSE helps raise achievement because the programme is underpinned by a school ethos which promotes high expectations, enhanced self-esteem and personal effectiveness." *Headteacher*



Much of the knowledge base for Education for Sustainability is covered in specific subject areas, so PSE has set out mainly to cover the Values and Attitudes, Skills and Learning Experiences which make up an entitlement to Education for Sustainability. Above all, the PSE programme focuses on empowering pupils – giving them the necessary time and space to explore their own values and attitudes, and different perspectives on important issues. In addition it aims to develop their skills as active citizens of the school, and increasingly of the local and global community.

A spiral curriculum has been developed whereby cross-curricular issues are addressed in each year through content relevant to the age group, some being revisited in varying ways in other years. Education for Sustainability has been seen as an umbrella concept for all the cross-curricular themes, helping to provide a coherence to the programme.

### Lower School PSE – Example of Spiral Curriculum Topic: Citizenship

#### Year 7

What is citizenship? What makes a good citizen?

- Examples of good citizenship and anti-social behaviour (Greater Manchester Police input)

Becoming a citizen of Royton and Crompton School

- The need for rules and law
- How you are involved in running the school: School Council, Environment Group, Green Group
- Being aware of others' needs and rights: bullying and racism; work of pupil counselling service
- Children's rights; child poverty

Who makes the laws and how can you be involved in changing them?

- British Government, Local Council, EEC

Links to Environmental Education: What is sustainable development?

Links to Health Education: Safe routes to school – project with Council

#### Year 8

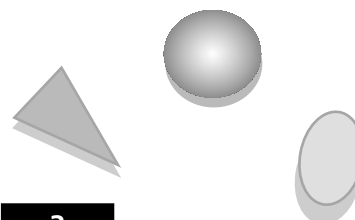
How your lifestyle affects others

- Links with EIU: Consumer power; fair trade

How do we look after and treat the elderly?

- Visit and link with local nursing home

"At first I was a bit nervous about expressing ideas in front of a group of adults, but after a while you get used to it, and it gives you a lot more confidence in being able to express your opinions." *Year 9 pupil after attending a number of sessions at the Oldham Borough Environment Forum*



## Year 9

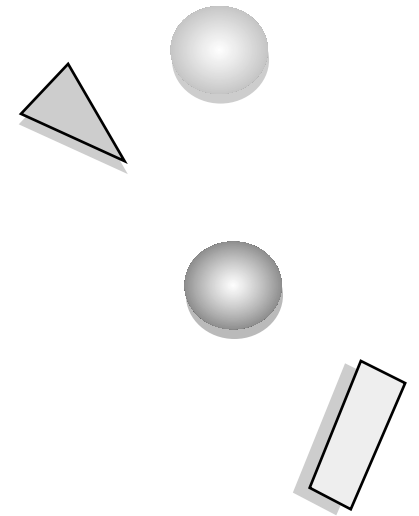
### The police and you

#### Homelessness

- Links with Environmental Education: Planning your environment – link with Council and Agenda 21: improving local area/facilities for young people
- Planning a sustainable community

#### World of work

- You and the law: employment rights



PSE is taught for one 60 minute period throughout Years 7 to 11. In Years 10 and 11 it is linked to a GCSE RE short course and becomes 'PSRE'. The PSE team comprises teachers from various subject areas who have volunteered to teach PSE and increasingly want to develop specialist skills.

Every aspect of PSE starts with the pupils' own experience, and questions why issues such as alcohol abuse should be discussed and taught – it is more than just a process of giving information.

Pupils are encouraged to discuss issues at home and get involved in local campaigns to effect change in relevant areas. For example, the Year 7 topic on 'Safety' includes a section on 'Journeys to School'. We have linked up with the Council to take part in the Sustrans-inspired 'Safe Routes to School' project to survey attitudes and practice, map journeys to school and involve pupils with the Council in trying to come up with safer and more sustainable travel solutions.

The Year 9 topic on 'Planning your Environment' is linked with the Agenda 21 Environment Forum to involve pupils in suggesting ways in which better facilities can be identified for young people in their area. A Year 10 unit on 'Sustainable Futures' involves looking at images of the future in the popular media, considering the state of the planet now and envisioning alternative futures.

"Pupils reflect on their attitudes to solvent abuse or the homeless but then they are challenged so they leave the class wiser. This is unusual." *HMI 'good practice in PSE' inspection, 1998*

"Children are being shown the future is not just something that happens – they can play a part in making it different." *feature on Education for Sustainability at Royton and Crompton School, Times Educational Supplement, 6 June 1997*

**Active citizenship: putting theory into practice**

The School Council is made up of Year Group Representatives (though any Form Representative can attend if they wish) together with the Senior Prefects and the Assistant Heads of Year. The Headteacher or Deputy Head attend meetings. The School Council has enabled improvements for pupils such as lockers and outside seating. It also helps formulate and evaluate school policies.

The Green Group is made up of interested pupils who are given job descriptions (secretary, treasurer, etc). They run the school paper collection and get involved in environmental projects. The Green Group Spokesperson attends the School Council and the Environment Group.

The Environment Group comprises members of the whole school community (pupils, teachers, Deputy Head, Head of Year, Heads of Department, Ancillary Staff, Governors) who try to encourage sustainable use and development of the school site. The agreed site plan is part of the School Development Plan.

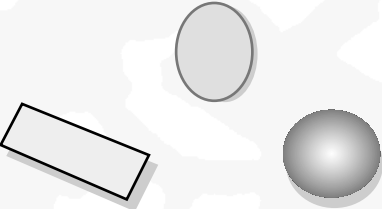
Pupils are also encouraged to get involved in the Borough Environment Forum and Youth Action Group. As a result of this, some pupils have helped run the 'Sus-bus' for Local Agenda 21 consultation; others have been to Germany on a European youth exchange to discuss environmental issues, and one pupil went to New York to represent the UK at a UN International Youth Meeting prior to the Conference on Sustainable Development.

"The children's influence is felt throughout the local community and the town." *feature on Education for Sustainability at Royton and Crompton School, Times Educational Supplement, 6 June 1997*

**Residential experiences**

The PSE Department has a major input on residential experiences. Soon after joining the school, Year 7 pupils go away for a night and a day to a local residential centre to get to know each other and their Form Tutor. They take part in a range of exercises and experiences to enhance their self-confidence and build co-operative and team work skills. In Year 9 a two and a half day residential further develops such skills and fosters greater independence prior to moving into the upper school.





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As well as these experiences, which are an entitlement for all pupils, there is a residential weekend for members of the Green Group and interested pupils in Year 10 along with members of staff, parents and governors, to the Centre for Alternative Technology (C.A.T.) in Wales. This is part-funded by the paper collection organised by the Green Group. Participants stay in Eco-cabins to experience sustainable living and take part in co-operative activities and curriculum development and review.

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### **Pupil involvement in curriculum change**

Evaluation is an integral part of the PSE curriculum. Each pupil is given the opportunity to reflect on their own learning and the content and format of every lesson, giving teachers immediate feedback. In addition, every unit of work is reviewed and evaluated by pupils, using a 'Focus Group' method of randomly selected pupils from each teaching group who have a written and oral interview with the head of PSE.

Teaching and learning styles and resources are assessed by the pupils, leading to further development. Pupil evaluation informs teacher evaluation, so the PSE curriculum evolves annually into something that pupils perceive as a positive tool in their own personal development.

In addition, PSE takes part in whole school monitoring and evaluation procedures such as Work Week, when the Senior Management Team review a selection of exercise books and work from all curriculum areas.

This year, for the first time, pupils in Year 10 contributed to long-term curriculum development. During the C.A.T. weekend, six pupils and the PSE co-ordinator looked at the whole PSE curriculum (Years 7–11). Issues they felt were important but under-developed were examined and included, and the delivery time of certain topics was changed to match the changing needs of pupils. These pupils genuinely volunteered to do this task; as one of them said: "Pay back time – giving something back to the course."

**"Each week pupils are to record the following:**

- 1 What they have learnt during the lesson
  - 2 What skills they have developed/practised during the lesson
  - 3 What they thought of the lesson/how it could be improved
  - 4 An evaluation of their own performance during the lesson.
- This should not be about their behaviour but about their active participation in the lesson."

PSE Homework guidelines

### **PSE and Education for Sustainability: links with effective teaching and learning**

It has been recognised that one of the effects of the National Curriculum has been to focus teachers heavily on the content of lessons and pay less attention to the process of education. The National Curriculum may dictate what should be taught, but it does not say how. It can be argued that, in an age of rapidly changing communication and information overload, how pupils learn may be more important than what they learn. To survive in a world of constant change pupils will need to be flexible, adaptable and co-operative; but how far is this reflected in the sort of education they are getting?

The school set up an Effective Teaching and Learning group to share good practice, linked into monitoring and developing Education for Sustainability. It was agreed that many of the values and attitudes, skills and learning experiences requisite to Education for Sustainability were common to most subject areas. A lot of work has been done in PSE on ensuring a range of teaching and learning styles, particularly participatory learning.

Circle time has been introduced to ensure whole class participation. This can be used as an introduction to a topic/issue to find out what pupils know already or what their attitudes are, or to review what pupils have learnt or how their attitudes may have been influenced.

Teacher and pupils sit in a circle and begin with non-threatening activities such as "All those wearing socks change places", which enables seating arrangements and friendship groups to be mixed up. This warm-up activity can also be used to raise issues about the topic you want to explore, for example bullying: "All those who have been bullied change places" – pupils begin to see that it effects more than a few.

The next activity is sentence completion, which again can begin in a non-threatening way: "One thing I have felt proud of this week is...". Pupils have to listen to

what others say without comment, as the turn passes round the circle (they can pass if they want a bit more time to think). The teacher can then begin to introduce / revert to the theme: "Bullying is when...", "People bully others because...".

Even the best led discussion groups allow some to opt out, but circle time ensures that pupil seating arrangements are mixed, activities build from non-threatening issues such as social habits to more serious ones, and everyone is listened to and has a say.

Pupils are made aware of the importance of the skills of discussion, co-operative and independent learning, and evaluate and are often asked to assess each others' performance. Their PSE reports reflect the importance of these skills. Pupils are encouraged to fill in their own report draft which is then discussed with the rest of the class to see if they agree, and the teacher bases his/her report on this draft and discussion. Emphasis is put on pupil empowerment in the classroom and beyond, developing active and aware citizens.

*"I learnt how to say what I thought without getting embarrassed. It gets everyone talking and in a good mood." Year 9 pupil*

*"One of the key features of PSE is the range of teaching styles, and particularly the emphasis on participation." HMI 'good practice in PSE' inspection, 1998*

## Fostering skills of independent learning and collaboration beyond PSE

There is a lot of collaborative planning and sharing of ideas and resources among members of the PSE team who, in addition, have begun to use collaborative methods and activities to develop pupil participation in their own subject areas.

Post-OFSTED a number of INSETs on Effective Teaching and Learning were delivered by the LEA and outside 'experts'. The PSE Department is now being asked to lead INSETs for other departments as it has been recognised that a lot of dynamic work is being done there on effective teaching and learning strategies.



"I had not thought before to use some of the teaching styles I'd come across in PSE in my own subject area. I now get pupils working in groups more and get them to teach each other. I also involve pupils more in evaluating the effectiveness of teaching methods. Such strategies have, I feel, greatly enhanced both the teaching and learning." *Maths teacher and member of PSE team*

"The enjoyment of learning, collaboration, growth and development is something we all wish to participate in and share – both teachers and pupils. As teachers, we are all learners and wish to share our experiences in the best possible way."

*Curriculum deputy*

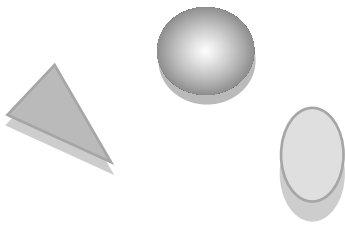
**The effects of this are reflected in such things as:**

**Mini-Enterprise fair – groups of pupils in Year 10 set up and run their own business activity for a Christmas Fair for pupils in the lower school. The money raised is donated to charities of their choice.**

**Science Week presentation – Year 9 pupils prepare displays around a theme (eg Science and Sustainability) and then explain their work to Year 7 and 8 pupils and other members of the school community. Maths week has similar activities. Pupils from Year 5 in feeder primary schools have come to do investigative work in Science under the direction of Year 9 pupils.**

**Geography – Year 9 pupils have developed board games about super-power relations, showing the social and environmental effects of trade and economics, and how they affect different countries. They have then taught the topic to Year 6 pupils in the neighbouring primary school.**

Such independence and co-operation has also led to the training of pupils as anti-bullying counsellors. A training programme was set up with another secondary school in the borough and the LEA Peer Support programme. Volunteers are trained in listening and communication skills, and are made aware of child protection issues. Photographs of counsellors are displayed in the main corridor and pupils can book appointments. Counsellors have 'buddy group' meetings every three weeks to discuss issues and give each other support. There are now plans to train pupils as counsellors for other social issues and as mentors and literacy helpers.



## Community links

PSE has also fostered a lot of community links through involving outside agencies, such as Health Visitors, Youth Service, Police Youth Forum and Theatre in Education, in teaching and consulting with pupils in school.

The school was recently inspected by HMI planning the proposed national PSE curriculum, as an example of good practice.

"Royton and Crompton School is worth going to see – there is a lot of good practice. An impressive PSE programme and an impressive team."



### Essentials for Success

- 1 Senior Management Support
- 2 Co-ordination of initiatives (eg Raising Achievement, Effective Teaching and Learning, Education for Sustainability)
- 3 Cross-curricular, committed team
- 4 Time allocation for planning and delivery (4% curriculum time at Royton and Crompton)
- 5 Participatory methods (staff and pupils)

## Acknowledgements

Written by Clive Belgeonne (Cross-curricular co-ordinator) and Helen Brookes (PSE/Careers and Guidance co-ordinator), Royton and Crompton School, Royton, Lancashire.

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## Reference

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*Safe Routes to School*, Sustrans, 35 King Street, Bristol BS1 4DZ

