

Life Education Centres

Parent, Carer & Governor Information



What is “Drug Education” in primary schools?

Drug Education is well established in most 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 sensibly, can be good 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.

The National Curriculum states the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills which are appropriate for each age group.

Children in Key Stage 1, ages 5-7, should:

- know that all medicines are drugs but not all drugs are medicines

- know that all substances can be harmful if not used sensibly
- know about different types of medicine and that some people need them to lead a normal life
- know and understand simple safety rules about medicines, tablets, solvents and household substances

Children in Key Stage 2, ages 7-11, should:

- know that all medicines are drugs but not all drugs are medicines
- know that there are over-the-counter, prescribed, legal and illegal substances and have some understanding of their effects
- know how to make simple choices and exercise some basic techniques for resisting pressure from friends and others
- know the important and beneficial part which drugs have played in society

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.

Did You Know? • LEC Facts

- Life Education Centres operate in 12 countries across the world and in 43 regions in the UK
- Cambridgeshire Life Education will visit over 90 schools in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough each year and 20,000 children will benefit from the Life Education experience
- Life Education in the United Kingdom is part of Coram, the UK's first children's charity



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.

Equally, there is a worrying increase in the misuse of tobacco and alcohol by teenagers.

We cannot afford to wait until then to offer protection to young people.

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

What are Life Education Centres?

Life Education Centres 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 within two mobile classrooms through a partnership between the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Life Education Trust, Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council.

Over 250 primary schools have now been visited.

How does the Life Education Centre Mobile Classroom help?

The principles upon which the Life Education Centre 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 safe when risky decisions have to be made.

It brings a really exciting new 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 “educators” are Louise Augarde and Julie Gray. They work with children and also help schools to gain maximum advantage from classroom visits.

We are immensely grateful to the hard work and determination of Rotary Clubs and their members in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough that has enabled us to use this wonderful resource in our schools.

How can you get more information?

For more information about the Life Education Centres and their work in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, please contact Louise Augarde on 01480 376256.

If you would like to know more about Drug Education in Cambridgeshire please contact Jon Pratt, head of the Cambridgeshire Personal, Social and Health Education Service on 01480 376256.

If you would like to know more about Drug Education in Peterborough please contact Gaynor Mansell, PSHE Coordinator, Peterborough City Council on 01733 748378.

