

Effective Preventative Education Towards Removal of Learning Disorders in School Education

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ABSTRACT

School education has been a crucial element of broader efforts to prevent negative outcomes, and curriculum-based programmes as it provide an important context in which to deliver universal preventative interventions. There is a wealth of evidence to show that classroom-based prevention education, when taught in line with best practice, can have a significant impact across a range of risk behaviours. Reviews of prevention programmes show that they have been associated with positive outcomes in relation to alcohol, tobacco and cannabis consumption, as well as healthy eating, exercise, and taking safety precautions like wearing a cycle helmet). Studies also show improvements in mental health and social skills, and reductions in antisocial behaviour. Sex and relationships education programmes have been shown to reduce risky behaviours and negative outcomes and to increase the chances of going on to have healthier relationships. There is further evidence demonstrating the link between social and emotional education programmes and academic attainment, showing that this learning improves academic performance. Efforts to build resilience have also been shown to have a positive impact both on risk-taking behaviours and on academic attainment. More generally, associations between mental wellbeing and good academic performance suggest that programmes which have positive outcomes for pupils' wellbeing could also indirectly affect their academic attainment. The effectiveness of prevention education programmes are, inevitably, affected by the quality of implementation. Certain evidence suggests that the quality of provision is variable at present. In English schools, PSHE education is the most common mode of delivery for education around key areas including substance misuse, online safety, sexual health, healthy relationships, mental health and emotional wellbeing. However, few most recent review of provision noted that it was 'not yet good enough' in schools, pointing to a lack of confidence among teachers, who are often not trained in the subject. It is also possible that, in some sensitive areas such as teaching on mental health and wellbeing, poor practice may lead to negative effects. These principles can both raise the quality of teaching in individual schools, and additionally inform the development of curricula, resources and training programmes. In fact this report aims to outline recent research into the determinants of effective practice across a range of prevention educational programmes.

Keywords : Preventative interventions, Unplanned pregnancies, Mental health, Emotional wellbeing,

Major key elements of effective practice which discusses some of the principles of effective and preventative education identified in the research outlined below:

1. The whole-school approach including multi component interventions A whole-school approach to preventative education ensures that the curriculum, school policies, pastoral support and the school ethos complement each other to create an environment that helps to prevent negative behaviours. However, one study into smoking prevention programmes found a lack of evidence

for the effectiveness of 'multimodal' programmes which include a range of interventions including 'tobacco prevention interventions in schools, the community, and with parents and community members, and school or state policies to change tobacco sales, increase taxes and prevent sales to minors' etc.

2. Our varied teaching styles addressing a range of factors reviews recommend the use of comprehensive and diverse intervention strategies as well as varied teaching styles and strategies. Researchers identify the need to use an 'array of

interventions’, ‘multiple activities’ and ‘varied teaching methods’ to address the full range of risk and protective factors. Some researchers note the importance of using a variety of teaching methods, norms ranging from direct instruction to interactive and participative learning, and focusing on acquiring skills and developing awareness. However, there is particular emphasis across the literature on an active, skills-based approach, albeit one which it incorporates a mix of strategies as part of this approach.

While it was found that positive effects of cooperative group work, they also found that anti-bullying programmes increased victimisation and bullying where they involved working with Key Principles Of Effective Prevention Education peers – including peer mediation, peer mentoring and encouraging bystander intervention. They attribute this to the detrimental effects of focusing on ‘delinquent’ pupils. Active skills-based learning Researchers highlight the importance of active skills-based learning – defined as ‘anything that involves students in doing things and thinking about what they are doing. Some of the authors identify a set of so-called ‘SAFE’ principles of effective social and emotional learning, which outline how these skills can be developed.

Effective programmes emphasise the need for explicit learning goals and a sequenced approach which breaks down skills into smaller steps which are sequentially mastered. SAFE practices also involve offering active learning, which allows pupils to ‘act on the material’ and practise skills, and also allow sufficient time for pupils to gain the skills.

3. Certain guidance includes a case study of resilience-building transition programmes implemented in schools in Scotland. These programmes take a whole-school approach, aiming to develop a school environment which promotes resilience and to train both teachers and headteachers in resilience and wellbeing. Findings show that the project was effective in achieving its aims, and the discussion raises interesting issues about successful implementation, Key Principles Of

Effective Prevention Education. There are some reviews into the factors that affect the effectiveness of sex and relationships education interventions for young people with learning disabilities. Overall, research in this area further reinforces the broader principles identified in this report, noting a particular need to focus on skill-building for pupils with disabilities, and on guiding pupils to apply those skills in real-life contexts. A study by Bruder and Kroese into clinical interventions aimed at people with learning disabilities suggested that knowledge alone does not change behaviour, and it is also necessary to teach skills through role play and rehearsal – echoing the findings of broader prevention education research. They further draw the distinction between teaching pupils skills, and teaching how to generalise these skills to real-life settings, both of which must be taught. Schaafsma et al. conducted a review of sex education programmes for special educational needs and disability (SEND) pupils, with the aim of identifying effective teaching methods. The authors identify a lack of evidence and theoretical basis for the teaching of sex education, with many papers lacking adequate detail on what was taught and how. Despite these concerns, the authors identify active learning methods, including modelling, role play, rehearsal and practice skills, as useful for improving skills.

4. Our learning which is inclusive of difference and socio culturally relevant Researchers note the importance of ensuring that prevention education programmes are relevant to the communities in which they are delivered as well as to diversity in relation to culture, ethnicity, faith, disability, sexuality and gender identity. Kirby et al. (2007) note the importance of developing programmes which are relevant to youth culture as well.

5. Well-trained teachers and number of researchers noted that programmes are more effective when delivered by teachers who have access to ongoing high-quality training and support, and are confident in their role. In addition, teacher training bears upon the need to implement the

programme with fidelity. Programmes which are implemented as intended are more likely to be successful, and providing training and support to those responsible for programme delivery increases the chances that this will be the case. UNODC guidance (2004) also notes the importance of developing programme tools which enhance and support the teacher's existing role, noting that teachers' credibility may be damaged where programmes are seen to be externally imposed and highlighted.

6. Theories research-based and factual Key Principles Of Effective Prevention Education Studies suggest that it is important to design prevention education programmes which are based on theory (that is, programmes are designed based on relevant theories, for example on child development); based on empirical evidence; and subject to ongoing evaluation note the importance of expertise in the curriculum development process as well as in curriculum delivery, recommending involving people with diverse areas of expertise at the development stage.

7. Certain studies found targeted programmes to prevent youth offending have found that a focus on negative consequences and 'harsh realities' or on boot-campstyle discipline is ineffective or can increase the likelihood of offending. Tofi and Farrington's finding that strong disciplinary methods are effective may be seen as contradictory to the studies cited above, although they note that these findings could be due to the influence of one highly successful study which used these methods.

8. Clear goals and outcomes, and effective monitoring and evaluation There is a broad consensus on the need for preventative education programmes to have clear overall goals, and for lessons to have clear objectives outline the implications of such an approach, recommending clearly mapping out health goals and specific behaviours being targeted, as well as identifying the protective and risk factors associated with the targeted behaviours, and how interventions are

expected to impact on those factors. Berkowitz and Bier argue that these clear objectives should also be communicated to stakeholders, including pupils themselves. As noted previously, a clear link between interventions and targeted behaviours can only be achieved through a theory- and research-based approach which identifies the reasons why elements of a programme are effective, and accurately identifies causal and risk factors leading to unsafe online behaviour, noting that these will differ based on the desired intervention outcomes. There is also a link between the need for clear objectives, and effective evaluation and assessment to ensure that programmes continue to achieve these objectives. Authors note the importance of evaluating approaches for effectiveness, piloting programmes, and ongoing assessment, monitoring and evaluation including collecting data on pupils' and teachers' views of the programme.

9. Support from school leadership teams and other authorities The department for Education and Mentor ADEPIS standards both note the importance of gaining support from the head teacher and the senior management team. Kirby recommend securing 'at least minimal support' from appropriate authorities, which can include regional authorities and community groups.

10. Community, parent and pupil engagement Researchers recommend the engagement of pupils, especially older pupils, in the design and development of the programme, noting that this is a characteristic of successful interventions. Nation noted that effective programmes attempt to include the target group in programme planning and implementation, while UNODC (2004) note the importance of collaboratively developed and transparent policies and procedures around drug prevention. Few researcher identified problems related to the high level of commitment demanded of parents by some programmes. Some forms of pupil engagement are also shown to have negative effects, with evidence showing that peer mediation, peer mentoring and encouraging bystander

intervention are not effective at tackling bullying and improving behaviours also found that ‘multimodal’ interventions, which included engagement with the community among a range of other strategies to be ineffective.

11. Intervention must be of adequate length or intensity Research suggests that it is important for an intervention to have sufficient ‘dosage’ to achieve the desired effects. This can be measured both in terms of the quantity and quality of sessions, and is likely to vary across programmes. For example, Mason (2008) suggests that online safety education must mirror the 24/7 nature of digital communication. This consideration must be balanced with the need to ensure that the resources required for the successful implementation of an intervention are consistent with the resources available, including staff time . This must be considered when selecting ‘effective’ programmes, since poorly resourced interventions are less likely to be implemented appropriately.

Conclusion :

While the lack and negligence of research evaluating the effectiveness of online safety programmes remains of concern, programme developers can draw on existing research in other areas of prevention education, given the apparent generalised ability of their findings. There is considerable consensus on the hallmarks of effective programmes, including a focus on a developmental approach, skill-building and active learning; engagement of stakeholders including pupils, parents, teachers and the broader community; and clarity on intended outcomes and ongoing evaluation of these. In addition, programmes can heed calls to ensure that education is factual, both in terms of the information imparted to pupils and in terms of knowledge of the behaviours, skills and attributes associated with risky versus safe behaviour online. Research into how children and young people use the internet, such as that assembled by the UK Safer Internet

Centre , can support this work but the findings do suggest thorough consideration is needed of the risk factors related to different online safety and the specific skills needed to stay safe online before programmes are developed and prepared.

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