



Active Learning Techniques

and PSHE Education in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent.

2026

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PSHE education plays a vital role in supporting children and young people to develop the knowledge, skills, values and attributes needed to thrive as individuals and members of society. Through high-quality PSHE education, children and young people learn how to build healthy relationships, maintain positive physical and mental wellbeing, manage risk, make informed decisions and access support when needed.

Effective PSHE education goes beyond the delivery of information. Children and young people are more likely to develop and apply learning when they are actively engaged in the learning process. Active learning approaches encourage participation, discussion, collaboration, reflection and critical thinking, helping children and young people develop the confidence and skills needed to navigate real-life situations.

Ultimately, active learning is not about making learning more entertaining. It is about creating meaningful opportunities for children and young people to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to make informed decisions, build positive relationships and thrive throughout life.

The Department for Education statutory Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education guidance (RSHE) (2025) states:

The curriculum should be delivered by school staff or, where schools choose to use them, external providers who have the knowledge, skills and confidence to create a safe and supportive environment and to facilitate participative and interactive education which aims to support and not to alarm pupils.

This guidance has been developed by the Pan-Staffordshire PSHE Education Service to support education settings across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent to embed active learning approaches within PSHE education. It provides an overview of the evidence underpinning active learning, explores the role of the professional and learner within an active learning environment, and offers a practical toolkit of techniques that can be adapted for use across a range of ages, stages and settings.

The guidance should be read alongside national legislation, statutory guidance and local policies, including:

It should be read alongside:

- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education Statutory Guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- The Equality Act 2010
- Prevent Duty Guidance
- Local Safeguarding Policy

Effective PSHE education requires trained, confident and competent professionals who can create safe learning environments and support children and young people to develop the knowledge, skills and values needed to thrive

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this guidance is to support education settings in developing a planned, evidence-informed approach to the use of active learning techniques within PSHE education.

The updated Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education guidance highlights the importance of skilled delivery of participative education, recognising that children and young people learn most effectively when they are actively engaged, involved in discussion and given opportunities to develop and practise essential life skills.

This guidance aims to ensure that active learning approaches:

Support high-quality PSHE education

Promote meaningful participation and engagement by children and young people

Develop knowledge, skills, values and attributes

Create safe and inclusive learning environments

Reflect current statutory RSHE guidance

Support positive relationships, wellbeing and safeguarding outcomes

Encourage critical thinking, reflection and decision-making

Meet the diverse needs of children and young people

Form part of a whole-setting approach to PSHE education

WHY ACTIVE LEARNING MATTERS IN PSHE

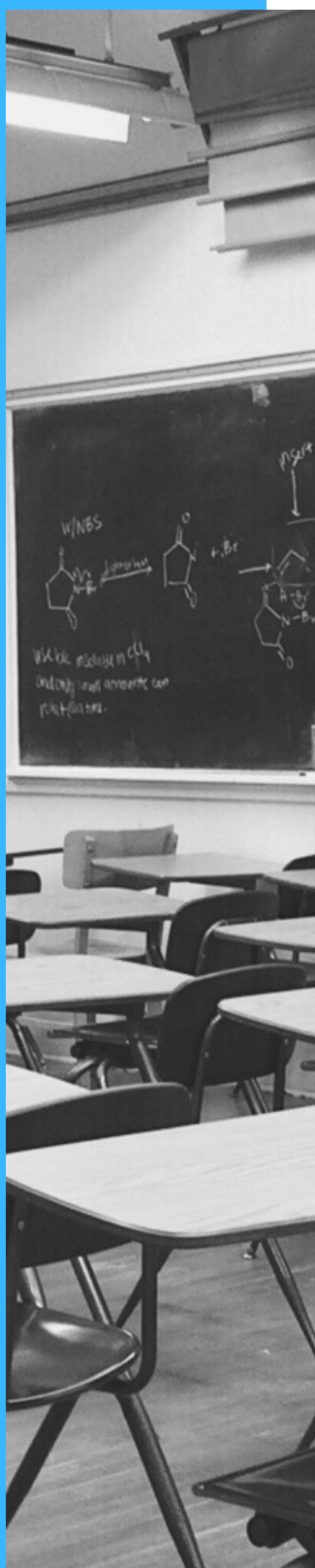
Effective active learning is not about making learning more entertaining. It is about creating meaningful opportunities for children and young people to develop the knowledge, skills, values and confidence needed to build positive relationships, manage risk, make informed decisions and thrive throughout life. While knowledge is important, information alone is often insufficient to influence behaviour or support positive decision-making.

Children and young people will often encounter situations where they need to apply their classroom learning to real-life contexts. Whether managing peer pressure, navigating relationships, recognising online risks, supporting their mental wellbeing, or seeking help when needed, they require more than factual information. They need opportunities to develop and practise communication, critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving and self-management skills. Active learning provides these opportunities.

The updated RSHE guidance highlights the importance of skilled delivery of participative and interactive education, recognising that learning is most effective when children and young people are actively engaged in the process rather than being passive recipients of information.

Active learning matters because it:

- Encourages meaningful participation and engagement
- Supports the development of essential life skills alongside knowledge
- Enables children and young people to explore attitudes, values and beliefs in a safe environment
- Develops confidence in communication, discussion and decision-making
- Promotes empathy, respect and understanding of different perspectives
- Enhances retention and application of learning
- Supports inclusive practice by providing a variety of ways for children and young people to participate
- Creates opportunity for the voice of the child, reflection and self-awareness
- Allows children and young people to rehearse strategies they may need in real-life



THE VOICE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

The statutory RSHE Guiding Principles remind us of the importance of listening to the voice of children and young people, as their views provide a valuable insight into what high-quality PSHE looks like in practice.

The Sex Education Forum's Young People RSE Poll (2025) found:

50% of young people said that their RSE was interactive

Using real-life examples, discussions, and interactive activities would make RSE more engaging.

More interactive and having a teacher that is not awkward

When developing resources locally around managing emotions, the Pan-Staffordshire PSHE Education Service asked: **"If you helped to design PSHE resources, what would you include?"**

Strong, consistent feedback from young people highlighted a need for more engaging delivery:

Young people want:

- Interactive learning – group discussions, role-play, activities
- Less reliance on worksheets and booklets
- More:
 - Videos
 - Case studies
 - Guest speakers/Lived Experience

Young people strongly prefer interactive, participatory, active learning approaches. This aligns with guidance from the Pan-Staffordshire PSHE Education Service and the updated statutory RSHE guidance.

National and international evidence consistently demonstrates that PSHE education is most effective when delivered through **active, participatory and skills-based approaches** rather than through information-giving alone. The purpose of PSHE is not only to increase knowledge but also to develop the social, emotional and practical skills that enable children and young people to make informed decisions, build healthy relationships, manage risk, seek support and maintain their wellbeing. These outcomes require opportunities for children and young people to actively engage with, reflect on and apply their learning.

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) highlights that effective social and emotional learning programmes share four key characteristics: they are **Sequential, Active, Focused and Explicit (SAFE)**. Active learning is identified as a core component because it enables pupils to practise, rehearse and apply the skills they are learning, rather than simply receiving information. EEF evidence suggests that high-quality social and emotional learning can have a positive impact on both wellbeing and academic attainment.

The Department for Education principles of effective practice place a strong emphasis on interactive and participatory learning. Children and young people benefit from opportunities to discuss, question, debate, solve problems, explore scenarios and reflect on their own experiences in a safe and supportive environment. Such approaches help children and young people develop confidence, critical thinking, communication skills and the ability to transfer learning into real-life situations.

This is particularly important when addressing complex and sensitive topics such as relationships, mental health, online safety, substance use and personal safety. Research shows that behaviour change is more likely when young people can explore attitudes and values, practise decision-making and rehearse strategies for responding to real-life situations. Information alone is rarely sufficient to influence outcomes.

Effective PSHE typically incorporates a range of active learning techniques, including discussion, role play, case studies, collaborative tasks, problem-solving activities, reflection exercises, and scenario-based learning. These approaches support deeper understanding, increased engagement and the development of knowledge, skills and attributes that underpin healthy, safe and successful lives.

The evidence is clear that active learning should not be regarded as an optional teaching technique but a fundamental component of high-quality PSHE education. When carefully planned, inclusive and developmentally appropriate, active learning techniques provide the strongest foundation for achieving the intended outcomes of PSHE and preparing children and young people for life beyond the classroom.



How does your PSHE curriculum ensure that active learning approaches are consistently embedded to develop children and young people's knowledge, skills and behaviours, and not solely their understanding of key concepts?

7 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The 2025 Relationships Education, Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (RSHE) statutory guidance includes an overarching set of guiding principles that education settings are asked to keep in mind when developing their curriculum.

Engagement with Pupils

Pupils should help shape the RSHE curriculum so it feels relevant to their lives. Their input keeps lessons engaging, grounded and meaningful.

Engagement and transparency with parents

Parents and carers should know exactly what is being taught and have access to all RSHE materials. They must be clearly informed about sex-education content and their right to withdraw their child.

Positivity

Teaching should build positive attitudes, healthy norms and strong relationship skills. Avoid language that normalises harmful behaviour or reinforces damaging stereotypes.

Careful Sequencing

Content should be taught in a logical order that supports pupils before challenges arise. Early, well-timed learning helps prevent harm and builds confidence.

Relevant and Responsive

The curriculum must be age/stage-appropriate, accessible and tailored to local needs. Education settings should work with local partners to address specific issues in their community.

Skilled delivery of participative education

RSHE should be led by confident, knowledgeable staff or vetted external experts. Teaching must feel safe, interactive and supportive, with staff trained to handle disclosures.

Whole school approach

RSHE works best when it aligns with the school's wider culture and policies. A consistent approach across behaviour, safeguarding and wellbeing strengthens its impact.

LOCAL QUALITY FRAMEWORK

We believe that for PSHE education to be effective it must:

- Be delivered in a safe learning environment based on the principles that prejudice, discrimination and bullying are harmful and unacceptable.
- Have clear learning objectives and outcomes and ensure sessions and programmes are well planned, resourced and appropriately underpinned by solid research and evidence.
- Be relevant, accurate and factual, including using the correct terminology.
- Be positively inclusive in terms of:
 - Age
 - Gender Identity
 - Race
 - Sex
 - Disability
 - Pregnancy and Maternity
 - Religion or Belief
 - Sexual Orientation
- Designed to include the development of knowledge, skills and values to support positive life choices.
- Use positive messaging, that does not cause shame or victim blaming.
- Challenge attitudes and values within society, such as perceived social norms and those portrayed in the media.
- Be reflective of the age and stage of the children and young people and be tailored to the environment and group.
- Utilise active skill-based learning techniques to encourage active participation.
- Ensure that children and young people are aware of their rights, including their right to access confidential advice and support services within the boundaries of safeguarding.
- Be delivered by trained, confident and competent professionals.
- Empower and involve children and young people as participants, advocates and evaluators in the development of PSHE education.

For more information about Quality Assurance, you can access our Best Practice guidance [here](#).

Professional development is essential in ensuring these principles are consistently achieved.

THE EVOLVING ROLE OF THE PROFESSIONAL

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Utilising active learning techniques has implications for the role of the professional. Active learning requires a shift from a professional-centred model of teaching towards a participant-centred approach. This involves moving beyond the transmission of knowledge and creating opportunities for children and young people to actively engage with, explore and apply their learning.

There is also a shift from a focus on the end product of learning to a focus on the learning process itself. While the acquisition of knowledge remains important, equal emphasis is placed on developing the skills, confidence, critical thinking and reflective abilities that enable children and young people to use that knowledge effectively in real-life contexts.

The professional remains central to the learning process but acts increasingly as a facilitator, guide and enabler, helping children and young people take an active role in their own learning and development.

Professionals should therefore reflect not only on what children and young people are learning, but also on how learning takes place and the role they play in facilitating it.

From:	To:
Professional-centred classroom	Participant-centred learning
Product-focused learning	Process-focused learning
Professional as "transmitter of knowledge"	Professional as an organiser and facilitator of knowledge
Professional as a "doer" for children and young people	Professional as an enabler of learning and development
Providing answers and solutions	Supporting enquiry, exploration and problem-solving
Leading all aspects of learning	Sharing responsibility for learning with children and young people
Subject-specific focus	Holistic learning focus
Measuring success primarily through outcomes	Valuing both the learning process and outcomes achieved

How closely does your current practice reflect the characteristics described in the "To" column, and which aspects could be strengthened to promote more active participation by children and young people?



THE EVOLVING ROLE OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

As professionals adopt more active learning approaches, the role of children and young people also changes. Children and young people become active participants in the learning process, taking greater responsibility for exploring ideas, developing skills, reflecting on experiences and learning collaboratively with others.

This shift supports the development of confidence, critical thinking, communication and decision-making skills, all of which are key outcomes of effective PSHE education.

The table below shows the shift in the role of children and young people in an active learning environment:

From:	To:
Being passive recipients of knowledge	Being active and participatory learners
Focusing primarily on answering questions	Asking questions, exploring ideas and demonstrating curiosity
Relying on adults to direct learning	Taking increasing responsibility for their own learning and reflection
Working independently or in competition with others	Collaborating and learning with others
Learning discrete topics in isolation	Making connections between learning, experiences and real-life situations
Remembering information	Applying knowledge, skills and understanding in meaningful contexts



To what extent are children and young people in your setting active participants in their learning?

What evidence do you see of curiosity, reflection, collaboration and independent thinking in practice?

DIFFERENT FACILITATION ROLES TO ENHANCE LEARNING

Active learning techniques are most effective when professionals adopt the role of facilitator, creating opportunities for children and young people to explore ideas, develop skills and learn from one another. Facilitation involves guiding learning rather than directing it, enabling participants to think critically, question assumptions and consider a range of perspectives.

At times, it may be helpful for the facilitator to adopt a specific role in order to extend discussion, encourage deeper thinking or support meaningful participation. The choice of role should always be guided by the intended learning outcomes and the needs of the group.

Facilitator Roles

Neutral Facilitator

Creates opportunities for children and young people to explore a range of viewpoints without expressing a personal opinion. This approach helps children and young people to develop their own understanding and consider multiple perspectives.

Devil's Advocate

Deliberately presents an alternative viewpoint, regardless of personal beliefs, to stimulate discussion, challenge assumptions and encourage critical thinking.

Ally

Provides support to a particular individual or group, often where a minority viewpoint may otherwise be overlooked. This can help ensure all perspectives are heard and valued.

Official View

Clarifies factual information or provides the recognised position on an issue, such as legislation, safeguarding procedures or organisational policy.

Challenger

Uses questioning and discussion to encourage children and young people to examine, justify and reflect on their views, assumptions and decision-making.

Provocateur

Introduces viewpoints or arguments that participants may encounter in the wider world in order to explore misconceptions, challenge stereotypes and encourage critical analysis. Careful consideration should be given to the suitability of this approach and the needs of the group.

In-Role Facilitator

Adopts the perspective of a particular individual or stakeholder to help bring an issue to life and encourage children and young people to consider different viewpoints and experiences.

Considerations for Practice

The effectiveness of any facilitation role will depend on the context, the learning intentions and the needs of the children and young people involved. When planning learning activities, consider:



- Which facilitation role is most likely to support the intended learning outcomes?
- How confident do you feel in adopting different facilitation roles?
- Do you already use any of these approaches in your practice, either consciously or unconsciously?
- What additional considerations are required to meet the needs of individual children and young people or the wider group?
- How will you create a safe and supportive environment for discussing challenging or sensitive issues?
- What strategies will you use to respond to unexpected questions, disagreement or differing viewpoints?
- How will you ensure that the chosen facilitation approach supports, rather than distracts from, the learning objectives?

Reflections:

PLANNING FOR EFFECTIVE ACTIVE LEARNING

Active learning techniques can help children and young people develop a deeper understanding of issues, strengthen key skills and increase engagement in learning. However, the success of any activity depends on careful planning and consideration of the needs of children and young people.

When selecting and facilitating active learning techniques, professionals should consider the following:

- Is the activity appropriate for the age/stage of development and the needs of the children and young people involved?
- Are the intended learning objectives clear and understood by the children and young people?
- Does the activity provide meaningful opportunities for participation and engagement?
- Can children and young people take an active role in leading or shaping elements of the learning?
- Will all children and young people have an equitable opportunity to contribute?
- Does the session or programme incorporate a range of approaches to maintain engagement and meet different learning preferences?
- Have appropriate opportunities been built in for reflection, discussion, consolidation and assessment of learning?

Understanding the Group

The Pan-Staffordshire PSHE Education Service does not endorse the use of “grab-and-go” resources; this is because the effectiveness of active learning is influenced by the dynamics, experiences and needs of the group. It is important to reflect on the learning environment and adapt activities accordingly.

Considerations for Practice

- 
- How well does the group know one another?
 - Are there any individual needs, experiences or circumstances to consider?
 - What is the profile of the group, including factors such as age, group size, confidence levels and additional learning needs?
 - What adaptations may be required to promote inclusion, participation and accessibility for all children and young people?
 - How comfortable and confident are participants in expressing their views and engaging in discussion?
 - What measures are in place to create a safe, respectful and supportive learning environment?
 - How confident do you feel in facilitating the activity and responding to issues that may arise?

Considering these factors will help ensure that activities are inclusive, purposeful and effective, enabling all children and young people to participate meaningfully in the learning process.

SUPPORT FROM PSHE EDUCATION SERVICE

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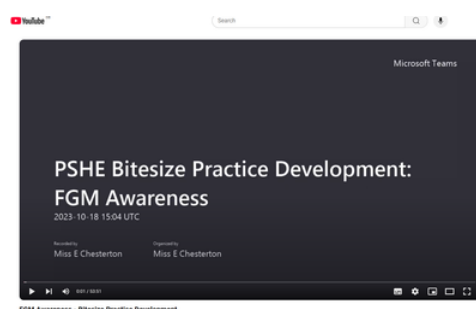
The PSHE Education Service is dedicated to supporting the development and delivery of high-quality, age/stage-appropriate PSHE education across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

The service provides regular webinars and training sessions to help educators stay updated on best practices and new developments in PSHE Education.



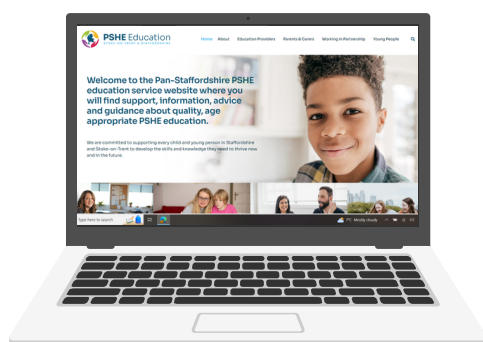
PSHE Leads Network Meetings:

These half-termly online meetings provide an opportunity for PSHE Leads to come together, share best practice, address challenges and build connections. Information and booking can be [found here](#).



Bitesize Practice Development Sessions:

Aimed at improving knowledge of specific topics taught within the PSHE curriculum, these webinars are led by subject experts who share their knowledge and expertise.



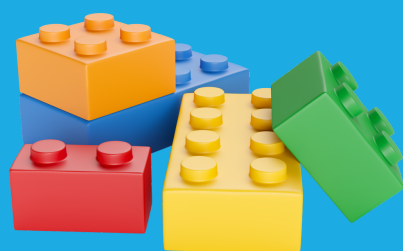
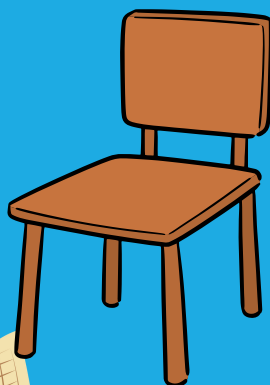
Resource Library:

A central repository of high-quality nationally sourced and locally produced resources. Free to access for education settings in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, [registration is required](#), and there is no limit to the number of accounts each setting can have.



In-Person Training:

The Service offers a twilight training session to support CPD plans on "Using Active Learning Techniques". These are tailored to the type and phase of settings requesting the training. This training is part of our core offer, and so there is no charge to education settings for this training.



TOOLKIT



INTRODUCTION TO THE TOOLKIT

This toolkit has been developed to support professionals in selecting and using active learning techniques within PSHE education. The activities included are intended to complement, not replace, effective planning, facilitation and assessment.

The techniques have been chosen because they encourage participation, discussion, reflection, critical thinking and the development of practical skills. When used appropriately, active learning approaches can help children and young people develop a deeper understanding of issues, explore different perspectives and apply their learning to real-life situations.

There is no single "best" active learning technique. The most effective approach will depend on the intended learning outcomes, the age and stage of the children and young people, the needs of the group and the learning environment. Professionals should therefore select techniques purposefully, ensuring that the activity supports the learning rather than becoming the focus of the session.

This toolkit is not intended to provide an exhaustive list of active learning methods. Instead, it offers a range of practical and adaptable techniques that can be incorporated into PSHE education across different phases and settings.

Before selecting a technique, consider:

- What are the intended learning outcomes?
- What knowledge, skills, values or attitudes are being developed?
- Is the activity appropriate for the age/stage and needs of the group?
- How will all children and young people be enabled to participate?
- How will learning be reflected upon, consolidated and evaluated?

It is essential to start with the learning outcome, not the activity.

The following pages provide an overview of a range of active learning techniques, including guidance on how to use them, key considerations for practice and reflective questions to support professional development.

AT A GLANCE

Technique	Typical Time	Group Size	Best For?	SEND Friendly?	Colour Code
Icebreakers	5-10 mins	Any	Building relationships, Participation, Confidence	High	
Ask-it Basket	Ongoing/ 5-10 mins	Any	Questions, pupil voice, sensitive topics	High	
Mind Maps	10-15 mins	Individual, Pairs, Small Group, Whole Group	Baseline assessment, Reflection, evaluating progress	High	 
Continuums	10-20 mins	Whole Group	Values, exploration, attitudes, discussions	Medium-High	
Graffiti Walls	10-20 mins	Whole Group	Gathering ideas, reflections, participation	High	
Case Studies/Scenarios	15-30 mins	Small or Whole Groups	Decision-making, problem-solving, safeguarding topics	High	
Agony Advice	15-20 mins	Small Groups	Problem-solving, empathy, healthy choices	High	
Card Sort	10-20 mins	Individual, Pairs, Group	Classification, discussion, knowledge development	High	
Diamond 9	15-30 mins	Pairs or Small Groups	Prioritisation, decision-making, reasoning	Medium	 
Worksheets	5-20 mins	Individual, Pairs, Small Groups	Reflection, recording learning, assessment	Medium-High	

Technique	Typical Time	Group Size	Best For?	SEND Friendly?	Colour Code
Small World Play	10–30 mins	Individual or Small Groups	Exploration, role play, skill development	High	
Creative Activities	15–30 mins	Individual or Small Groups	Expression, engagement, exploring feelings	High	
Role Play	15–30 mins	Small Groups	Skill rehearsal, communication, decision-making	Medium	
Conscious Alley	10–20 mins	Whole Group	Ethical dilemma, empathy, decision-making	Medium	
Think, Pair, Share	5–15 mins	Pairs leading to Whole Group	Discussion, participation, reflection	High	
Group Discussions	10–30 mins	Small Groups	Collaboration, speaking and listening	Medium-High	
Fishbowl Activity	20–40 mins	Whole Group	Structured discussion, sensitive topics	Medium	
Resource Development	20–60 mins	Individual, Pairs or Small Groups	Applying learning, assessment, campaigns	Medium	
Presentations	20–60 mins	Individual, Pairs or Small Groups	Research, communication, assessment	Medium	
Gallery Walk	15–30 mins	Whole Group	Feedback, reflection, reviewing learning	High	
Silent Debate	15–30 mins	Whole Group	Sensitive topics, inclusion, critical thinking	High	
Hot Seating	10–25 mins	Whole Group	Empathy, perspective-taking, exploration of issues	Medium-High	

Technique	Typical Time	Group Size	Best For?	SEND Friendly?	Colour Code
Four Corners	10-20 mins	Whole Group	Values, opinions, social norms	Medium	
Jigsaw Learning	20-40 mins	Small Groups	Collaborative learning, leadership	Medium-High	
Quiz Activities	5-20 mins	Individual, Pairs, Small Group	Retrieval, misconceptions, assessment	High	 
Problem-Solving Challenges	15-40 mins	Small Groups	Applying learning, teamwork, decision-making	Medium-High	
Circle Time	10-30 mins	Whole Group	Feelings relationships, belonging, communication	High	
Peer Teaching	20-60 mins	Pairs or Small Groups	Leadership, communication, knowledge consolidation	Medium-High	

Key:

SEND Friendly:

- High - Easily adaptable and typically accessible for a wide range of SEND needs
- Medium-High - Generally accessible with minor adaptations
- Medium - May require additional scaffolding, communication support, pre-teaching or alternative participation methods.

Colour Code:

- **Navy** - Knowledge Development
- **Purple** - Skill Development
- **Yellow** - Values and Attitudes Exploration
- **Green** - Assessment and Reflection
- **Light Blue** - Relationship Building and Participation

Planning Prompt:

When selecting an active learning technique, start with the intended learning outcome rather than the activity.

- **Knowledge:** Explore, organise or recall information.
- **Skills:** Practise and apply learning.
- **Values & Attitudes:** Discuss, reflect and consider different perspectives.
- **Assessment:** Demonstrate understanding and progress.
- **Participation & Group Development:** Build confidence, communication and collaboration.

Ice Breakers



Many active learning approaches involve discussion, collaboration and shared learning. Before children and young people can participate confidently, they need to feel comfortable within the group and confident that their views will be listened to and respected.

Icebreakers are short, structured activities designed to help participants get to know one another, build relationships and develop confidence in contributing to group discussions. They can help reduce anxiety, establish a positive learning environment and encourage participation, particularly when working with new groups or discussing unfamiliar topics.

Effective icebreakers are low-risk, inclusive and enjoyable. They provide opportunities for children and young people to share their views without fear of being judged or giving a "wrong" answer. Regular use of icebreakers can help create the conditions for more meaningful participation throughout a session or programme of learning.

How to Use This Technique:

Use a simple question that is unrelated to the learning topic.

- 1.Explain that the activity is about getting to know one another and that there are no right or wrong answers.
- 2.Share the question with the group.
- 3.Give participants 2-3 minutes to discuss their responses with a partner or small group.
- 4.Invite volunteers to share their answers with the wider group.

Example Questions:

- What is your favourite meal?
- If you could visit anywhere in the world, where would you go?
- What skill would you like to learn?
- What is your favourite season and why?

Top Tips



- Keep questions simple, inclusive and non-personal
- Keep the activity brief
- Encourage participation, but do not force contributions
- Use the activity to reinforce respectful listening and discussion



How could you currently create opportunities for children and young people to build confidence and feel comfortable contributing to discussions and activities?

Ask-It Basket



Providing children and young people with opportunities to ask questions is an important part of effective PSHE education. An Ask-it Basket offers a safe and anonymous way for children and young people to raise questions, seek clarification and explore issues they may not feel comfortable discussing openly.

This technique can help increase participation, identify misconceptions and ensure learning is responsive to the needs and interests of the group.

How to Use This Technique:

1. Provide each participant with a question slip.
2. Invite participants to write a question anonymously. If they do not have a question, ask them to write "No question today" so everyone contributes equally.
3. Collect all slips in a basket, box or envelope.
4. Review the questions and decide when they will be answered, either during the session or at a later point.
5. Respond to questions accurately, using reliable sources or specialist support where required.

Top Tips



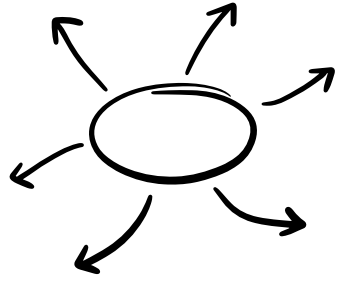
- Explain that all questions will be treated respectfully.
- Establish clear boundaries about confidentiality and safeguarding.
- Allow time to research answers if required.
- Use submitted questions to inform future learning.
- Remind participants that someone else may have the same question, even if they have not asked it themselves.



How do you create opportunities for children and young people to ask questions safely and anonymously, particularly when discussing sensitive topics?

It's also important to include diverse perspectives, honest information about consent and relationships, and a safe space to ask questions without judgment.
Young Person, Sex Education Forum, 2025

Mind Maps



Mind maps are a useful way of exploring existing knowledge, generating ideas and identifying misconceptions. They can be used at the beginning of learning to establish a baseline and revisited later to demonstrate progress and understanding.

How to Use This Technique:

1. Provide a stimulus, such as a question, image or keyword.
2. Ask participants to record words, ideas or associations that come to mind; this can be at an individual, paired, small group or whole group activity.
3. Encourage participants to share and discuss their responses.
4. Revisit the mind map later in the learning and invite participants to add, amend or remove ideas to reflect their learning.

Top Tips



- Remind participants that there are no right or wrong answers at the start
- Use different coloured pens when revisiting learning
- Explore misconceptions through discussion rather than correction alone



How could mind mapping help you identify prior knowledge and measure progress in learning?

Continuums

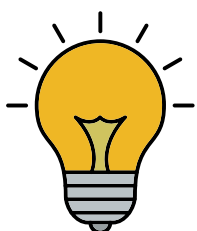


Continuums encourage children and young people to explore different viewpoints, reflect on their own opinions and understand that issues are often more complex than simple right or wrong answers.

How to Use This Technique:

1. Create a continuum line (e.g. Agree-Disagree, High Risk-Low Risk).
2. Read a statement related to the topic.
3. Ask participants to position themselves along the continuum.
4. Facilitate discussion about the reasons for their choices.
5. Encourage participants to listen to and consider different perspectives.

Top Tips



- Use thought-provoking statements
- Allow participants to change position during discussions
- Focus on reasoning rather than reaching agreement



How do you create opportunities for children and young people to explore different perspectives safely and respectfully?

Graffiti Walls



Graffiti activities encourage participation from all participants and can be used to assess knowledge, gather opinions and support reflection.

How to Use This Technique:

1. Place questions or statements around the room
2. Invite children and young people to move around and record responses
3. Review responses together
4. Use findings to inform discussion and future learning

Top Tips

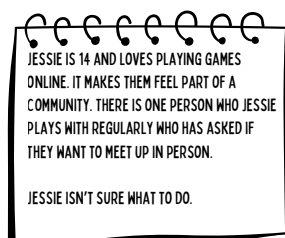


- Encourage words, phrases or drawings
- Reinforce that there are no right or wrong answers
- Use responses to identify misconceptions and learning needs



How might this technique encourage contributions from children and young people who are less confident speaking in groups?

Case Studies and Scenarios



Case studies and scenarios provide a safe distancing technique that allows children and young people to explore situations, consider consequences, and develop problem-solving skills.

Given an example / a real world issue that can cause a discussion
Stoke-on-Trent Young Person

Use real life scenarios that we might relate to
Staffordshire Young Person

How to Use This Technique:

1. Introduce a realistic scenario
2. Ask participants to identify the issue or dilemma
3. Explore possible responses and outcomes
4. Discuss what support, skills or knowledge the character may need

Top Tips

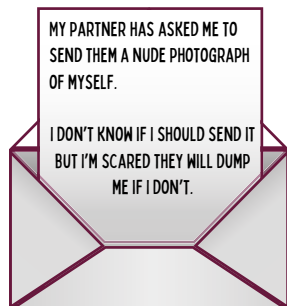


- Use inclusive characters and scenarios
- Avoid reinforcing stereotypes
- Focus on decision-making and support strategies



How could distancing techniques help children and young people engage more confidently with sensitive topics?

Agony Advice

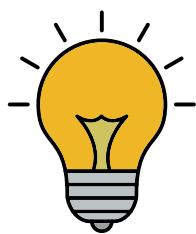


This activity develops empathy, problem-solving and communication skills by encouraging children and young people to offer advice and consider different solutions.

How to Use This Technique:

1. Present an imaginary problem
2. Ask groups to discuss possible responses
3. Invite groups to share their advice
4. Compare approaches and discuss the strengths of each

Top Tips



- Use realistic scenarios
- Encourage multiple solutions
- Focus on supportive and healthy responses

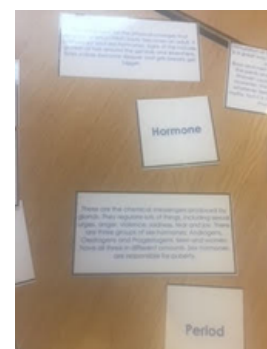
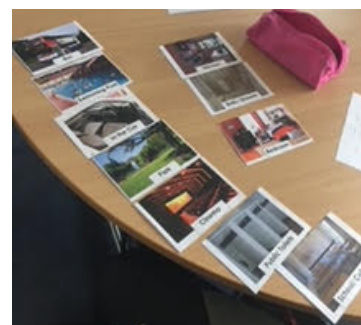


How does this activity help children and young people practise decision-making in a safe environment?

Card Sort



Card sorts support discussion, classification, critical thinking and collaborative learning.



How to Use This Technique:

1. Provide cards containing words, statements or images
2. Ask participants to categorise, match or rank them
3. Encourage discussion and justification of choices
4. Review responses as a group

Top Tips

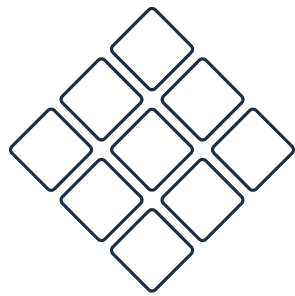


- Ensure instructions are clear
- Focus the discussion on reasoning
- Encourage respectful disagreement



How can card sorting move learning beyond simple recall of information?

Diamond 9

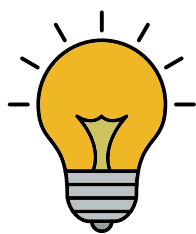


Diamond 9 activities support prioritisation, decision-making and discussion

How to Use This Technique:

1. Provide 9 statements or factors
2. Ask participants to rank them in a diamond shape
3. Encourage discussion and negotiation
4. Review similarities and differences between groups

Top Tips



- There is rarely one correct answer
- Encourage justification of choices
- Focus on the discussion process



How does prioritising information help develop critical thinking skills?

Worksheets

Early Warning Signs Worksheet:



Worksheets can support reflection, recording and consolidation of learning when used alongside active learning approaches. They are most effective when they complement discussion, collaboration and critical thinking rather than replace them.

How to Use This Technique:

1. Clearly explain the purpose of the worksheet and how it links to the learning objectives
2. Provide the participants with time to complete the task individually, in pairs or in small groups
3. Encourage discussion and reflection when completing the activity, where appropriate
4. Review responses as a group to explore different ideas and address misconceptions
5. Use the worksheet as a basis for further discussion, application or assessment of learning

Top Tips



- Consider where a more active alternative may be more effective
- Use worksheets to support, not replace, discussion
- Build in opportunities for reflection and debrief



Is the worksheet the most effective method for achieving the intended learning outcome?

Small World Play



Small world play enables children to explore experiences, relationships and decision-making through imaginative play.

How to Use This Technique:

1. Create a themed play environment
2. Provide props and resources linked to learning
3. Encourage children to explore freely
4. Observe interactions and discussions
5. Use observations to extend learning

Top Tips

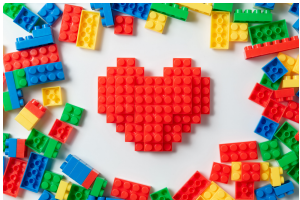


- Use realistic scenarios and props
- Allow children to lead the play
- Use questioning to deepen understanding



How can play based learning support the development of PSHE skills and understanding?

Creative Activities



Creative activities allow children and young people to explore ideas, communicate feelings and engage with PSHE topics in different ways.

How to Use This Technique:

1. Introduce a creative task linked to the learning
2. Provide suitable materials and resources
3. Allow time for creation and discussion
4. Invite participants to explain their work
5. Reflect on key learning points

Top Tips



- Focus on learning rather than artistic ability
- Offer different creative options
- Use creative outcomes as discussion starters



How might creative approaches support inclusion and engagement?

Role Play

Role play enables children and young people to rehearse skills, explore consequences and practise responses in a safe environment.

How to Use This Technique:

1. Introduce the scenario and expectations
2. Allocate roles or invite volunteers
3. Facilitate the role play
4. Pause, rewind or replay where appropriate
5. Debrief and discuss the learning

Top Tips



- Reinforce ground rules
- Never force participation
- Always allow time for reflection and debrief



What skills can children and young people develop through role play that are difficult to teach through discussion alone?

Conscious Alley

Conscious alley helps children and young people consider a range of viewpoints, exploring dilemmas and decision-making

How to Use This Technique:

1. Present a dilemma or scenario
2. Create 2 lines facing each other
3. Ask 1 participant to walk down the alley
4. Participants offer advice, thoughts or perspectives
5. Debrief and discuss the final decision



Top Tips



- Use realistic scenarios
- Encourage different viewpoints and solutions
- Focus on reasoning and consequences



How does this activity promote empathy and critical thinking?

Think, Pair, Share

Think, Pair, Share provides a structured approach to reflection, discussion and participation.

How to Use This Technique:

1. Pose a question or statement
2. Allow individuals thinking time
3. Ask participants to discuss with a partner
4. Invite pairs to share their ideas
5. Summarise key learning points



- Protect the thinking time
- Encourage active listening
- Ask children and young people to report back on their partner's views



How does structured discussion support participation for all children and young people?

Group Discussions



Group discussions develop communication, listening and collaborative problem-solving skills

How to Use This Technique:

1. Split the group into smaller groups of no more than 6
2. Remind participants of the ground rules
3. Provide a discussion prompt or task
4. Allow time for discussion; provide warning times to enable groups to wrap up discussions
5. Monitor and support where needed
6. Debrief and summarise key themes

Top Tips

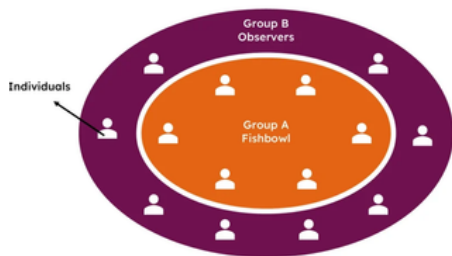


- Consider assigning roles
- Ensure all voices have the opportunity to be heard
- Build in reflective time



What strategies do you use to ensure group discussions are inclusive and purposeful?

Fishbowl Activities

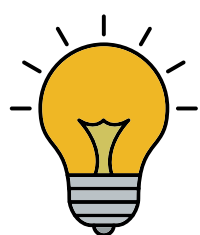


Fishbowl discussions provide a structured approach to explore complex issues while developing speaking and listening skills.

How to Use This Technique:

1. Select an appropriate discussion topic
2. Create an inner discussion circle and outer observation circle
3. Explain the discussion structure
4. Allow the fishbowl discussion to take place
5. Switch roles and debrief

Top Tips



- Use open-ended questions
- Clarify expectations for observers
- Reflect on both the discussion and the discussion process



How can observing others help children and young people develop effective discussion skills?

Resource Development

Resource development encourages children and young people to apply and communicate their learning to others

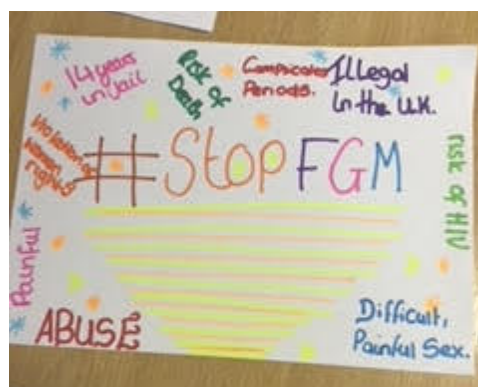
How to Use This Technique:

1. Explain the purpose and target audience
2. Identify key messages to include
3. Create the resource
4. Share completed resources
5. Review accuracy and impact

Top Tips



- Prioritise content over presentation
- Be clear about the target audience
- Use as an assessment opportunity



How does creating resources help children and young people demonstrate their learning and understanding?

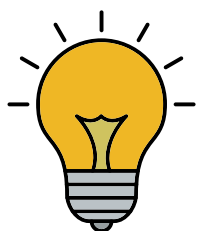
Presentations

Presentations develop research, communication, collaboration and media literacy skills.

How to Use This Technique:

1. Introduce the topic and expectations
2. Allow time for research and preparation
3. Support participants to organise information
4. Deliver presentations
5. Provide peer and facilitator feedback

Top Tips



- Encourage the use of reliable sources
- Provide adequate preparation time
- Include peer and self-reflection



How can presentations be used to assess both knowledge and skills development?

Gallery Walk

A Gallery Walk enables children and young people to view, discuss and respond to the work of others. It promotes reflection, collaboration and feedback.

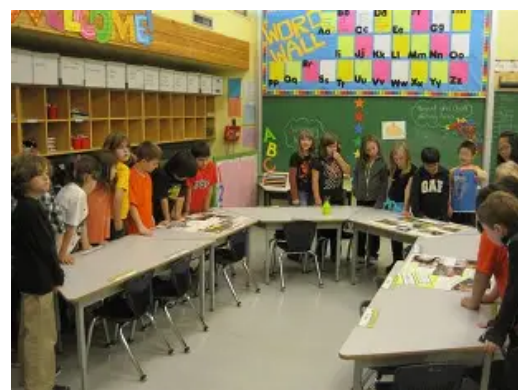
How to Use This Technique:

1. Display work, ideas or responses around the room
2. Ask participants to move around and review each display
3. Encourage written or verbal comments and questions
4. Allow time for discussion and reflection
5. Review the feedback together

Top Tips



- Establish expectations for respectful feedback
- Use prompts to guide responses
- Allow sufficient time to review all displays
- Focus on learning rather than presentation alone



How do you encourage children and young people to learn from and build on the ideas of others?

Hot Seating



Hot seating involves a participant or facilitator taking on the role of a character and responding to questions from the group. It helps children and young people develop empathy, explore different perspectives and understand the thoughts, feelings and motivations of others.

How to Use This Technique:

1. Introduce a character from a scenario, story or case study
2. Ask for a volunteer or facilitator to take on the role of the character
3. Invite the group to ask questions about the character's experiences, feelings, motivations or decisions
4. Encourage the character to respond from the perspective of the role they have adopted
5. Debrief the activity and discuss key learning points

Top Tips



- Use fictional or distanced characters where possible
- Ensure questions remain respectful and appropriate
- Consider modelling the technique before inviting participants to take part
- Use the activity to explore multiple perspectives on an issue



How could hot seating help children and young people develop empathy and understanding of different viewpoints?

Silent Debate



Silent debate provides an opportunity for children and young people to share ideas, opinions and questions in writing rather than verbally. It can be particularly effective for sensitive topics and helps ensure that all children and young people have an opportunity to contribute.

How to Use This Technique:

1. Display a statement, question or scenario
2. Ask participants to record their thoughts, responses or questions on flipchart paper, post-its, or digital platforms, e.g., Mentimeter
3. Encourage children and young people to read and respond to the comments of others in writing
4. Allow sufficient time for participants to review the discussion
5. Debrief as a group, exploring themes, questions and differing viewpoints

Top Tips

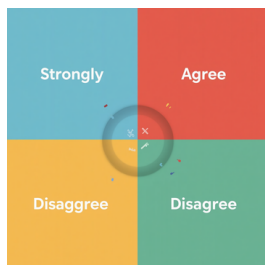


- Remind participants to communicate respectfully
- Allow time for careful reflection before responses are written
- Use anonymous contributions where appropriate
- Select prompts that encourage discussion rather than simple factual answers



How might silent debate enable participation from children and young people who are less confident contributing to verbal discussions?

Four Corners



Four Corners encourages children and young people to explore different viewpoints, justify their opinions and consider alternative perspectives. It can be particularly effective when discussing values, attitudes and social norms.

How to Use This Technique:

1. Label each corner of the room with a response option, e.g. strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree
2. Present a statement or scenario
3. Ask participants to move to the corner that best reflects their view
4. Give time for discussion within each corner
5. Invite groups to share their reasoning and allow participants to change position if their thinking develops

Top Tips



- Use statements that encourage discussion rather than factual recall
- Make it clear that changing your mind is a positive outcome
- Encourage participants to explain their reasoning respectfully
- Consider accessibility requirements if movement is difficult



How do you encourage children and young people to listen to and consider viewpoints that differ from their own?

Jigsaw Learning



Jigsaw Learning encourages collaboration and shared responsibility for learning. Children and young people become "experts" in one area of a topic before teaching others.

How to Use This Technique:

1. Divide the topics into sections
2. Assign each group one section to investigate
3. Allow groups time to become "experts" in their area
4. Rearrange participants into mixed groups
5. Ask each participant to teach their section to the new group

Top Tips



- Keep information manageable
- Provide clear guidance and resources
- Support children and young people who may lack confidence presenting information
- Use as a way of developing communication and listening skills



How could giving children and young people responsibility for teaching others increase engagement and ownership of learning?

Quiz Activities



Quiz activities can be used to assess prior knowledge, identify misconceptions and reinforce key learning. When used alongside discussion, they encourage critical thinking and help children and young people develop confidence in evaluating information.

How to Use This Technique:

1. Develop questions linked to the learning objectives
2. Ask participants to answer individually, in pairs or in small groups
3. Review responses together
4. Discuss misconceptions and provide accurate information
5. Revisit key questions later to assess learning

Top Tips



- Use quizzes to stimulate discussion rather than simply test knowledge
- Present accurate information clearly
- Avoid presenting misconceptions in ways that may unintentionally reinforce them



How can quiz activities be used to promote discussion, challenge misconceptions and deepen understanding rather than simply test recall?

Problem Solving Challenges

Problem-solving activities encourage children and young people to apply knowledge and skills to realistic situations, developing critical thinking, collaboration and decision-making.

How to Use This Technique:

1. Present a challenge, dilemma or problem
2. Provide relevant information and resources
3. Ask participants to work together to identify solutions
4. Invite groups to share their thinking
5. Reflect on different approaches and outcomes

Top Tips



- Use realistic age-appropriate scenarios
- Focus on the decision-making process
- Encourage multiple possible solutions
- Allow time for reflection and review



How do you provide opportunities for children and young people to apply their learning to real-life situations?

Circle Time



Circle time provides a structured opportunity for children and young people to share thoughts, feelings and experiences in a safe and supportive environment.

How to Use This Technique:

1. Arrange participants in a circle
2. Remind the group of the agreed ground rules
3. Introduce a question, prompt or theme
4. Allow participants the opportunity to contribute
5. Summarise key themes and learning

Top Tips



- Participants should be encouraged but not forced
- Use a talking object if helpful
- Establish expectations around listening and respect
- Keep questions age/stage-appropriate



How do you ensure all children and young people feel safe and included during group discussions?

Peer Teaching

Peer teaching enables children and young people to consolidate and deepen their understanding by sharing learning with others. It supports communication, confidence and leadership skills.

How to Use This Technique:

1. Allocate a topic or area of learning
2. Give time for research, discussion and preparation
3. Ask participants to develop a resource, presentation or activity
4. Facilitate the delivery of learning to peers
5. Review both the content and the learning process

Top Tips

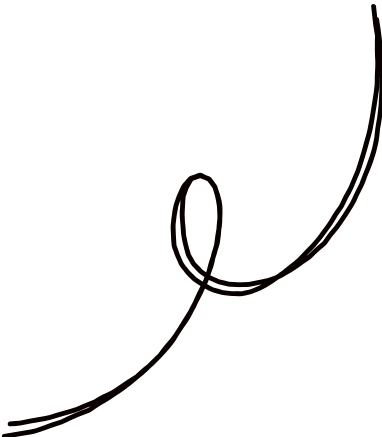
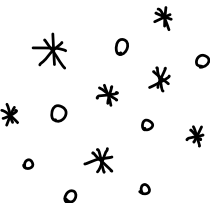
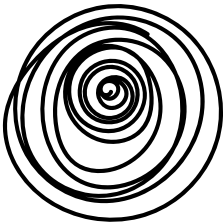
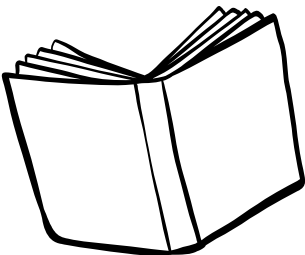
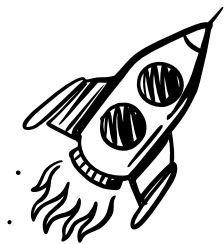
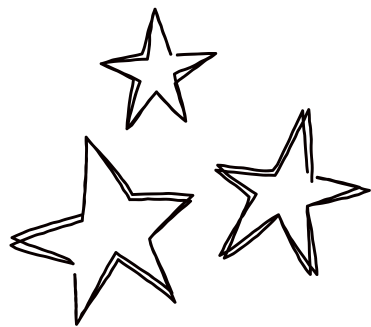
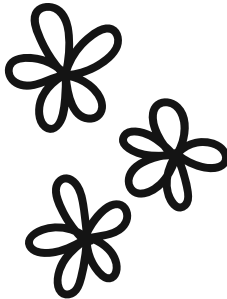


- Provide clear expectations
- Support participants with planning and preparation
- Focus on accuracy as well as creativity
- Encourage constructive feedback



How can peer teaching support pupil voice and deeper learning?

PAGE FOR NOTES





PSHE

Education

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