

Myself as an SPHE teacher

Looking at Myself and What I Bring to the Classroom

Teaching involves a complex combination of developing knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and behaviours. How we approach teaching is shaped by who we are. Being self-aware in terms of what we bring to the classroom and ways in which 'we teach who we are'¹ is particularly important in the context of teaching SPHE.

Self-awareness means reflecting on how your own experiences, attitudes, values and beliefs (and possible biases) have shaped you and considering how they might affect your approach to teaching SPHE and your responses to student experiences, views and opinions.

Everyone is socialised in the society, family and community in which they grow up. Given this, it is no surprise that students and teachers may bring different values and attitudes into the classroom, influenced by their upbringing, education, religious beliefs and experiences. Becoming more self-aware about the origin of your own beliefs and attitudes is an important first step in being able to facilitate open and non-judgemental dialogue in your classroom. This is needed so that students can be open and honest, and a classroom environment is created where everyone feels a sense of belonging and their unique identities are respected.

Becoming more self-aware and comfortable with SPHE topics will make all the difference when facilitating classroom discussions with students. Researching topics in advance, engaging with the resources on this toolkit, attending professional development, when possible, and planning collaboratively with other teachers will help you to feel more comfortable and confident.

Other relevant topics

Teacher as facilitator

What makes a safe SPHE/RSE classroom?

What makes an inclusive SPHE/RSE classroom?

Dealing with challenging conversations

Dealing with disclosure about sexual abuse

Taking a fresh look at teaching about food

For Reflection

- Growing up, how was my own experience of SPHE related learning (both at home and at school)?
- What was helpful about what I learned? What was unhelpful or missing from my experience of SPHE as a young person?
- Was this a positive and useful preparation for my role as an SPHE teacher?
- Did I have any positive role models for how to be a good SPHE teacher? What did I learn from them?
- Is there anything I need to unlearn or set aside when I step into the role of facilitating learning in SPHE?
- What topics do I feel most comfortable teaching and what are the topics I feel least comfortable teaching? How can I deal with this? For example, would talking to a colleague or carefully reading through the resources in this toolkit be helpful?
- Reflecting on my own identity – sexual, gender, religious, ethnic, social class and any other aspects that might be relevant – how might these impact on how I respond to student questions and discussion?
- What might help me in managing my own experiences/opinions/assumptions and allow me to approach topics in a sensitive, non-judgemental and inclusive way?
- How can I show a genuine respect and understanding for the diversity of views and values that may emerge, while affirming core SPHE values of respect, equality, inclusivity, responsibility, dignity, compassion and empathy?
- Am I able to express any concerns / fears I have about teaching the sensitive aspects of SPHE? How best could I prepare and support myself?
- What qualities do I have that will help me to be able to engage most effectively with my students?

¹Palmer, PJ (1997). *The heart of the teacher*. p.15