

PSHE case study

PSHE

One of the key aims of PSHE is to encourage students to reflect on and clarify their own values and attitudes and explore the complex and sometimes conflicting range of values and attitudes and information they may encounter in their lives. Providing them with critical literacy skills is part of enabling them to do this.

Critical literacy link to Key Stage 4 programme of study

- **Identity (1):** their personal qualities, attitudes, skills, attributes and achievements and what influences these.
- **Power (8):** how it is used and encountered in a variety of contexts including online; how it manifests through behaviours including persuasion and coercion and how it can be challenged or managed through negotiation and 'win-win' outcomes.

Case study – Year 10 fake news lessons at Newent Community School and Sixth Form, Gloucestershire

Year 10 students were studying fake news as a topic in their PSHE lessons. During one activity the students were invited to work in small groups, prompting them to consider perspectives from different viewpoints. Each group was given a different view and were asked to consider the article in relation to either the author, the individual reader and the wider audience. Small group work prompted discussion and a more analytical approach and a consideration of all views:

“The person who has written the article has their own agenda: they want to get the audience on their side, whatever way they can! And it can easily be through lies.” (Student)

“We have always been led to believe things we read or see online are factual, particularly news.” (Student)

We then discussed how we can tell if news is truthful or reliable. Journalists are bound by codes of conduct, which set out good ethical practice, like the double checking of sources. However, technology has made it easy for anyone to spread information without rules and regulation, distorting the truth.

With talk partners, students looked at an actual case of fake news, and considered how it went viral. They annotated the article showing what they believed to have been key moments or events that contributed to the spread of the story. Things such as political tensions were identified. From that we went on to look at how we need to be aware and learn how to counteract fake news.

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We then, as a whole class, considered how social media is a brilliant platform for people to declare their beliefs, whether or not they are 'true'. We discussed how fake news could stir up conflict and how it might have dangerous consequences. We established that an understanding of the difference between fact and opinion is crucial and that often news articles have an element of opinion - the facts are truth; fake news is commonly misleading in its correct use of fact and opinions.

After an activity of creating a clickbait headline, (for example: 'Teenagers need to make sure they spend at least two hours on social media a day!') the class considered the possible fallout of believing these kinds of headlines or articles. In small groups, students went on to draw up a list to share on how to spot fake news. They came up with ideas that were shared with the whole group, for example:

- Double check the sources
- Check who the author is
- Look for supporting sources
- Look beyond the title as these can be a hook and miss-leading to draw the reader in
- Get another person to check it out
- Look at the date it was written

Students also considered the importance of sharing and liking a story before it's been checked. Several talked about how they had inadvertently done this in the past, without really thinking about the consequences and the impact it might have.

Finally, in pairs, students created their own story which might fool the public, including fake data. They were asked to include some quotes that might add gravity to their piece, to make it seem more reliable.

Students swapped fake news articles, and were asked to establish how they might discover the article is fake if they were a member of the public reading it.

The final task reinforced the importance of looking very carefully at all aspects of the article, whatever the source, in order to substantiate its credibility as news.

Some of the things students said were:

"I think it's really important that we learn these skills. We need to be taught to always question things we read online. We need to know how to intelligently navigate all to decrease the chances of being misled."

"I think this is something that will get increasingly worse before it improves. The providers need to take more responsibility, as well as us."

“It’s a bit like sending inappropriate stuff on social media: we’re taught to always take a step back, count to ten, and think before we send. We need to do this before we believe what we read.”

Contributed by Di Harrill, Learning Lead PSHE at Newent Community School and Sixth Form and Gloucester Healthy Living and Learning Lead Teacher.