

Life Skills Primary Programme Parent/Carer FAQ sheet – Summer 2023

Covid 19 statement for Parents/Carers

We want to reassure you that Life Skills Education are continuing to make the Health and Safety of your children a priority. Where required we will still ensure the following –

- A complete risk assessment for all DAaRT Officers going into schools is in place
- DAaRT Officers will be aware of the school risk assessment and guidelines, and will work within this
- DAaRT Officers will still be equipped with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment and where required will wear this in line with school requirements
- Lessons may be adjusted to take account of social distancing guidelines
- All DAaRT Officers have been trained to deliver remotely where required

Who is this page for?

This page is for any parent/carers who has a child in Year 5 or 6 and who will be taking part in the programme. You may know this programme from when it was called 'DARE'. At the beginning of the course (if a DAaRT Officer is involved in the teaching) the school will be offered a parent/carers briefing by the DAaRT Officer. This gives parents/carers the opportunity to meet the DAaRT Officer and learn about the programme and ask any questions they might have. Do ask your child's teacher about the briefing if you have not had a letter about it.

How can I be involved?

At the beginning of the course, you will be sent a letter about the programme from the school. Once the workbook has been given to your child (in lesson 1) they will bring it home for you to read together and there is a place for you to sign to say that you consent for your child to undertake the course.

As the course progresses, we encourage children to take books home and to talk to their parent/carers about what they have learned. The graduation at week 11 is a celebration of your child's learning and usually parents/carers are invited to this – again, ask the school about this.

What is the programme about?

The programme is a 10-week course for Year 5/6 pupils which teaches children about making healthy and safe choices. We give basic information about drugs and alcohol so that they can learn about the health effects associated with their use. There are also lessons which look at knife crime and at the differences in our communities and in society. We also teach many other important life skills that your child will need as they are growing up. You can see more details about this further down this page.

How do you know the programme works?

By 2023 we will have been delivering this programme in the UK for over 27 years (it is regularly updated!) and have schools that have been working with us from the very beginning. In 2016, a report was published by Nottingham Trent University which details how successful the programme has been. From this survey we know that children who have graduated from the programme have ability deal effectively with stress, peer pressure and bullying, and will make safe and healthy choices by knowing the facts and health effects of tobacco, drugs and alcohol. They will also have developed improved communication skills and a higher likelihood of asking for help.

Please click here for more details of the evaluation 2016 report <https://lifeskills-education.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Summary-of-DARE-Evaluation-Report-29th-September-Version-AT.pdf>

We are currently waiting for the results from our latest evaluation, conducted by Sheffield Hallam University, in 2021.

How long does it last?

The programme lasts for 10 lessons with each lesson lasting about an hour. At the end of the programme there is a graduation (on week 11) where parent/carers are invited and where the children can show off what they have learned during the programme. The pupils and teacher will organise this. Certificates are given for those who have fully completed the programme and there is usually an opportunity to buy gifts and to speak to the DAaRT Officer involved with your school.

How will it help my child?

It will help your child to make safe and healthy choices and to understand different kinds of communication – this will lead to an increase in knowledge and self-confidence and assist in their overall development. This is especially important during the transition to secondary school when we know that they are at an extremely important, but also vulnerable stage of development.

Will you be showing drugs to my child?

No – we do this through cartoon pictures, we do not bring drugs or anything else into the classroom, and we do not use scare tactics.

Are drugs or knife crime a problem in my area?

We know that children are faced with several risky situations across all areas of the country, and it is likely that young people will move between communities as they grow older. It is important that your child is equipped with accurate and up to date information and knows what action to take as they face life's challenges. We know that the majority of children will develop into sensible young people, and we seek to reassure them that any kind of risky or challenging situation can be difficult, but is manageable with the right knowledge and skills.

Why does my child need to know about drugs at such a young age?

We live in a drug using world and we know that children are particularly vulnerable at the point of transition to secondary school. There are legal (tobacco, and alcohol) and illegal drugs (cannabis, heroin) and helpful (medicines) and harmful drugs - we know that prescribed medications can be abused and that this is on the increase. This is an opportunity for your child to understand the issues raised, to learn that legal does not necessarily mean safe and to obtain knowledge and skills which will help to be responsible when drugs are involved. We give all information in an age-appropriate way - we do not scare children into just saying no to drugs as we know that this approach is less likely to work.

I smoke/have a drink and that's OK, isn't it?

You are an adult and as such have the knowledge and judgement to make your own choices. We do not tell children that they should never smoke or drink, but we do highlight the dangers of drug use and of smoking. We give children the information they need about drugs, encourage them to weigh the risks and consequences and give them the tools to make positive decisions for themselves.

What else to they learn about?

We also include lessons about being respectful to all and about the different communities and individuals in society and how and why it is important to live positively together. With the rise in knife crime, we have been asked to include this as a topic. Your child will learn the facts including the law on knives and knife crime but will also be given the reassurance they need that the majority of young people are not involved in any ways with knives; again, we won't scare your child but will teach them how to manage any tricky situations they may come across and where to go to if they are worried or concerned.

What happens in class?

All classes are different; some are taught fully by our DAaRT Officers and sometimes the teacher will deliver the programme, sometimes there is a little of both throughout the course. This will depend on what the school has asked for.

We use a workbook that the children have responsibility for filling in during and after class. To graduate at the end of the course, the workbook must be filled in. If your child is absent for any lessons, then they have the responsibility to talk to the teacher and decide on a plan to make up the work.

We use videos alongside the workbooks to help the children learn about a variety of different topics including bullying, responsibility, confident communication, how to resist peer pressure, resistance strategies and where to go for help and advice.

The programme gives basic information about drugs and alcohol and what the health effects of using these are. We teach children to recognise risky situations and then to make safe and healthy decisions.

During the class the children will be encouraged to explore and discuss issues through question and answers, small and large group discussion, using the workbook and watching the videos.

I still have questions

We hope that we have been able to answer your questions but if you are still unsure about anything, please ask your child's class teacher, see the DAaRT Officer in school, ask to see the Parent/Carer video, or please feel free contact us through the form on our website.