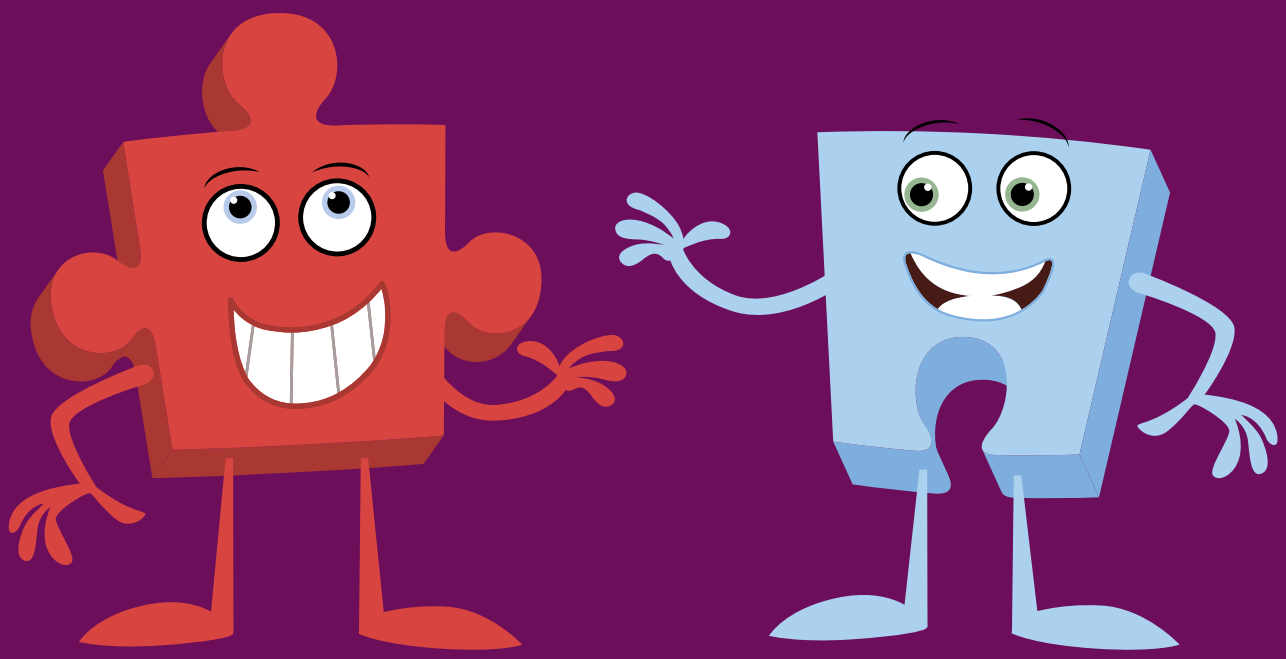
The mindful approach to PSHE

Including and valuing ALL children

What does Jigsaw teach about LGBT+ relationships?



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Jigsaw, the mindful approach to PSHE, is a teaching programme for Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) which includes statutory Relationships Education, statutory Health Education and non-statutory Sex Education (DfE England 2019).

It is a comprehensive programme for pupils aged from 3-16, and designed by Jan Lever MBE, a teacher and psychotherapist.

There are six half-term Puzzles (units) sequenced from the beginning to the end of the school year:

- **Being Me in My World**
- **Celebrating Difference**
- **Dreams and Goals**
- **Healthy Me**
- **Relationships**
- **Changing Me**

Each Puzzle has six lessons. The Jigsaw Friends are used as distancing tools along with the Jigsaw Charter to ensure a safe learning environment. Mindfulness philosophy and practice underpins and permeates the programme.

This information leaflet has been written to provide information about Jigsaw's approach to LGBT+ relationships in the age 3-11 programme.

Terminology:

LGBT+: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender. The + acknowledges sexualities and gender identities other than lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.

In Jigsaw, we also ensure children understand the term heterosexual.

Premise:

Our experience shows us that children are good at accepting and looking past differences to the person. They are happy to be friends with/work with any peer they like and feel comfortable with, regardless of the differences that might be apparent. Of course, difference is sometimes used as a source of bullying and Jigsaw works hard to alleviate this.

So, firstly, it is important to state that Jigsaw nurtures positive and healthy relationships across the school community. It is concerned that all children understand what makes a relationship positive and healthy and can recognise and get help if they are experiencing something unhealthy etc. The starting point is building a positive, respectful relationship with self, engendering a sense of belonging and inclusion. This work begins in the Being Me in My World Puzzle (unit) in all year groups and is reinforced throughout.

Therefore, there is minimal focus on sexual orientation and gender identity in the age 3 -11 programme; enough to enable children to understand the meaning of the words lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and heterosexual. At no point in this work is there any mention of sexual activity. It is about people and who they love, are attracted to and may want to marry or spend their lives with.

This work is about alleviating stereotyping, accepting and respecting all people and celebrating differences of all sorts. In this way we aim to value and include all children and all family compositions, not to mention all teachers and members of the school community, thus equipping children for life in the UK today.

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What does Jigsaw PSHE teach about LGBT+ relationships and why?

1) Jigsaw believes all children should feel included

Jigsaw is underpinned by the philosophy to value every child as a unique human being, to enable everyone to feel included and to celebrate difference, thus developing empathy, compassion and respect for self and others.

We believe that school is a place where all children should feel safe and respected.

Part of this is helping children to understand there are many differences and similarities between people and that this can be positive rather than a source of negativity, bullying or discrimination.

Jigsaw talks about children and people as being of equal value, without labels, and considers the qualities most important in human beings. It unpacks stereotypes and influences and helps children become mindful, aware of their thoughts and feelings and the impact these may have.

Families

One of the differences children will be familiar with is family composition.

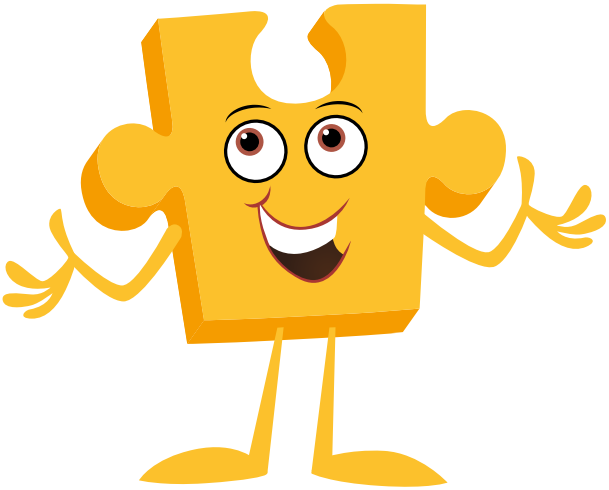
There are many family situations; some children will have parents who are separated, some may live with a mum and a dad, some may have stepparents, some may live in extended multi-generational families, and some may be fostered or adopted. Some may have other family arrangements; and some of those in parenting roles will be heterosexual and some will be LGBT+. We believe the gender identity and sexual orientation of parents and family members is what it is. This is their business, no-one else's, and in children's eyes is insignificant as these are the people they love and who love and care for them.

Jigsaw therefore makes every effort to reflect a wide range of families in its images so that all children can resonate with their own experience of 'family'. No child should ever be made to feel less accepted, or that their family is any less loving and caring than another. Careful treatment is given to this work in Jigsaw to avoid children being at risk of picking up 'hidden messages that may suggest to them their family is 'not as good as' or 'not right'.

Children who feel unaccepted or isolated are more vulnerable, possibly feel less secure, and potentially less able to apply themselves to learning. Jigsaw works hard to ensure its materials are accepting of all children and all families, (of course helping children to know how to get help if they are being harmed in any way).

The Jigsaw philosophy values every child as a unique human being and does not discriminate but supports them all to become the best they can be.

Jigsaw's lessons help children explore why a loving and caring family is important and how they contribute to that as members of their own families.



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Examples of teaching materials

In Jigsaw we sometimes use images of people and sometimes distance the learning by using e.g. cartoon characters.

Ages 7-8 Celebrating Difference

This lesson offers many images and asks children, 'Which pictures show a family?' thus opening a discussion on what makes a family and concluding that what is important is that we are loved and cared for, whatever our family composition.

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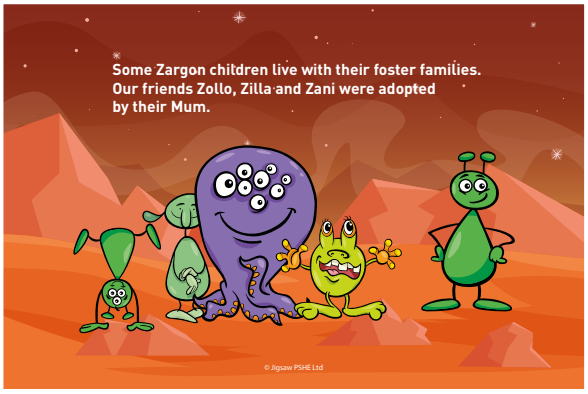
Ages 5-6 Relationships

This lesson uses cartoon characters from Planet Zarg to suggest there are many different sorts of families.



Children as individuals

In the same way that Jigsaw approaches all family compositions as of equal value, it also considers every child of equal value.

Some children in primary school may feel they are different in some way. This difference may be about their developing sexuality or gender identity, but equally, it may be about appearance, body-image, achievements, language, accent or any number of perceived differences.

The second Puzzle (unit) in the Jigsaw Programme for all year groups, called Celebrating Difference, is all about similarity and difference; the underpinning aim being to help children love and accept themselves for who they are and build a positive relationship with self and with others.

There is no direct teaching about children themselves being heterosexual or LGBT+, rather each child is treated as a valued individual.

We simply believe it is important that children understand that individuality is positive and not a source of negativity, thereby leading to acceptance and respect for self and others.

As they explore who they are and their sexuality and gender identity become more apparent to them, this will then be received in a positive way, without fear.

Jigsaw's ages 3-11 programme does not explicitly teach about heterosexual or LGBT+ relationships in adulthood either, other than to explain that any two adults can love each other and be attracted to each other.

The ages 3-11 Jigsaw Programme nurtures respect and acceptance for all, focussing on the characteristics of positive, healthy relationships children themselves will be experiencing e.g. family and friends.

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2) Jigsaw aims to eliminate bullying and give age-appropriate understanding

Bullying is often focused on some aspect of difference, hence the Celebrating Difference work which includes anti-bullying work.

When discussing any differences between people, Jigsaw helps teach children to form opinions about others based on whether they are kind, law-abiding, respectful, trustworthy, and responsible people, rather than judging them on appearance or any other aspect of difference or on first impressions or unsubstantiated judgements.

Children will have heard, or will come to hear, words such as 'gay', 'lesbian' or 'transgender'. Sometimes these words can be used as insults or derogatory terms. In this context, Jigsaw explains the meanings of these words age-appropriately and teaches that these are not to be used in derogatory ways as this could cause hurt or harm and are disrespectful. No words are ever to be used to cause hurt or harm.

At no point in Jigsaw is any reference made to sexual activity of any adults regardless of their sexuality. This we strongly believe would be inappropriate and unacceptable. In ages 9-11 when human reproduction is taught (at the school's discretion) this is done from a biological standpoint. IVF and adoption are mentioned to ensure children are aware, but the focus is on teaching the biology of human reproduction.

Jigsaw lessons help by giving age-appropriate information, and by assisting teachers to clarify children's understanding of words and terminology. Explanations as to LGBT+ are always accompanied by explaining heterosexual so that LGBT+ relationships are not singled out as different to the 'norm' but rather seen as part of the whole range of relationships, sexual orientations and gender identities.

However, for ages 3-11 this work is minimal as we are most concerned to nurture accepting attitudes. Further understanding can follow at secondary school.

3) Schools have a duty to uphold the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

The PSED or the Equality Act, as it is more commonly known, requires schools to eliminate discrimination; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relationships. By doing so, the Equality Act encourages schools to meet the diverse needs of children and to improve outcomes for all pupils regardless of background. Part of the Equality 'duty' is to teach children about rights and responsibilities, acceptance, empathy and understanding of others. Jigsaw aligns to this throughout.

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4) English schools have a duty to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of their pupils, including understanding British values.

The requirement to develop children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is set out in the Education Act (2002).

In 2014, additional guidance was published for schools with regards to teaching British values. Guidance states that schools should promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance, and makes it clear that children should learn about discrimination and how to combat it. As previously discussed, Jigsaw lessons, particularly in the Celebrating Difference units of work, include teaching children about acceptance, empathy, prejudice and discrimination, and the rights and responsibilities they have as UK and global citizens. A school's SMSC education is an important part of the Ofsted inspection framework.

5) Schools have a legal obligation to safeguard their pupils

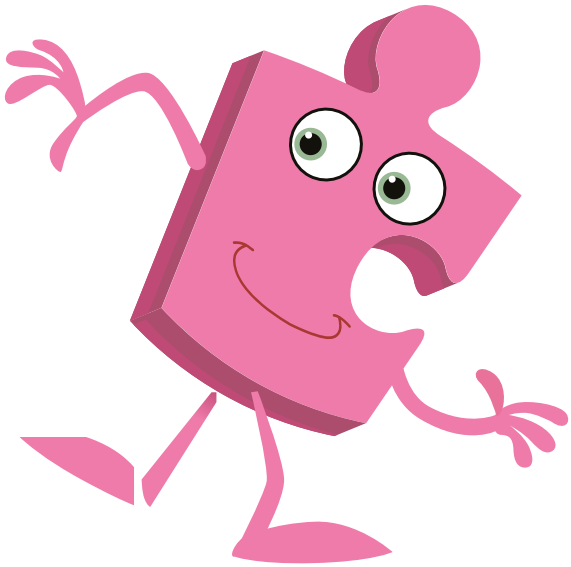
Safeguarding guidance establishes that schools must protect all children from physical and emotional abuse including bullying (on and offline) and abuse that could happen from an adult or from other children. Teaching children to accept there are a whole range of differences in people, helps combat stigma, discrimination and bullying. Children also need to be taught how to access help if they are involved in a bullying, or abusive situation. Jigsaw's lessons, particularly in the Celebrating Difference and Relationships units of work, teach children why bullying can happen and why it is unfair, how to recognise a bullying/abusive situation and how to get help. Within this work children discuss a wide range of reasons why some people are bullied, or become bullies, and this includes some discussion around name-calling which includes the inappropriate use of words such as 'gay' and 'lesbian' as an insult towards another person.

6) Statutory Relationships and Health Education in England

Relationships Education and Health Education became statutory for all primary schools in England from September 2020; schools being required to follow the published guidance.

Primary children learn that not all families are the same and to respect these differences.

They also learn about bullying and how to treat others with respect, whether this is within their immediate relationships, or in the wider community.



The guidance also states that when learning about different families, care should be taken to avoid stigmatisation of children based on their home circumstances. It also reaffirms the duty for schools to comply with the Equality Act, where sexual orientation and gender-reassignment are two of the nine protected characteristics.

The Relationships and Health Education guidance does not suggest a specific age when LGBT+ relationships should be brought into the curriculum, but there is an expectation for this to be included in a sensitive and age-appropriate manner, and in an inclusive way throughout, not simply as a one-off lesson or topic.

It is left to schools' discretion as to how and when they teach what in this regard, taking account of their children and families, situations, beliefs etc.

Schools using Jigsaw will be compliant with this statutory guidance.

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Transgender

For more information on Jigsaw's approach to gender identity and transgender, please see the article, **'How does Jigsaw approach Gender Identity?'**

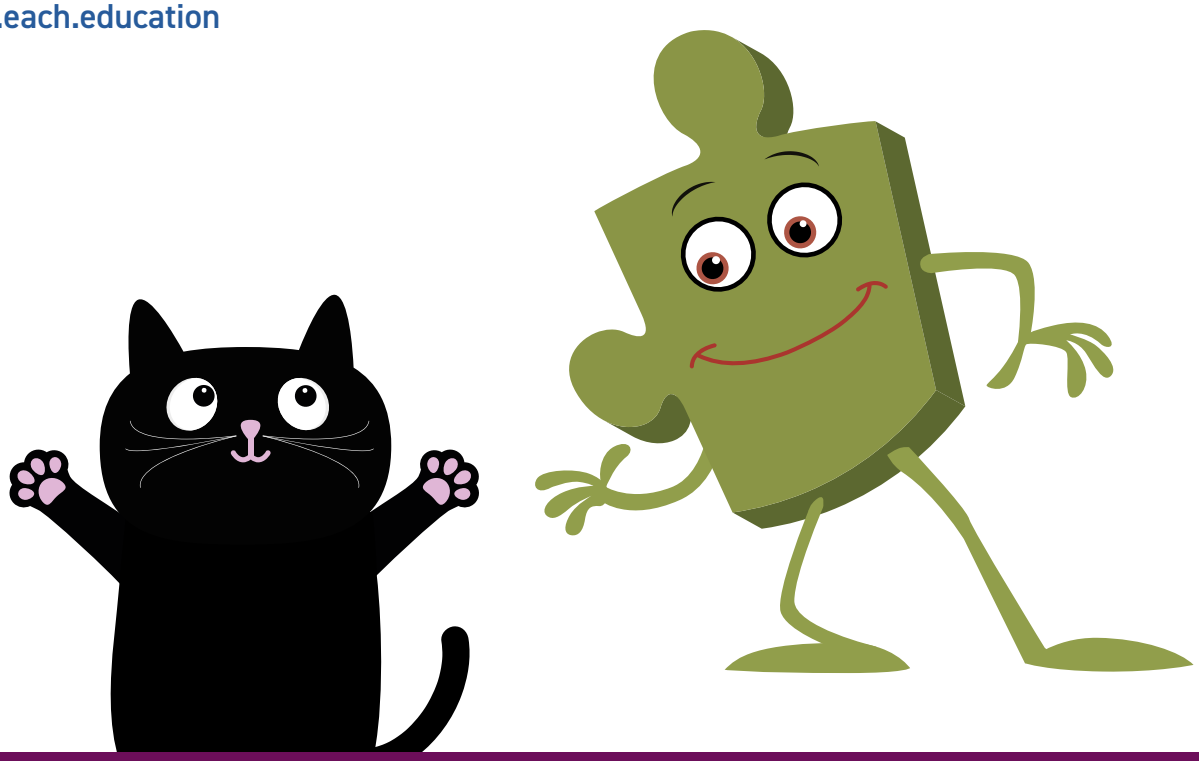
Parental right to withdraw

Since September 2020, parents may only request to withdraw their children from non-statutory Sex Education in PSHE. Relationships Education and Health Education are statutory; this includes lessons on puberty, prejudice and discrimination, bullying, difference and diversity, and different families, including the content discussed in this leaflet.

If you require further information about the Jigsaw Programme and/or how your child's school delivers it, please do approach your child's school which will be happy to discuss the programme with you. Schools are, of course, welcome to tailor the Jigsaw Programme for their children's needs mindful of statutory requirements.

Jigsaw PSHE is pleased to work in partnership with EACH (Educational Action Challenging Homophobia) and acknowledges the national work and books of its director: Jonathan Charlesworth M.Ed. in supporting Jigsaw's philosophy to value every child.

www.each.education



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