**Ukraine: Sensitive Issues in the PSHE Classroom**

Children will be aware of the complex situation in Ukraine and will have many questions and fears about it. As teachers, we may have similar feelings to our pupils as we experience uncertainty and anxiety about unfolding events. Below are some points for guidance in facilitating dialogue about this in our classrooms.

**Meaningful ground rules**

Negotiating ground rules at the outset of dialogue ensures that students and teachers alike have safe and clear boundaries and know what to expect. Ground rules should ensure the following:

* Everybody is treated with respect, listened to and valued. It is okay for us to disagree with another person’s point of view but we don’t make fun of them or put them down.
* Everybody has the right to pass. Nobody should feel pressured to share an opinion or reveal their personal feelings or experiences.
* Personal questions should not be asked of anybody. This includes pupils and teachers and removes anxiety about what they might be expected to reveal.
* We do not use language or terminology that will upset or offend.
* The conversation stays in the room as far as possible.

**No spokespersons**

Some children may come from the parts of the world affected by the current war in Ukraine, or they may have experienced conflict in other parts of the world. No child or individual is the spokesperson for a whole community or for everybody who has a particular experience. We would not, for example, ask a child of Russian heritage, ‘How do Russians feel about this?’

**Give a heads-up to those who you know to have personal experience or connections**

If you intend to share a clip or resource that may affect or trigger a response in particular individuals, share it with them in advance and check that it is ok for you to use it. Ask if there is anything else that they would like to make you aware of ahead of the lesson.

Arrange an exit plan should an affected child require the option to take a few minutes away from the classroom. This should be discrete, and you will need to make another adult aware of the arrangement.

**Always deliver as though somebody in the class is personally affected**

Whether or not you know it to be the case, always teach as though a child in your classroom is affected. This will ensure that we do not stigmatise or ‘other’ any particular group.

**Starting Points**

It is important that we meet children where they are at. We do not want to shock or increase fear, but we do want to pitch learning or discussion at the appropriate level. Find out what children already know, what are their concerns or misunderstandings. This may be through a graffiti wall, speech/thought bubbles (e.g., a group of young people are discussing Ukraine. What are they saying? What are they thinking?) or small group mind-mapping.

**Prompts, questions and ideas to help teachers facilitate dialogue**

* Acknowledge that this discussion is difficult but important, and that we are also in the process of making sense of the situation – we don’t have all of the answers
* It is ok to be unsure and uncertain, to make mistakes and change our mind
* Check that we want to continue with this discussion, or would it be better to put it on hold?
* Provide the facts in a way that is manageable and age-appropriate about what has happened, what is happening now and what could happen next
* Separate out fact and opinion
* Discuss how this is making people feel, both in the UK and in the Ukraine and Russia
* Challenge any generalisations that are made – you may want to draw attention to the fact that many Russians are opposed to Putin’s actions
* What can we do that is positive? Consider actions, behaviours, attitudes.

**Signpost Support**

Who are the trusted adults your children can go to? Where might they be able to get reliable support and advice. Consider sending a link to parents about limiting access to news and how best to speak about what is in the news (see link to Grief Specialists guidance below).

**Further reading**

* The Association of Citizenship Teaching has produced a teacher factsheet which can be found at: <https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/sites/teachingcitizenship.org.uk/files/2022/FACT%20sheet%20Russian%20invasion%20of%20Ukraine_ACT.pdf>
* Grief Specialists have produced guidance entitled Talking to Children about the Russian Invasion of Ukraine which can be found at: <https://www.griefspecialists.org/post/talking-to-children-about-the-russian-invasion-of-ukraine?fbclid=IwAR3BlmI1eViEKG7SNInnnPJXRrgPXFj5tivmIB1wtHFrhpJdsduBDdy4tFU>
* More general advice from BBC Newsround on what to do if you are fearful of the news can be found at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/13865002?fbclid=IwAR2tuvRkBnezePMolUvcISpBxXd5WwJcI-DuyJ1zRNAK2ndcbmhfUJdLAfs>
* [Help for teachers and families to talk to pupils about Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and how to help them avoid misinformation. - The Education Hub (blog.gov.uk)](https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2022/02/25/help-for-teachers-and-families-to-talk-to-pupils-about-russias-invasion-of-ukraine-and-how-to-help-them-avoid-misinformation/)

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