



# Information Please - Health Education in the Primary Years

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From currently available titles we have chosen some to recommend. Our selections are grouped thematically.

Topics like Ourselves and The Senses are a perennial feature of primary classrooms, providing opportunities for investigating and learning about some aspects of our bodies and how they work. In recent years the realisation of the social and financial costs of ill-health has led to a higher profile for the Health Education Council and a sharper focus on what might appear in the primary and secondary school curriculum in the name of health education. Knowing about how our bodies work leads to considering diet and fitness, health and hygiene. A more open dealing with feelings, with emotional as well as physical development, is a key aspect of mental health.

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By its very nature this is an area in which parents need to be closely involved. Sending out information and invitations to consult don't always avoid misunderstanding. Many infant schools have also involved parents and children together in projects - the kind of active participation that ensures mutual understanding. Inviting parents to look at and read the books and materials which teachers will be using with children is another way of making things clear.

At the top end of the primary school questions of what to include inevitably arise. With some girls reaching puberty before 11 and the later onset of adolescence in boys, responding to need requires considerable tact and sensitivity. There are primary age children who claim to be smokers and drinkers; some who encounter sexual abuse and are exposed to the risks of solvent and drug abuse. How to inform without sensationality, inviting experimentation or arousing unnecessary fears?

Books can be a valuable source of information for children and a useful support for teachers. In this area the best will include the two main elements of health education: **explanation** (What is it? What does it mean? How does it work?) and **reassurance** (Am I normal? Am I like that? How am I going to change?). They will also approach the subject from the child's point of view and reflect cultural diversity in a way that is natural and unforced.

From currently available titles we have chosen some to recommend. Our selections are grouped thematically.

## FUNCTIONS OF THE BODY

**Look At** series, Franklin Watts, £5.25 each (32 pages, 197 x 220mm) **Faces**, Henry Pluckrose, 0 86313 567 6; **Feet**, Henry Pluckrose, (0 86313 553 6; **Hands**, Ruth Thomson, 0 86313 554 4; **Hair**, Ruth Thomson. 0 86313 568 4

This series provides an excellent introduction to four parts of the body. The design and layout of the books is very attractive and the photographs outstanding. The text with its chatty, informal style covers an amazing range with apparent ease: individual difference, cultural and ethnic diversity, feelings, anatomy, physiology, language - all are

included along with invitations to observe, to speculate, to do things. In **Hair**, for instance, we find: 'The way that some people treat their hair shows that they are followers of a certain religion.'

This is followed by photographs and text, showing and explaining, Buddhist monks, Rastafarians, a Sikh, a Christian nun and a Greek Orthodox priest. And again: 'Some people have to wear their hair in a particular way for their work. Why do you think surgeons and cooks cover their hair with caps like these?' An excellent series for infants.

**Your Body** series, John Gaskin, Franklin Watts, £5.25 each (32 pages, 246 x 189mm)

**Breathing**, 0 86313 103 4; **Eating**, 0 86313 143 3; **The Heart**, 0 86313 145 X; **Moving**, 0 86313 142 5; **The Senses**, 0 86313 144 1; **Teeth**, 0 86313 102 6

Written by a primary headmaster who is also leader of the HEC's My Body project, these books have an extremely readable text. The approach is practical and direct and provides an uncomplicated introduction to the six aspects of the body. What a pity that the covers are so dreary and old-fashioned looking and the illustrations disappointing. If they can be persuaded past this uninviting appearance, top infants and juniors will find these very useful.

**You and Your Body** series, Dorothy Baldwin and Claire Lister, Wayland, £4.50 each (32 pages, 23 x 19cm)

**How You Grow and Change**, 0 85078 333 X; **The Structure of Your Body**, 0 85078 305 4; **Your Body Fuel**, 0 85078 332 1; **Your Brain and Nervous System**, 0 85078 331 3; **Your Heart and Lungs**, 0 85078 303 8; **Your Senses**, 0 85078 304 6

This series is aimed at older juniors and deals well with more complex processes. The books are attractive and informative with clear diagrams and excellent photographs. The direct address to the reader implied in the titles is well sustained throughout and makes for an accessible text.

## DIET AND FITNESS

**Your Health** series, Dorothy Baldwin, Wayland, £5.25 each

(32 pages, 23 x 20cm)

**Health and Exercise**, 0 85078 997 4; **Health and Food**, 0 85078 998 2

This series aims explicitly in six books to help children discover 'what you should do to achieve good health in both mind and body'. Two titles are mentioned here and more appear in other sections. In all the layout is attractive and there is a practical 'hints to help' section.

**You and Your Food**, Judy Tatchell and Dilys Wells, Usborne 'Body Books', 0 86020 939 3, £2.50 pbk

This book has the relaxed, jolly, crowded presentation that is Usborne's hallmark. Lots of information about healthy eating and a friendly voice which leaves readers better able to make their own choices. Usborne suggest I1-I5 is the age-range for this one but many juniors will find this interesting and useful.

(There is a companion volume, **You and Your Fitness and Health**, 0 7460 0004 9, £2.95 pbk, and a two-in-one edition, **Food Fitness and Health**, 0 7460 0079 0, £3.95 pbk.)

## GROWTH AND CHANGE

**Being Born**, Sheila Kitzinger, Dorling Kindersley, 0 86318 169 4, £5.95

Lennart Nilsson's remarkable photographs of the developing foetus in the womb were first made available to children with Nilsson's own (translated) text in **How You Began** (Kestrel). Last year **Being Born** appeared with a text by Sheila Kitzinger which charts the growth of a baby from conception to birth. The text is minimal, almost poetic, and is closely related to the Nilsson photographs which are guaranteed to absorb and fascinate any child. **Being Born** was the winner of the 1987 TES Junior Information Book Award.

**New Baby**, Judith Baskerville, A & C Black 'Celebrations' series, 0 7136 2645 3, £3.95

deals well with the emotions brothers and sisters feel about a new arrival.

Help from Older Children is just one section in

**The Joy of Birth**, Camilla Jessel, Methuen, 0 416 01572 7, £5.50 pbk

The black and white photographs in this beautiful book speak louder than the text of how fathers, mothers and siblings are all involved in the growth and development of a new human being. The book is subtitled 'a book for families to share' (and Camilla Jessel's commentary seems at times uneasy about which member of that family is being addressed). However, used sensitively, this is a book which could find a place in primary and secondary classrooms.

**The Story of Birth and Babies**, Viviane Abel Prot and

Philippe Delorme, Moonlight 'Pocket Worlds' series, 1 85103 027 1, £2.95

sets human birth in the context of egg layers, other mammals and metamorphosis. Conception and pregnancy are dealt with in some detail in informative but restrained illustrations, and there is a nice section on inheritance (though with exclusively Caucasian illustration). The cover depicts babies of three racial groups but the book in the main is conceived from a white European perspective - other peoples, mainly pictured in traditional costume, are presented as exotic. A pity as otherwise this is a useful book with a user-friendly text.

**Where Did I Come From?**, 0 333 24178 9; **What's Happening to Me?**, 0 333 24179 7, Peter Mayle, Macmillan, £5.95 each

Although many years old, these two are still popular in schools. Their off-beat humorous approach is particularly liked by top juniors and they tackle birth and puberty in a reassuring way.

Usborne's **Facts of Life** series, designed, say the publishers, for 10-15 year olds, is comprehensive in its coverage.

**Babies**, Robyn Gee, 0 86020 839 7, £2.25 pbk

deals with conception, birth and, unusually, looking after a baby and toddler.

**Growing Up**, Sue Meredith, 0 86020 837 0, £2.95 pbk

winner of the TES Senior Information Book Award when it appeared, deals directly and well with all aspects of adolescence; junior teachers may feel that the sections on sex and contraception are more appropriate for teenage readers. There is a page on AIDS in the latest edition.

## **PERSONAL HYGIENE AND HEALTH**

**Health and Hygiene**, Dorothy Baldwin, Wayland 'Your Health' series, 1 85210 0109, £5.25

provides good coverage of this aspect of health education for junior level. The approach is practical and suited to an older age-group than that indicated by the cover photograph.

**Health and Disease**, Bronwen Muirson, Macdonald 'My First Library' series. 0 356 11876 2, £4.50

has a delightful cover photograph of a grey-haired teacher gamely demonstrating a high kick to assorted half-dressed children. Inside, sections on Your Living Body, Keeping Healthy, Curing Disease cover a wide range of related topics without losing focus. The text is direct and simple and all illustrations (diagram, photographs, drawings) carry extended captions in bold which create a second shorter text.

**The Zoo in You**, David Taylor, Boxtree, 1 85283 000 X, £4.95

provides a fascinating glimpse of the strange underworld of creatures who rely on the body for their existence. This book will fascinate juniors, but may repel adults!

Regrettably there is very little infant material on this topic, although **Your Teeth** by Joan Iveson-Iveson, Wayland 'All About You' series, 0 85078 515 4, £3.50, provides a very clear guide, with a glossary to explain various terms.

## EMOTIONS

Feeling good about ourselves is an important element in health education and Dorothy Baldwin in **Health and Friends**, 1 85210 013 3, and **Health and Feelings**, 1 85210 012 5 (Wayland 'Your Health' series, £5.25 each) tackles this complex area with great skill. Coping with fear and anger, friendships and shyness, affects all children and exploring these issues helps for a better understanding.

The subject of child abuse received specific attention in a recent issue of **Books for Keeps** (No. 45, July 1987); there have been some useful additions to the titles covered there.

Helen Hollick's **Come and Tell Me** (Dinosaur, 0 85122 661 2, £3.50) deals sensitively with a parent's need to know where a child is, when out playing, even if the child thinks there is no need. The story format makes the book easier to introduce to infant level.

Jenny Hessel's **What's Wrong with Bottoms?** (Hutchinson, 0 09 173536 X, £5.95) handles the difficult situation of an uncle who asks his nephew to do things which the boy thinks are not right. A reassuring chat with Mum sorts things out and allays the boy's guilt about what will happen as a result of his action.

**Feeling Safe**, Pete Sanders, Franklin Watts/Gloucester Book 'Let's Talk About' series, 0 86313 657 5, £5.25

Another excellent bit of packaging from Aladdin Books. A careful and sensitive text combines with well-chosen photographs to deal with all aspects of feeling - anger, unkindness, bullying, belonging and child abuse. The emphasis throughout is on developing understanding and encouraging children to trust their feelings, realise they have rights, and above all to talk and share. Each double spread carries a focusing question in bold type which is answered in a direct, sympathetic tone by the following text. Captions inset into the photographs carry a complementary message. A helpful addition to titles in this area.

## SENSES

**Thinkabout** series, Henry Pluckrose, Franklin Watts, £5.25 each

**Tasting**, 0 86313 277 4; **Hearing**, 0 86313 280 4; **Smelling**, 0 86313 278 2; **Seeing**, 0 86313 279 0; **Touching**, 0 86313 276 6

Provides an excellent introduction for infants. The colour photographs are particularly outstanding and make the books

accessible to a wide range of abilities.

**My First Library** series, Macdonald, £4.50 each

**Touch and Feeling**, Robert Royston, 0 356 11171 7; **Hearing**, Mary Gribbin, 0 356 11 172 5; **Taste and Smell**, Mary Gribbin, 0 356 1 1 179 2; **Sight**, Mary Gribbin, 0 356 10199 1

These four titles provide a clear, comprehensive guide to the senses for junior level. The section at the beginning on How to Use This Book is particularly useful at a time when children are being encouraged to become independent learners.

## **SMOKING, DRINKING AND DRUG ABUSE**

Some of these, particularly the harmful effects of smoking, are touched on in other titles mentioned here. There is no extended consideration of these subjects written specifically with juniors in mind.

The **Life Guides** series (Brian Ward, Franklin Watts, £5.95 each) suggests that it is for 'age 10 and upwards' but the three titles dealing with **Alcohol Abuse** (0 86313 501 3), **Drugs and Drug Abuse** (0 86313 502 1) and **Smoking and Health** (0 86313 401 7) would need to be used carefully with this younger end of the age-range. This is an attractive series - well designed with an excellent blend of photographs, diagrams and drawings-all in full colour. Brian Ward's text is informative, well-balanced and reads well. Teachers could well find it a useful source of information.

The **Life Guides** series also includes **Diet and Nutrition** (0 86313 452 1), **First Aid** (0 86313 453 X) and **Dental Care** (0 86313 402 5).

## **ALL-IN-ONE**

**Body Watch - Know Your Insides**, Anna Sproule, Cambridge University Press 'Science World' series, 0 521 33239 7, £4.95

touches on all these areas in its 48 pages. The treatment is not exhaustive - a double page spread on each topic - and the layout and design is less elegant than others we have, mentioned but for juniors starting their own enquiry (or just browsing) this could be a useful volume, not least because it has a particularly good index and glossary.

We are grateful for the help and advice of Hampshire's School Library Service in the preparation of this feature.

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