



Relationships & Sexuality Education Policy

REVIEWED SEPT. 2017

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Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Relationships and Sexuality Education in the N.I. context

The framework for sex education was initially established by DENI in a *Guidance Circular 1987/45*. Its main recommendation was that each school should have a written policy on sex education, endorsed by staff and governors and communicated to parents. It stated *“sex education should be taught in a sensitive manner which is in harmony with the ethos of the school and in conformity with the moral and religious principles held by parents and school management authorities”*

The Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 required all grant aided schools to offer a curriculum which:

1. promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, intellectual and physical development of pupils at the school and thereby of society ... and...
2. prepares such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life

The School’s Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy takes account of the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 which requires that all pupils have the right to learn in a safe environment, to be treated with respect and dignity and not to be treated any less favourably on grounds of their actual or perceived sexual orientation.¹

The general principles which underpin our work are those set out in Departmental guidance and the following Circulars:

Circular 2001/15: Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Circular 2001/15-2: Guidance for Primary Schools - Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Circular 2010/01: Guidance on Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Circular 2013/16: Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy in Schools

Circular 2015/22: Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Update for Primary Schools, relating to the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) 2006 - Guidance

We further recognise the importance of working in partnership with parents/carers in this area of personal development and acknowledge the contribution that can be made by outside agencies with skill and expertise in particular areas of the curriculum. (NSPCC, Women’s Aid and School Nursing Service).

INTRODUCTION

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a lifelong process which encompasses the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills, and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about personal and social relationships and gender issues. We recognise that the learning process begins informally in families before children come to school.

¹ A person’s sexual identity in relation to the gender to which they are attracted; the fact of being heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual.

RSE is included on a statutory basis within the NI curriculum through PDMU, Health Education, the World around Us and Religious Education. Health Education is taught mainly through the medium of PDMU in the Personal Understanding and Health strand.

DIVERSITY

We recognise that our pupils live in a diverse range of cultures, religions and family types.

We recognise the need to provide a safe and nurturing environment in which children can develop a positive understanding of themselves and any issues they may face regarding gender and sexual orientation.

We recognise that our pupils have the right to be treated with respect and dignity regardless of their class, sexual orientation, culture, religion and gender.

We are committed to an RSE programme which at all times will reflect the diversity and complexity of the lives and experiences of our pupils in our school and our community.

We recognise that there may be conflict between differing value systems and at all times, whilst respecting difference, the staff will uphold the aims and policies of the school.

The provision of RSE plays an integral part in preparing children for the emotional and physical changes at puberty and for adult life. It is therefore important that pupils have opportunities to discuss their feelings and concerns and are provided with appropriate factual information to enable them to make informed decisions and to resist unhelpful peer and media pressure.

RSE can have a positive effect on children's self-esteem, and is particularly important at Key Stage 2. We can nurture the self-esteem of pupils by creating a climate of trust and acceptance in which each person is valued and respected and encouraged to feel good about themselves. Pupils are encouraged to recognize their individual needs, to respect the needs and wants of others, and to develop the skills and self-esteem to become confident and resilient adolescents/adults.

Many pupils cannot, or are unwilling to, talk to their parents about growing up and about sexual matters. We offer age-appropriate information and opportunities to consider feelings and concerns within a secure environment.

Through RSE and we can enable pupils to challenge inappropriate and unwanted attention from others.

The Moral Framework of the Policy

RSE plays a part in increasing informed choice by providing opportunities for pupils to examine their own values and beliefs in the light of those held by others. Deeper understanding of the values and beliefs that they hold can help pupils to clarify why they think and behave as they do, to separate fact from fiction, to recognize prejudice and to respect the views, emotions and feelings of others.

The importance of a moral framework is emphasised in the DfEE Circular No 5/1994 *Education Act 1993: Sex Education in Schools (Paragraph 8)* :

Sex education . . . must not be value-free; it should also be tailored not only to the age but also to the understanding of pupils. School's programmes of sex education should therefore aim to present facts in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner, set within a clear framework of values and an awareness of the law on sexual behaviour. Pupils should accordingly be encouraged to appreciate the

value of stable family life, marriage and the responsibilities of parenthood. They should be helped to consider the importance of self-restraint, dignity, respect for themselves and others, acceptance of responsibility, sensitivity towards the needs and views of others, loyalty and fidelity. And they should be enabled to recognise the physical, emotional and moral implications, and risks, of certain types of behaviour, and to accept that both sexes must behave responsibly in sexual matters.

Teachers are reminded:

to acknowledge that many children come from backgrounds that do not reflect such values and experiences. Sensitivity is therefore needed to avoid causing hurt and offence to them and their families, and to allow such children a sense of worth.

In RSE pupils will be taught in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

The value of a stable family life and the responsibilities of parenthood will be presented. We must acknowledge and respect different family units.

As they mature, pupils will be encouraged to appreciate the importance of self-discipline, dignity, respect for themselves and others.

Through PDMU and the World Around Us (Science) children will learn about changes in their bodies as they grow older and, in Yr6/7, will have the opportunity to attend a talk with the school nurse, or similar professionals, in order to help prepare them for post-primary school and the emotional and physical changes they are experiencing and will experience.

Teaching will be appropriate to the maturity and level of understanding of the pupils concerned. Teachers will be aware of, and take into account, the variety of existing pupil knowledge, different attitudes and beliefs and the pupil's capacity to understand the issues.

Sexuality includes all aspects of the human person that relate to being male or female, gender and identity and may be subject to change and development throughout life. Sexuality is an integral part of our personality and has biological, cultural, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions. It especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to give and receive love; procreation and, in a more general way, the aptitude for forming relationships with others. It is a complex dimension of human life and relationships.

Teaching RSE should provide opportunities which enable pupils:

1. to form values and establish behaviour within a moral, spiritual and social framework;
2. to examine and explore the various relationships in their personal lives;
3. to learn how to develop and enjoy personal relationships and friendships which are based on responsibility and mutual respect;
4. to build the foundations for developing more personal/intimate relationships in later life;
5. to make positive, responsible choices about themselves and others and the way they live their lives.

AIMS

The aims of RSE are to:

1. enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child;
2. help the child develop healthy and respectful friendships and relationships;

3. foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, social and spiritual framework;
4. promote responsible behaviour and the ability to make informed decisions;
5. help the child come to value family life and stable family relationships;
6. appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood;
7. promote an appreciation of the value of human life and the wonder of birth.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The RSE curriculum should enable pupils to:

1. acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self
2. develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth;
3. develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well-being of others;
4. understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and

in wider contexts;

1. develop an awareness of different family patterns;
2. develop strategies to make decisions, solve problems, and implement actions in various personal, social and health contexts;
3. become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change and understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity;
4. develop personal skills which will help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships;
5. develop some coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse;
6. acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction;
7. acquire and use an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development;
8. develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making.

SKILLS

The RSE curriculum should enable pupils to develop the skills necessary to form and maintain relationships and to make informed choices and decisions regarding health and well-being.

Pupils should also be helped to develop skills to critically evaluate the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values they meet. They need opportunities to develop:

1. **practical skills** for everyday living; for supporting others; for future parenting;
2. **communication skills** learning to listen, listening to others' points of view; putting one's own view forward clearly and appropriately; giving and receiving feedback; handling and resolving conflict peacefully; being assertive;
3. **decision-making and problem-solving skills** for making sensible choices in the light of relevant information; making moral judgements about what to do in actual situations and putting these judgements into practice; acting responsibly and with initiative as an individual or as a member of a variety of groups;
4. **inter-personal skills** for managing relationships confidently and effectively; for developing as an effective group member or leader.

SPECIAL NEEDS

It is particularly important for teaching staff to be aware of the fact that physical development may outstrip emotional maturity in the case of pupils with Special Needs and to accommodate this disparity in class lessons and experiences.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN HOME, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

The effectiveness of this RSE policy and programme is dependent on a collaborative process involving teachers, parents, governors and other educational and health professionals. Each of the partners has distinct contribution to make.

Teachers, governors and parents can raise any concerns they may have about RSE issues and the Senior Management will address these or refer to the BOG if necessary.

THE ROLE OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT

A planned, structured and coherent approach to RSE will be sought throughout the school. Implementing this programme, and other related policies, will be overseen by the Senior Leadership Team. Consultation will be initiated with governors, staff, parents, health and education professionals and other relevant community bodies as necessary.

THE ROLE OF GOVERNORS

The Governors will support the development and implementation of our RSE policy and related policies by collaborating with teachers and parents. They shall facilitate the consultative process whereby the school community can respond and contribute on relevant issues. The Governors will seek to accommodate and be sensitive to the religious and cultural beliefs of both teachers and parents while fulfilling their responsibility to ensure the availability of adequate RSE for all children.

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS

The classroom teacher has a significant and diverse role to play in the planning and implementation of RSE in the school. At all times the role must be considered to be complementary to that of parents, taking cognisance of the individual needs, age, maturity, stage of development and family background of the child. The class teacher will strive to promote the aims of this policy and other related policies and deliver the requirements of RSE at the level appropriate to their particular class.

INVOLVING PARENTS

Our aim is to develop a structure which enables both parents and teachers to work together. The home exerts a major influence on all aspects of a child's life, especially in the domain of relationships and sexuality.

Parents are often concerned about the information their children are receiving from their peers and from television, films, social media and magazines. We will attempt to provide opportunities for pupils to consider this information, ensuring they receive accurate information.

Where puberty-related changes are being addressed with Yr6/7 pupils, parents are informed about when these talks will take place, the content to be covered and the activities that pupils will undertake.

THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS

There is no statutory parental right to withdraw a pupil from RSE classes. However, the school will take account of parental concerns expressed, and will try, as far as possible, to make alternative provision for any pupil whose parent wishes them to be excused from particular, or all, RSE classes. Any issues raised by parents regarding the content of an element of RSE will be addressed in a positive manner. We will attempt to deal with any misunderstandings, identify the specific issues and lessons which are problematic and explain the implications for the pupil in terms of the elements of the curriculum which may be missed.

The social and emotional effects of exclusion should be considered as well as the likelihood that pupils will discuss the content of RSE lessons outside the classroom.

CONFIDENTIALITY IN THE CLASSROOM

At Moneyrea we respect the child's right to privacy.

A key rule, agreed in advance of any discussion, is that no one will be expected to provide personal/family information or to ask or answer any personal questions.

It is equally important that teachers share this right and never feel obliged to impart information about their personal life.

As teachers we cannot promise confidentiality. Confidentiality cannot be maintained if physical or sexual abuse is suspected. Where a disclosure is made to a member of staff, the child must be told, sensitively, that the matter must be reported to the designated teacher and, where a pupil is at risk, to the appropriate agencies. Decisions will be taken in accordance with the procedures detailed in 'Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools' (2017).

ADVICE & ANSWERING PUPILS QUESTIONS

Teachers can provide general educational advice to all pupils as part of the curriculum. It is important that the type of advice and the manner in which it is given is age-appropriate and is supportive of the role of the parents.

There will be occasions when teachers will have to exercise their discretion and judgment about how to deal with particular issues raised by an individual or by a group of pupils. An initial judgment will need to be made about whether or not it is appropriate to deal with the issues with the whole class. The teacher may wish to discuss the issues with the parents first, to see how they would like the matter to be handled. Teacher colleagues, or the school nurse may be approached for advice. It may be appropriate to respond to the issues with individual pupils or to arrange time for group discussion. In all cases, teachers should encourage pupils to discuss any issues and concerns they might have with their parents, if this is appropriate.

The first concern of parents is likely to be for the safety and well-being of their children. It is important that if pupils cannot talk or do not wish to talk to their parents, they have access to support from sympathetic teachers at school.

As a school, we may need to consider our responses to specific sensitive issues. Topics such as conception, birth, fertility, family planning, sexual orientation, abuse and HIV/AIDS are often part of the storyline of television soaps. It is therefore possible that older pupils will raise questions about these issues.

Using our '*I wish my Teacher Knew*' boxes, pupils can record comments at any time and post them in the box. This strategy gives teachers time to consider an appropriate depth of response and, if necessary, to consult with parents.

If pupils raise issues that are offensive to some or beyond the level of maturity of the pupils, staff will not answer in class. The teachers may suggest that the pupils ask their parents and may need to inform the parent of the nature of the child's query.

SUPPORTING THE NEEDS OF BOYS

From an early age, boys and girls learn what is considered to be appropriate behaviour from the significant adults in their lives. However, sex education has tended to focus primarily on the concerns of girls. In order to redress this imbalance, it is important that within the RSE programme activities are included to allow boys to talk about their interests, development, concerns and feelings.

We are particularly conscious of the need to encourage boys to express and understand their feelings/emotions. More women are on antidepressants, but significantly more men commit suicide.

Formal and informal opportunities can be used for pupils to explore attitudes, emotions, relationships, stereotyping and parenting from a male perspective.

It is important to acknowledge that male and female perspectives may exist on issues and to respect the reasons for such differences. Sessions (with the relevant health professional if possible) will also be included to explain the physical and emotional changes at puberty to boys.

DELIVERING THE RSE PROGRAMME

The following includes extracts from the *N.I. Primary Curriculum - Personal Development and Mutual Understanding Strand - Personal Understanding and Health*:

Foundation Stage

Self-Awareness

Exploring who they are, what they can do, identifying favourite things, what makes them special

Feelings and Emotions

1. beginning to recognise how they feel
2. knowing what to do if sad or lonely, afraid or angry
3. telling others about feelings
4. realising what makes people sad or unhappy, recognising how people feel

Health and Safety

1. being aware of caring for his/her own body
2. recognising good hygiene practices
3. understanding growth and change
4. exploring appropriate personal safety strategies, road safety,
5. medicines and drugs -safety rules

Relationships

1. Explore what families are like and what they do together
2. Know how to treat others

Rules, Rights and Responsibilities

1. Why rules are important
2. Develop a sense of fairness
3. Taking responsibility for what we say and do

Similarities and Differences

- Understand that everyone is of equal worth and that it is acceptable to be different.

Key Stage 1

Self-Awareness

1. feeling positive about oneself
2. awareness of own strengths, abilities, qualities, personal preferences
3. recognising own feelings and emotions
4. recognising and managing the effects of strong feelings – anger, sadness, loss
5. acknowledging that everyone makes mistakes
6. recognising how they can develop and improve learning

Health, Growth and Change

1. recognising and valuing the options for a healthy lifestyle
2. having respect for their bodies and those of others
3. Naming parts of the body(basic), developing an agreed language for our bodies
4. being aware of the stages of human growth and development
5. recognising how responsibilities and relationships change as you grow older
6. understanding medicines and drugs
7. understanding that, if not used properly, all products can be dangerous
8. being aware that some diseases are infectious and some can be controlled

Relationships

1. My family, special people in my life- what they do for me and what I do for them
2. Friendships – communicating, playing together, listening, co-operation and sharing
3. Loss and mourning
4. Respect and caring for family members

Safety

1. Personal safety- dangerous situations and adults who will help.
2. Strategies to protect themselves from dangerous situations.
3. Be aware of bullying and develop personal strategies to deal with this.

Rules, Rights and Responsibilities

1. Rules at home, at school and the community.
2. Interdependence of school members

Managing Conflict

1. Recognise how conflict arises and how it could be avoided.

Similarities and Differences

1. Similarities and differences between myself and others, for example: hobbies; race; age etc.

Living as members of a community

1. Be aware of what influences our views and feelings and how these can be similar or different.

Key Stage 2

Self-Awareness

1. developing self-awareness, self-respect and self-esteem
2. confidently express own views and opinions
3. identify current strengths and weaknesses
4. face problems and try to resolve them
5. examine and explore own and others' feelings and emotions
6. recognise, express and manage feelings in a positive and safe way
7. develop insight into potential and capabilities
8. reflect on progress and set goals
9. identify and practise effective learning strategies
10. be aware of different learning styles

Health, Growth and Change

1. understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle
2. recognise what shapes positive mental health
3. know about the harmful effects of tobacco, alcohol and other illicit and illegal substances
4. understand that bacteria and viruses affect health and know that basic routines can be followed to minimise risks
5. know how the body grows and develops
6. be aware of physical and emotional changes that take place during puberty (Yr6 and 7 only)
7. be aware of the skills and importance of good parenting
8. recognise how responsibilities change as they become older and more independent

Relationships

1. making and maintaining friendships
2. respecting others' views
3. recognising the benefits of families and friendships
4. consequences of actions on oneself and others
5. recognise how responsibilities change as they become older and more independent

Keeping Safe

1. develop strategies to resist peer pressure
2. recognise the nature of bullying and the harm which can result
3. become aware of the potential danger from strangers and how their attention can make you uncomfortable
4. recognise appropriate road use
5. develop a pro-active and responsible approach to safety – at home, near water, on the internet, TV etc
6. know where, when and how to seek help
7. being aware of basic emergency procedures and first aid (Yr7 ABC For Life Prog.)

Rules, Rights and Responsibilities

1. being assertive in defending individual rights and beliefs

Managing Conflict

1. understanding the importance of body language in arguments
2. handling difficult circumstances e.g. death, teasing, bullying etc.

Similarities and Differences

1. differences and similarities in people – need for respect within the N.I. context

Living as members of a community

1. appreciation of the family unit, relationships within the school and wider community
2. Cultural differences

OTHER RELEVANT POLICIES

This policy complements and supports a range of other school policies including:

- Positive Behaviour/Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Use of Reasonable Force/Safe Handling
- Special Educational Needs
- First Aid and the Administration of Medicines
- Health and Safety Policy
- Use of Mobile Phones/Cameras
- ICT and access to the internet
- Intimate Care

MONITORING EVALUATING AND REVIEWING THE RSE POLICY:

Moneyrea staff are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this policy.

Specifically important to the review of our RSE Programme are:

1. pupil feedback
2. staff review and feedback
3. parental feedback
4. further Departmental guidance and legislative changes
5. perceived needs of the children any particular time

DISSEMINATION OF THE POLICY

The contents of this policy is approved by the Board of Governors and will be made available to all members of the Board of Governors and teaching staff. It can also be found on the school website, or parents may request a hard copy.

APPENDIX 1: USEFUL LOCAL ADDRESSES

Childcare Northern Ireland	11 University Street, Belfast, BT7 1FY. Tel: (028) 9065 2713.
NSPCC	Jennymount Court, North Derby Street, Belfast, BT15 3HN. Tel: (028) 9035 1135.
Family Planning Association	113 University Street, Belfast, BT7 1HP. Tel: (028) 9032 5488. Telephone helpline and advisory service providing advice and information on sexual issues. Also provides a non-directional unplanned pregnancy service. This voluntary agency also offers training for professionals.
Health Promotion Agency (HPANI)	18 Ormeau Avenue, Belfast, BT2 8HS. Tel: (028) 9031 1611. The Agency is a non-departmental public body whose remit is health promotion. It carries out its work through providing public and professional information; training and professional development; research and evaluation; and policy development for health.

APPENDIX 2: USEFUL NATIONAL ADDRESSES

Childline UK	Freepost 1111, London, N1 OBR. Tel: (0800) 1111. A free national helpline for children
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