

Coleraine College



Relationships and Sexual Education Policy (reviewed: December 2015)

RATIONALE

Many young people are maturing earlier. It is therefore important that young people are provided with appropriate factual information and have opportunities to discuss their feelings and concerns.

During their post-primary school years, our pupils will experience greater freedom, increased responsibility, and exposure to a bewildering variety of messages about sexuality and gender issues. Relationships and Sexuality Education helps young people deal with these challenges.

Relationships and Sexuality Education helps promote a positive view of sexuality and sexual health by helping young people to feel good about themselves, to respect others and to be able to make safe, responsible and satisfying relationships.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION

The UK has one of the highest rates of conceptions amongst under 18 year olds in Europe. Although the rates are slowly declining in response to the National Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (SEU 1999), sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, continue to rise. Children and young people already receive information about sex and relationships both formally and informally, from a variety of sources and in a variety of settings. These include friends, family, the media, music and films as well as education and health settings. Some informal sources such as friends and the media can be misleading and inaccurate. Therefore it is essential that young people have access to professionals that are adequately trained and supported to enable young people to challenge misinformation confidently, and to provide children and young people with their entitlement to good quality Relationships and Sexuality Education.

Numerous surveys repeatedly confirm that children and young people want better Relationships and Sexuality Education. They describe what they receive as 'too little, too late and too biological' and say that it avoids the broader issues of relationships, emotions, sexuality, contraception, sexually transmitted infections and abortion. Furthermore, surveys of parents consistently show support for Relationships and Sexuality Education. However, many feel they lack the skills, confidence and knowledge to talk to their children about Relationships and Sexuality Education and look to professionals for support. Therefore Relationships and Sexuality Education must be both specific to the needs of

children and young people and also integrated into the mainstream to improve the sexual health and well-being of all children and young people.

DEFINITIONS

What is Relationships and Sexuality Education?

Relationships and Sexuality Education enables all pupils to clarify what they believe, why they believe it and develop and respect for and interest in the beliefs of others.

- Relationships and Sexuality Education embodies both sexuality and relationships with others.
- Relationships include how a person interacts with self, including their spiritual side; male and female peers; adults; parents and family; authority figures and others.

“Sexuality includes all aspects of the human person which relate to being male or female and is a continuous process. It is an integral part of the human personality and has biological, cultural, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions. Sexuality is concerned with the capacity to give and receive love, procreation and the aptitude to form effective relationships with others.”

Ref: CCEA Guidance for Post-Primary Schools.

MORALS & VALUES FRAMEWORK

Young people from all faiths and cultures have an entitlement to Relationships and Sexuality Education that can support them on their journey through childhood to adolescence and adulthood. It will involve examination and discussion of the ‘morals’ and ‘values’ that our school seeks to promote.

- Morals are directly displayed in behaviour
- Values are the beliefs which govern behaviour, e.g. it is wrong to hurt others (value). Not hurting others intentionally (even when tempted) is a moral judgement.

Our pupils need a clear framework of values from which they can make moral and responsible judgements. However teachers need to acknowledge that many children, young people come from backgrounds that do not reflect the same values as the school. Sensitivity is therefore needed to avoid causing hurt and offence to them and their families, and to allow such children and young people a sense of worth. Children and young people need opportunities to understand the law and health issues in relation to sex, sexuality and sexual health.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The school aims to teach Relationships and Sexuality Education in a sensitive manner, which will reflect the general aims and ethos of the School, and in consultation with pupils, parents and staff. The school has a duty to ensure that the policy is inclusive of all pupils, and that young people with Special Educational Needs and learning difficulties are properly included in Relationships and Sexuality Education.

Teaching materials will be in accordance with the Personal, Social and Health Education framework and the law. Explicit and inappropriate images and language will not be used.

Relationships and Sexuality Education has three main elements:

- a. Attitudes and values
- b. Personal & Social Skills
- c. Knowledge and Understanding

KEY ELEMENTS TO RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY EDUCATION

“Relationships and Sexuality Education is learning about sex, sexuality, emotions, relationships, sexual health and ourselves.”

Good quality Relationships and Sexuality Education is mindful of children’s early experiences and is based on their developmental and expressed needs. It provides consistent messages, is on-going and progressive, and supports children’s confidence and self esteem as they move from childhood to adulthood. It helps them understand themselves, negotiate their relationships and prepare them for adulthood. It should prepare them as young adults to take responsibility for and enjoy sexual and emotional relationships, and neither exploit others, nor be exploited themselves. It should also provide them with sufficient information and skills to resist pressure have a sense of their own rights and protect themselves and their partner from unintended / unwanted conceptions or sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

There are three key elements to Relationships and Sexuality Education:-

- a. acquiring information;
- b. developing skills;
- c. exploring attitudes and values.

Information about sex alone can never be enough. All three elements are closely interrelated and a proper consideration of attitudes and values is vital to the development of essential life skills. In turn these skills will help children and young people acquire and use relevant information. (Taken from Sex Education Forum (1999) the Framework for Sex and Relationships Education)

Relationships and Sexuality Education Information

Children and young people are entitled to clear, relevant information which is accurate and non-judgmental. The content of Relationships and Sexuality Education should address:

- the potential consequences of unprotected sex, for example unintended pregnancy, young parenthood, abortion, and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.
- the effect and impact of ignorance, prejudice, discrimination and stigma
- what children and young people know already
- what children and young people say they need
- the emotional, biological, legal, social and cultural aspects of growing up, sexual development, sexual behaviour, sexuality and sexual health
- the advice and confidential support available to children and young people including leaflets, websites, help-lines and other health and support services
- how they are able to participate in their own learning

Relationships and Sexuality Education Skills

Children and young people are entitled to learn and practice key life skills which should include:

- emotional skills – managing emotions confidently, developing empathy for others, building emotional resilience and resourcefulness, developing independence of thought and behaviour
- social skills – developing and maintaining relationships with others, taking responsibility for their own and others' emotional and sexual health
- communication skills – learning to participate effectively, to listen and ask questions, express emotions, give opinions, challenge and to be challenged

- negotiation skills – resisting peer pressure and ensuring that they get what is best for them, managing and resolving conflict, asking for what they want and not pressurising others
- practical skills – caring for self and others, accessing support and advice
- decision making skills – managing real life dilemmas, assessing risk, making informed choices and being able to act on them.

Relationships and Sexuality Education Attitudes and Values

By exploring and challenging attitudes and values, children and young people can be helped to develop a positive attitude to sexual health and well-being through:

- developing a positive value and moral framework that will support their decisions, judgements and behaviour
- gaining an understanding of the range of different social, cultural, ethnic and religious frameworks and their value systems
- developing a critical awareness of value systems represented in the media and amongst peers
- recognising that prejudice, discrimination and bullying are harmful and unacceptable
- understanding that sexual intimacy involves strong emotions, and should involve a sense of respect for one's own and others' feelings, decisions and bodies
- understanding that all rights have responsibilities and all actions have consequences
- recognising the value and right to active participation in their learning.

CURRICULUM ORGANISATION

Relationships and Sexuality Education in the Curriculum

The Relationships and Sexuality Education programme is delivered primarily through the Personal Development strand of the Northern Ireland Curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4. At Key Stage 3 guidance materials for teaching are provided through the CCEA 'In-Sync' programme. Trained staff deliver this programme. Opportunities for Relationships and Sexuality Education in the Curriculum also arise across the curriculum. In subjects such as English, Science, Home Economics, Physical Education, Religious Education and Learning for Life and Work, relationships and sexuality issues are explored from a variety of perspectives.

Teaching methodologies are in accordance with the collaborative and active thrust of the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

Aspects of the Relationships and Sexuality Education programme are delivered by a range of external agencies. These programmes supplement and complement internal provision.

The programme of Relationships and Sexuality Education is kept under review.

The programme meets the needs of both genders and is generally taught in mixed groups to enable boys and girls to work alongside one another, thus promoting positive relationships with each gaining an understanding of the other's perspective. However, in certain circumstances, mixed gender arrangements may be altered when it is deemed more appropriate to teach gender specific issues to single sex groupings.

School acknowledges that the implementation of Relationships and Sexuality Education cannot be considered in isolation and encourages parents to support the School programme. Parents are informed in the event of external agency involvement and are presented with a brief synopsis of proposed content.

External Agencies

All activities presented by external agencies complement the internal curricular programmes in Relationships and Sexuality Education. Care is taken to ensure that external agencies comply with the School Policy and that there is collaboration between internal and external staff regarding the content and also follow-up and progression. At least ONE teacher is always present when an external agency is delivering an aspect of the Relationships and Sexuality Education programme.

- All agencies are issued with School's Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy and are asked to adhere to it in terms of ethos, morals and values
- All resources used by external agencies are vetted before use to ensure that they are consistent with the School Policy
- All agencies are asked to complete and present an evaluation report of their programmes
- All agencies are informed of School's Child Protection procedures regarding pupil confidentiality and disclosure.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Refer to "Child Protection Policy" – DENI Circular nos. 2001 / 15 Relationships and Sexuality Education.

"A teacher approached by a pupil for counselling on sexual matters should, where appropriate, encourage the pupil to seek advice from his or her parents and / or from qualified professionals. Where the circumstances lead the teacher to believe that the pupil has embarked on, or is contemplating, conduct which is likely to place him or her in moral or physical danger or in breach of the law, the teacher has a duty to inform the pupil of the

risks involved. The pupil should be made aware that the teacher can offer no guarantee of confidentiality. Whether the teacher should take the matter further, by informing the designated teacher for child protection or the Principal, and where the Principal should consider involving the pupil's parents, the specialist support services, or the designated child protection officer of the Education and Library Board or CCMS, will depend on the particular circumstances involved and on the professional judgement of the staff concerned."

Withdrawal from class

Due to the sensitive nature of Relationships and Sexuality Education there may be parents who have specific concerns about the content of lessons. After consultation with Vice Principal their child may be withdrawn.

Sensitive Issues

The following topics have legal implications. We operate within the Law, EA and Department of Education Guidelines.

Sexual Identity

The issue of sexual identity is handled in a sensitive and non-confrontational way. Staff aim to counteract prejudice and support the development of self-esteem in every pupil. In our lessons we promote the benefits of a stable loving family life, the approach being promotion of tolerance of all lifestyles.

Underpinning Morals and Values Framework

- The dual nature of human sexuality; males and females differ;
- Young children learn aspects of their sexuality both from their parents and other sources;
- The importance of family life where children can develop their sexuality; children need experience of male and female role models;
- The need to educate young people to be tolerant of the life styles of others with which they may not agree.

CONTRACEPTION AND ABSTINENCE

Underpinning Morals and Values framework

- Abstinence as a positive option which is an achievable reality to which young people can aspire;
- Deferment of sexual activity until young people are physically and emotionally mature enough to understand the inherent responsibilities;

- A recognition of the positive benefits of seeking sexual fulfilment within a permanent, committed relationship with one person;
- The importance of respect both for self and for other people.

Contraception is not a licence for young people to engage in pre-marital sex. The loss of self-respect, often due to the difference between the perceived, and by some, accepted standards for males and females, plus the health risks attached to promiscuity, are emphasised. While we promote the deferment of sexual activity and emphasise that unprotected sex is dangerous, we recognise that a “Harm Minimisation” approach needs to be considered. The responsibilities of parenthood are included in this section and it is emphasised that the natural outcome of sexual activity may be conception.

Morning After Pill

When dealing with pupils who ask for permission to leave school to attend a clinic in order to obtain The Morning After Pill, the following guidelines apply.

ALL THESE CASES ARE REFERRED TO THE SCHOOL’S CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER. ON NO OCCASION SHOULD THIS BE DEALT WITH BY OTHER STAFF.

The Welfare of the individual pupil is paramount. Each case will be dealt with in accordance with the age and maturity of the young person.

The Sanctity of Life and Related Issues

A sense of solidarity with and a duty towards, one’s neighbour – particularly the poor and vulnerable – are characteristic of human moral aspirations. This transcends all boundaries and effectively recognises the value of each human being. From the acknowledgement of human dignity flows a range of human rights, the most basic of these being the right to life.

Abortion

The messages which the pupils receive must be consistent and compatible with the morals and values framework endorsed by the school.

Sexual Orientation

“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 the grounds of their actual or perceived sexual orientation.”
Equality Commission

The issue of sexual orientation must be handled in a sensitive, non-confrontational way. Teachers should counteract prejudice and support tolerance. They should be objective in

any discussion of homosexuality in the classroom but should not intentionally promote homosexuality. Bullying of any kind will not be tolerated within the school community.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's) including HIV / AIDS

Pupils need to know and be provided with information on modes of transmission, risky behaviours and the difference between HIV and AIDS.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Board of Governors

The Board of Governors has overall responsibility and works in collaboration with the principal, Staff and Parents. They examine and ratify the policy and programme, ensuring that it adheres to the Guidelines and is in keeping with the ethos of the School.

Principal

The Principal has responsibility for consulting with Governors, Staff and Parents, and ensuring that the programme is delivered in line with Department of Education Guidelines.

Vice Principal

The Vice Principal, Pastoral and Designated Teacher for Child Protection has responsibility for co-ordinating all issues related to the Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy and programme development responsible for its monitoring and evaluation.

Staff

All members of Staff had the opportunity to contribute ideas to the draft document.

Parents

While the School has the child's best interest at heart, the ultimate responsibility for Relationships and Sexuality Education rests with the parents.

MONITORING & REVIEW

The programme, teaching and resources will be monitored and evaluated annually by the Principal with other relevant teachers.

The effectiveness of the programme will be gauged using Staff, Pupil feedback and self-evaluation.

Support Agencies for Young People

Barnado's

Care Team - Coleraine College

Child & Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS)

Coleraine Adolescent Partnership

Contact Youth

Department Public Prosecutions

Dhu Varren

Education & Library Boards

Education Welfare

Family Centre (Ballymoney)

Foster Care Services

Guardian Ad Litem Agency

Hazelbank

Health Services - inc. all health professionals, e.g. dentists, school nurse, speech therapist etc.

Lakewood

Linden (Belfast)

Looked After Children Team (LAC)

Making Changes Team, N.I.

NSPCC

PSNI (Care Unit)

Psychology

Samaritans

School Age Mother (SAM)

Social Services

Tutoring Services

Women's Aid

Youth Justice Agency

Youth Services (Sunlea)