



Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

Date Approved by the Board of Governors: Feb 2017

POLICY FORMATION AND CONSULTATION PROCESS

This policy was drawn up initially by Mrs C Wilson, Personal Development & Mutual Understanding (hereafter PDMU) co-ordinator and Mrs H Montgomery, Special Educational Needs co-ordinator and Designated Teacher for Child Protection, following training. The stages of policy development are:

- Board of Governors approval – February 2017
- Parent focus group consultation – March 2017
- Policy disseminated to parents – March 2017
- The RSE policy will be reviewed every 3 years

INTRODUCTION

The Northern Ireland Curriculum aims to empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives. Relationships and Sexuality Education (hereafter RSE) is firmly grounded in Personal Development and Mutual Understanding, where the central focus is on the emotional development of children, health and safety, relationships with others, and the development of moral thinking, values and actions (CCEA: Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance, An update for Primary Schools, 2015, page 13).

RSE is about more than simply educating children about biological sexual reproduction, particularly in primary schools. Although it is often referred to as 'sex education', this terminology is misleading. Relationships and Sexuality Education is a lifelong process, encompassing:

- the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills; and
- the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy.

For children, the learning process has begun informally, with their parents or carers, long before any education in a formal setting takes place at school. Sexuality includes all aspects of the human person that relate to being male or female: it may be subject to change, and it develops throughout life. Sexuality is an integral part of the human personality and has biological, cultural, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions.

RSE is now a statutory element of the NI curriculum and is most effective when it is taught in a sensitive and inclusive manner, and in a way that is appropriate to the child's emotional and physical age and stage of development. All children have the right to quality teaching and learning across the curriculum; RSE is no exception. An absence of such provision may leave children with a learning and skills deficit, making them more susceptible to inappropriate behaviours, sexual abuse and exploitation (CCEA: Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance, An update for Primary Schools, 2015, page 14).

CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

Our school policy on RSE has been written in the context of current legislation and guidance which relates to the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006. All students/pupils have the right to learn in a safe environment, to be treated with respect and dignity and not be treated any less favourably on grounds of their actual or perceived sexual orientation.

The general principles which underpin our work are those set out in the Department of Education guidance and the following circulars and policies:

- Circular 2010/01: Guidance on Relationships and Sexuality Education RSE - <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-201001-guidance-relationships-and-sexuality-education>
- Circular 2013/16: Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy in Schools - <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-201316-relationships-and-sexuality-education-policy>
- CCEA: Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance, An update for Primary Schools, 2015 - http://ccea.org.uk/curriculum/rse_primary

SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

In Bangor Central Integrated Primary School we seek to provide a caring, stimulating and happy environment for each child where they can learn to the best of their ability. We work in partnership with parents to help children to realise their potential, to celebrate their achievements and to foster self-esteem. We will endeavour to establish an environment where children are equipped for today and empowered for tomorrow. RSE seeks to compliment and foster such values establishing the importance of safe and secure nurturing relationships in our school.

AIMS

In the context of RSE, Bangor Central Integrated Primary School aims to meet the intellectual, emotional, social, physical and spiritual needs of all children. RSE is an important area of the curriculum as it:

- Respects the rights of children
- Promotes a better understanding of diversity and inclusion
- Helps children keep themselves safer in the digital world
- Provides age-appropriate, reliable, accurate and timely information
- Promotes the use of appropriate language
- Helps children to recognise inappropriate behaviour and touch

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The RSE curriculum should enable pupils to:

- value themselves as unique individuals;
- respect themselves and others;
- begin to develop their own moral thinking and value systems;
- learn about friendships, healthy relationships and behaviours with others;
- recognise and communicate their feelings and emotions and those of others;
- learn about the changes that occur as they progress towards adolescence, particularly the emotional and physical changes at puberty; and
- learn about keeping themselves safe and know what to do or who to go to if they feel unsafe.

PROVISION FOR PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

In Bangor Central Integrated Primary School, teachers realise that some pupils with special educational needs may require adaptation of and support when accessing the RSE curriculum. It is widely recognised that pupils with Special Educational Needs are more vulnerable to all forms of abuse and exploitation. Teachers must try to ensure that they develop the knowledge, understanding and skills of pupils to enable them to:

- identify inappropriate and exploitative behaviour;
- help develop their own prevention strategies to stay safe;
- recognise and build healthy relationships; and
- know who they can talk to.

WORKING IN MIXED AND SINGLE-GENDER GROUPS

Generally, the teaching of RSE will take place in mixed groups, where boys and girls learn together so as to gain an understanding and appreciation of each other's perspectives. However, there are times when it is more appropriate to work in single-gender groups, particularly when they are exploring 'girl' or 'boy' issues (P6, P7).

SENSITIVE ISSUES & RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS

Sensitive issues are part and parcel of life. Children are aware of them, and want to talk about and understand them, particularly those sensitive issues which are also topical. When teaching RSE, the natural inquisitiveness of children often results in the teachers being asked many questions which they had not planned for. There will be occasions when teachers will use their own discretion and judgement about how to deal with particular questions raised by a pupil or a group of pupils. Teachers will

exercise their professional judgement: for example, they may need to decide whether it is appropriate to deal with the question in a whole-class forum, through circle time, or if it may be more appropriate to respond on an individual basis, or to arrange time for group discussion outside class time. The teacher may also wish to discuss the questions the children have asked with the parents or carers and/or a senior member of staff to ascertain how they would like to handle the matter.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND DEALING WITH DISCLOSURES

The provision of effective RSE can play a key role in meeting schools' child protection/safeguarding obligations. Schools have the responsibility to develop appropriate policies and practices which safeguard and keep children from harm. The foundation for the effective delivery of RSE is the building of secure, trusting, respectful relationships between the teacher and their pupils. Pupils should feel reassured that their teacher cares about their wellbeing and be aware that there are adults whom they can talk to and confide in. Pupils must also know and understand that the promise of confidentiality is never an option in the classroom or school setting. It must be clear to pupils that, whilst teachers will offer support, they are obligated to notify the child protection/safeguarding teacher or team if they are concerned that the pupil may be 'at risk'.

STRENGTHENING THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY

In Bangor Central Integrated Primary School we use the expertise and skills of education and health professionals from outside agencies to complement the existing teaching programmes.

The benefits of this include:

- Outside agencies/individuals in the wider community can bring specialist knowledge, expertise and experience into the classroom;
- The novelty of a new visitor coming into the classroom/school is often welcomed by pupils;
- It can increase the pupils' knowledge of services which can be accessed in the local community, and teach them how to go about accessing these services if and when they need them; and
- It can enhance teachers' capacity by updating their knowledge and/or showing teaching practices used by the outside agency/individual.

To maximise learning from the session, teachers will prepare pupils for the visit. The class teacher will also check that pupils are not uncomfortable or unhappy with either the topics that they are addressing or the teaching methodologies that will be used. During the session, the teacher will be present at all times. Afterwards the

teacher will provide pupils with the opportunity to discuss their experience and honestly evaluate the sessions.

If an outside agency is coming into the school to support the RSE programme, parents or carers will be made aware in advance to ensure that they have the opportunity to raise any concerns they might have before the visit. Doing this will also have the added benefit of letting parents or carers know what is going on, and strengthen ties between home and school.

ENGAGING WITH PARENTS OR CARERS

It is understandable that many parents or carers are anxious about when, what and how their children will be taught in RSE. Concerns range from parents or carers thinking that their child is not old enough, or is not physically and emotionally mature enough, to learn about certain issues. As parents or carers play a crucial role in supporting their child's education, we recognise that the school's teaching of RSE will be complementary and supportive of the parental role as lead educators in this sensitive area, and will be delivered in the context of the school's distinctive ethos. We will:

- provide up-to-date parent or carer-friendly information leaflets, which would encourage parents or carers to discuss any issues which may arise in the classroom with their children;
- hold awareness-raising workshops; and
- share resources to educate parents or carers on, for example, how to ensure that their children are using social media safely and responsibly.

WITHDRAWAL FROM RSE

As previously stated in the introduction of this policy, RSE is now a statutory element of the NI revised curriculum. All children have the right to quality teaching and learning across the curriculum; RSE is no exception. An absence of such provision may leave children with a learning and skills deficit, making them more susceptible to inappropriate behaviours, sexual abuse and exploitation. However, if a parent or carer chooses to withdraw their child from all or part of RSE, they must discuss the potentially detrimental effect that this can have on the child with the school (Lundy et al, 2013, page 25). They should consider the social and emotional effects of being excluded, as well as the likelihood that the child will hear their peers' version of what happened or what was said in the classes, rather than the safe and reliable source of the teacher's. Ultimately, however, the school must respect the wishes of the parent or carer. If a parent does choose to withdraw their child from RSE lessons, the responsibility for the supervision of the child during the delivery of these lessons lies with the parent or carer.

APPROACHES TO LEARNING AND TEACHING AND LINKS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

In order to ensure RSE is meaningful and engages pupils, the school will adopt a child-centred approach to facilitate and guide learning. The approaches used by the Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities framework, often lead to children gaining a deeper knowledge and understanding, and really engaging in the learning process.

The CCEA resource *Living. Learning. Together* helps to support the delivery of the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding area of learning. *Living. Learning. Together* covers issues and topics related to RSE.

Lessons will be delivered by the class teacher through a cross curricular approach supported by the *Living. Learning. Together* resource. At times we use the expertise and skills of education and health professionals from outside agencies to complement the existing teaching programmes (see the section on strengthening the partnership between school and the wider community).

Foundation Stage

Self-Awareness

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

Feelings and Emotions

- beginning to recognise how they feel
- develop ways of expressing how they feel
- knowing what to do if sad or lonely, afraid or angry and when it is important to tell others about their feelings
- realising what makes people sad or unhappy, recognising how people feel

Health, Growth and Change

- be aware of how to care for their body in order to keep it healthy and well
- recognise and practice basic hygiene skills
- realise that growth and change are part of the process of life and are unique to each individual

Safety

- exploring appropriate personal safety strategies
- identify situations that are safe and those where personal safety may be at risk
- understand and know the safety rules that apply when taking medicines

Relationships

- find out about their family and what families do together
- begin to recognise how they relate to adults and other people
- identify who their friends are, what they do together and know how to treat others

Similarities and Differences

- begin to recognise the similarities and differences in families and the wider community
- understand that everyone is of equal worth and that it is acceptable and to be different
- celebrate special occasions

Key Stage 1

Self-Awareness

- feeling positive about oneself
- awareness of own strengths, abilities, qualities, personal preferences

Feelings and Emotions

- recognising own feelings and emotions
- recognising and managing the effects of strong feelings – anger, sadness, loss

Health, Growth and Change

- recognising and valuing the options for a healthy lifestyle
- having respect for their bodies and those of others
- being aware of the stages of human growth and development
- recognising how responsibilities and relationships change as you grow older
- understanding that, if not used properly, some products can be dangerous
- being aware that some diseases are infectious and some can be controlled

Safety

- know what to do or whom to seek help from when feeling unsafe
- recognise the nature of bullying and the harm which can result
- know about the potential dangers and threats in the home environment, eg. Internet safety and 'stranger danger'
- develop simple safety rules and strategies to protect themselves from potentially dangerous situations

Relationships

- examine the variety of roles in families and the contribution made by each member
- be aware of home and school life and the responsibilities this can bring
- know how to be a good friend
- understand that they can take on some responsibility in their family and friendship groups

Similarities and Differences

- appreciate ways we are similar and different, eg. Disability, gender, religion, hobbies, abilities

- be aware of the diversity of people around the world

Key Stage 2

Self-Awareness

- developing self-awareness, self-respect and self-esteem
- confidently express own views and opinions
- identify current strengths and weaknesses
- face problems and try to resolve them
- recognise how responsibilities change as they become older and more independent
- examine and explore what influences their views, feelings and behaviour

Feelings and Emotions

- examine and explore their own and others' feelings and emotions
- know how to recognise, express and manage feelings in a positive and a safe way
- recognise that feelings may change at times of change and loss (the situations of the pupils should be taken into account prior to teaching this element)

Health, Growth and Change

- understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle
- recognise what shapes positive mental health
- know about the harmful effects of tobacco, alcohol and other illicit and illegal substances can have on themselves and others
- understand that bacteria and viruses affect health and know that basic routines can be followed to minimise risks
- know how the body grows and develops
- be aware of physical and emotional changes that take place during puberty (P6 and P7)
- know how babies are conceived, grow and are born
- be aware of the skills and importance of good parenting

Safety

- develop strategies to resist peer pressure
- recognise the nature of bullying and the harm which can result
- become aware of the potential danger of relationships with strangers or acquaintances, including good and bad touches.
- develop a pro-active and responsible approach to safety, eg. on the Internet, TV, gaming etc.
- know where, when and how to seek help

Relationships

- examine and explore the different types of families that exist
- recognise the benefits of families and friends

- find out about sources of help and support for individuals, families and groups
- explore and examine what influences their views, feelings and behaviour
- consider the challenges and issues that can arise at home, in school and with friends and these can be avoided or resolved

Similarities and Differences

- examine and explore the different types of families that exist, the roles within them and the different responsibilities
- acknowledge that people that differ in what they believe is right or wrong
- recognise that people have different beliefs that shape the way they live
- develop an awareness of the experiences, lives and cultures of people in the wider world
- recognise how injustice and inequality affect people's lives

LINKS TO OTHER SCHOOL POLICIES

This policy exists alongside the following school policies and should be read in conjunction with these policies:

- Anti-bullying Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Drug Education Policy
- Use of Internet and Digital Technology
- Health and Safety Policy
- Department of Education, NI: Pastoral Care in Schools – Child Protection, 1999

Programmes being implemented that complement and enhance RSE:

- Helping Hands – Women's Aid - <https://www.womensaidni.org/about-us/our-work/preventative-education/working-with-children-in-primary-schools/>
- Speak Out Stay Safe – NSPCC - <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/working-with-schools/speak-out-stay-safe-service/>
- Love for Life - <http://www.loveforlife.org.uk/sectors/teachers/primary/>

References

CCEA: Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance, An update for Primary Schools, 2015.

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