



Friends' School Lisburn

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION POLICY

1. Introduction and Rationale

The Friends' School Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy is drawn up within the context of our Mission Statement and ethos:

'Friends' School seeks to provide an environment in which pupils, staff and parents are committed to the idea of excellence within a caring, supportive community.'

Friends' School offers a broad and balanced curriculum which promotes the intellectual, moral and spiritual development of our pupils whilst fostering their personal and social development. We also acknowledge that all pupils have a right to an educational provision that prepares them for the experiences, opportunities and responsibilities of adult life.

Relationships and Sexuality Education is an integral part of that provision, as one aspect of a life-long process that encompasses the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills, and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about personal and social relationships and gender issues.

'Sexuality includes all aspects of the human person that relate to being male or female and is subject to change and development throughout life. Sexuality is an integral part of the human personality and has biological, cultural, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions.' CCEA *Guidance for Post-Primary Schools: 'Relationships and Sexuality Education'*

'Our sexuality is a central and significant part of who we are and how we see ourselves in relation to other people. It is part of our overall health and contributes to our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being.' CCEA *Personal Development NI Curriculum*

This Policy acknowledges the social contexts which inform the delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education:

- earlier maturation of young people;
- increased independence of young people;
- greater freedom of young people;
- legislation change to the age of consent;
- decreasing age of first sexual activity;

- Northern Ireland having one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in Europe;
- continuing rise in numbers of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV infection;
- increased exposure to mixed media messages concerning gender and sexuality issues.

It is against this backdrop that the Department of Education commissioned CCEA to produce updated guidance for Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in Post-Primary Schools (2015). This states that every school should have a policy setting out how the school will address RSE within the curriculum.

This Policy takes account of *The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Northern Ireland, 2006*, in acknowledging that it is unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation. This includes the way a pupil is afforded access to information regarding relevant RSE. Additionally, this Policy acknowledges the principles laid down in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)* including the responsibility to take educational measures to protect children from exploitation and abuse; the duty of schools to prepare a child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance and equality, and the rights of a child to form their own views and express them freely.

This Policy links to the School Development Plan (2017 -2020), in aiming to ‘Enhance Provision’ for all learners.

2. Policy Formation and consultation

This Policy was updated in June 2019, and then again in January 2021, by the Learning for Life and Work Coordinator, after consultation with teaching staff and groups of pupils. It takes account of the DENI Circular 2015/22 and CCEA’s *Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance: An Update for Post-Primary Schools (2015)*. It will be available on School’s website and should be viewed in the context of Friends’ School’s Pastoral Care, Safeguarding, Promotion of Healthy Lifestyle, Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) and Anti-Bullying Policies.

All staff involved in the delivery of RSE in School will be familiarised with the policy and procedures regarding pupil confidentiality and disclosure. The Policy will be subject to regular review.

3. Aims and Objectives of the Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

Values

Relationships and Sexuality Education ‘must not be value free’. DENI Circular 2001/15

This Policy promotes the values of Friends’ School. The RSE programme aims to present facts in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner, set within a clear moral framework with appreciation of current Northern Ireland legislation. It is a progressive programme that is tailored to the age, maturity and understanding of our pupils, and is responsive to their changing needs.

Pupils are encouraged to view their relationships in a responsible and healthy manner and to explore their rights and responsibilities within those relationships.

The RSE programme encourages pupils to appreciate that friendships and relationships are based on self and mutual respect, empathy, honesty, loyalty, trust and commitment. It promotes the development of acceptance, tolerance, care, forgiveness and compassion within all relationships.

Pupils are also encouraged to appreciate the value of family stability, marriage, permanent loving relationships and the responsibilities of parenthood. They should be enabled to develop the skills involved in creating and sustaining stable relationships, and the personal and social benefits they bring. As they mature, pupils are enabled to understand the moral, psychological and health risks to themselves and other people of certain types of sexual behaviour and to develop appropriate decision-making skills in relation to relationships and an acceptance of responsibility.

The following guidelines are offered within the moral framework of Friends' School's values and ethos:

- the deferment of sexual activity until young people are physically and emotionally mature enough to understand the inherent responsibilities and the consequences of their actions;
- an appreciation of the value of permanence and love in relationships, marriage, stability in family life and the responsibilities of parenthood;
- a recognition of the positive benefits of seeking sexual fulfilment within a permanent, committed relationship with one person;
- an understanding of diversity regarding religion, culture, family structures and sexual orientation;
- abstinence as a realistic and achievable option.

Aims

The RSE programme seeks to:

- enhance each pupil's personal development, self-esteem and well-being;
- promote positive attitudes towards sexuality, personal health and relationships within a moral, social and spiritual framework;
- encourage healthy friendships and relationships based on acceptance, tolerance, sensitivity, honesty, trust and mutual respect;
- develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of themselves and others as individuals;
- develop positive attitudes of self-respect, self-confidence and self-discipline;
- promote relationships based on responsible behaviour and informed decision making;
- develop positive and informed attitudes towards committed relationships, family life and the responsibilities of parenthood;
- promote an appreciation of the value of human life;
- prepare pupils for adult life;
- identify and ensure that pupils understand risk-taking behaviours.

Objectives

The RSE programme gives pupils valuable experiences that will enable them to:

- understand human physiology in relation to puberty, fertility, sexual intercourse and reproduction;
- discuss and debate sensitive and controversial issues such as consent, HIV/AIDS, abortion, gender identity and technological developments which involve consideration of attitudes, values, beliefs and morality;
- understand sexual development and identity, including gender issues, stereotyping and cultural influences including the media;
- know and understand the law as it relates to sexual behaviour;
- encourage good communication about relationships and sexual matters between young people and their parents/carers, family and friends;
- appreciate differing family structures and patterns;
- explore their own and others' feelings and emotions;
- develop strategies to make decisions, solve problems and implement actions in various personal, social and health contexts;
- explore the nature and development of relationships within families and friendships;
- develop personal and interpersonal skills which will help to establish and sustain healthy relationships;
- develop personal skills to cope and protect oneself from peer pressure, cyberbullying and threats to personal safety;
- develop skills to protect oneself from/deal with sexual abuse, including child sexual exploitation;
- develop a critical understanding of external influences on decision making about lifestyle choices;
- develop an awareness of the rights and responsibilities involved in relationships;
- acquire knowledge of the services and support available from relevant agencies, including CEOP, Childline etc;
- understand family issues such as parenting, childcare and life-long responsibility.

4. Management and co-ordination of Relationships and Sexuality Education

In Friends' School the responsibility for Relationships and Sexuality Education is appropriately shared with contributions from teachers, male and female, the School Nurse, parents and external agencies. Each of the partners has a distinctive contribution to make and the effectiveness of the RSE programme depends on regular communication and collaboration.

• **The Principal**

It is the responsibility of the Principal to ensure the development and implementation of an RSE Policy and a planned, coherent and progressive programme that meets the needs of all pupils. The Principal

consults with Governors, staff, parents, pupils and relevant professionals to ensure the implementation of the programme.

• **Vice-Principal**

The Vice-Principal responsible for the curriculum in school, Sarah Cochrane, oversees all issues related to the RSE Policy and programme development in school. She works closely with the Vice Principal with responsibility for Pastoral Care, Steven Alexander, and the Designated Teacher, Ciara Lowe, to ensure the, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the policy.

• **Learning for Life and Work Coordinator**

Emma Anderson is the LLW Coordinator and her role in relation to Relationships and Sexuality Education involves:

- planning and coordination of curricular provision;
- liaison with external agencies in reference to curriculum provision;
- liaison with the Vice Principals and Designated Teacher for Child Protection on RSE matters;
- attendance at relevant in-service training and dissemination of appropriate information to staff;
- liaison with teachers involved in delivering RSE as part of Personal Development and organisation of training, as appropriate.

• **Members of Staff (teaching and non-teaching)**

All members of staff should be familiar with the RSE Policy and procedures regarding pupil confidentiality and disclosure.

Curricular Provision

The RSE Programme is delivered primarily through the Personal Development strand of the Northern Ireland Curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4. At Key Stage 3, Collect teachers deliver this programme through a weekly LLW period, subject to timetabling. Lesson materials for teaching are prepared by the LLW Coordinator and encompass some of CCEA's 'In-Sync' programme. These resources are kept under review in order to ensure that they are responsive to the pupils' changing needs and that they are consistent with School's values.

Opportunities for RSE also arise across the curriculum. In subjects such as English, Science, Home Economics, Physical Education and Religious Education, relationships and sexuality issues are explored from a variety of perspectives. RSE issues in these subjects will be also underpinned by the values set out in this policy.

Teaching methodologies, which are largely collaborative and discursive, are framed by the Northern Ireland Curriculum. Some aspects of the RSE programme are delivered by a range of external agencies. These programmes supplement and complement internal provision.

The programme meets the needs of all pupils and is generally taught in mixed groups to promote positive relationships and an understanding of the perspectives of others. However, in certain circumstances, arrangements may be altered when it is deemed more appropriate to teach gender-specific issues to single sex groupings.

Technical and anatomical terminology should be used in the delivery of RSE in order to reduce embarrassment and provide pupils with an appropriate vocabulary through which they can seek clarification and ask relevant questions. Teachers delivering aspects of the RSE programme should make this clear during lessons. Pupils may tend towards the vernacular but homophobic or misogynistic language will not be allowed.

Sensitive issues such as abortion, gender identity and 'sexting' will arise through the programme of study and teachers will not avoid appropriate, well-balanced debate; discussion of such issues in society and the media is common, so pupils will already be aware of them. These issues will be presented in such a way which is free from bias and sensationalism, and sensitively pitched to the pupils' needs and situations. Pupils need to be provided with a balanced, non-judgmental view which reflects School's Mission Statement to provide a 'caring, supportive community'.

A pupil's right to privacy will be respected at all times and no pupil will be expected to ask or answer any personal questions in an RSE classroom. Equally, teachers should not be expected to answer personal questions on their views and opinions. Where personal opinion is offered, reference should consistently be made to this Policy and School's values as presented within it.

Personal medical advice will not be given by a teacher to any pupil. There will be an acknowledgement that only doctors and health professionals should give medical advice to pupils.

Monitoring provision

The Vice-Principals in conjunction with the LLW Coordinator, are responsible for evaluating the provision of RSE within School, including appropriate consultation with governors, teachers, pupils and parents.

Regular evaluation will ensure that:

- the RSE Policy continues to comply with legislation and guidelines;
- classroom practice continues to reflect the Policy and the needs of all pupils;
- teaching resources are reviewed and updated;
- external agency input is of a consistently high standard;
- the views of pupils are respected.

5. Specific Issues

Confidentiality and disclosures

No member of staff can give a guarantee of confidentiality to pupils concerning child protection issues. If details are disclosed, during either internal or external delivery of RSE, that reveal that sexual abuse is involved, the teacher/facilitator must follow Child Protection procedures as outlined in the Safeguarding Policy.

Gender identity and 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*

Respect for all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, will be promoted in line with School's ethos. Pupils have the right to hold different views in a peaceful manner. Homophobic abuse, or any other form of bullying, will not be tolerated. Sexual orientation and gender identity will be handled in a sensitive, non-confrontational manner. All teachers have a responsibility to counteract prejudice and support the development of self-esteem and a sense of personal responsibility in all pupils.

Contraceptive Advice to young people

As stated in *Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance. An update for Post-Primary Schools, NI Curriculum 2015*, as part of the curriculum teachers can provide general information to all pupils about types of contraception. They can provide pupils with information about where they can obtain confidential advice, treatment and support. Personal medical advice will not be given to individual pupils. Teachers must advise pupils to seek advice from parents, the school nurse and medical practitioners.

Sex and the Law

Pupils will be taught that the legal age of consent in Northern Ireland is 16 years for both heterosexual and non-heterosexual sexual activity. The importance of consent will be made clear to pupils through Personal Development lessons in Year 11. Additionally, related issues like 'sexting', and the legal issues involved, will be addressed through the RSE programme.

Outside agencies

All activities presented by outside agencies complement the internal curricular programmes in RSE. 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 RSE programme.

All agencies are issued with School's RSE Policy, in advance of delivering their programmes, and are asked to adhere to it in terms of ethos and values. Resources used by external agencies are vetted before use to ensure that they are consistent with School's Policy. Agencies are asked to complete and present an evaluation report of their programmes. All agencies are informed of School's Safeguarding procedures regarding pupil confidentiality and disclosure.

6. Involvement of parents

School is aware that its role in providing RSE is complementary to that of parents or carers. Parents are encouraged to support the RSE programme and are kept informed in the event of external agency involvement. Parents can access the latest information relating to RSE from the Department of Education [here](#).

APPENDIX 1

The following list of websites may be of use to pupils, teachers and parents when considering RSE issues:

www.childline.org.uk Provides a range of useful information for young people about bullying, friendships and sex, amongst other issues.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/> Information for young people, parents and teachers on the various forms of abuse and harmful sexual behaviours.

https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/11_13/Need-advice/Posting-pictures-and-videos/ and support for young people on the issues surrounding 'sexting'.

<https://www.childnet.com/resources> Useful information for pupils, parents and teachers on keeping young people safe online.

<https://www.safertoknow.info/> Information on Child Sexual Exploitation, produced by the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland.

<http://www.fpa.org.uk/> A range of useful resources and links for young people and teachers, dealing with contraception, STIs and pregnancy.

<https://www.nhs.uk/video/Pages/Typesofcontraception.aspx> The NHS 'advice for teenagers on different types of contraception.

<https://www.brook.org.uk/> Information for young people and teachers on a range of sexual health issues.

<http://www.endbullying.org.uk/> Resources for parents and pupils on dealing with bullying effectively.

<http://the-classroom.org.uk/> Resources for teachers on dealing with diversity on issues concerning sexual orientation and gender identity.

http://ccea.org.uk/curriculum/rse_post_primary CCEA's most recent guidance to Post-Primary Schools on meeting the requirements of Relationships and Sexuality Education.

<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/safer-futures/expect-respect-educational-toolkit/> Resources for teachers and pupils on domestic abuse and healthy relationships.

APPENDIX 2

The following topics form part of the Personal Development programme throughout KS3 and KS4. They are kept under regular review and will be responsive to the changing needs of the pupils.

YEAR 8	YEAR 9	YEAR 10	YEAR 11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing yourself • Positive decision making • Personal and family values • Feelings, emotions and unhelpful thinking • Who do I trust? • Family conflict • Risk-taking behaviours • Self esteem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who influences me? • Morals, beliefs and values • Friendships • Romantic relationships • Decision making • Fitting in • What do I value? • Coping with emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying and cyberbullying • Sexting • Personal morals and values • Boyfriends/girlfriends • Respect/ healthy relationships • Sex and its consequences • Sexually transmitted infections • Conception • Contraception • Peer pressure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent/ sex and the law • Sexual and gender identities • Teenage/ unplanned pregnancy • STIs • Contraception • Abortion • Healthy relationships/ respect • Domestic abuse • Parental responsibilities