

## FRIENDS' SCHOOL LISBURN

### RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION POLICY

#### Introduction

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'.***

The Policy is set within the context of:

- Friends' School's Pastoral Care, Child Protection and Promotion of Healthy Lifestyle Policies
- DENI Circulars 2001/15 and 2010/01
- CCEA Guidance for Post-Primary Schools: Relationships and Sexuality Education
- CCEA Personal Development NI Curriculum 2007
- Education Authority (South Eastern Region) exemplar, Relationships and Sexuality Policy for Schools January 2006
- DHSS Sexual Health Promotion: Strategy and Action Plan 2008 – 2013 December 2008
- Equality Commission's Eliminating Sexual Orientation Discrimination in N Ireland March 2009
- Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 – revised February 2009.

#### Definition

***"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"***

***"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. It especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to give and receive love; procreation and the aptitude for forming relationships with others"***

***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***

#### Rationale

Friends' School offers a broad and balanced curriculum which promotes the intellectual, moral and spiritual development of our pupils; and fosters 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, one aspect of a lifelong 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.

This Policy acknowledges that Relationships and Sexuality Education is now a statutory component of both Personal Development and Home Economics within the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

This Policy also acknowledges the social context which informs 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 incidents of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV infection

- increased exposure to mixed media messages re gender and sexuality issues

## **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.

Pupils are encouraged to view their relationships in a responsible and healthy manner and explore their rights and responsibilities involved 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; and 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; and 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 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 responsibility of parenthood
- a recognition of the positive benefits of seeking sexual fulfilment within a permanent, committed relationship with one person
- abstinence as a positive option

## **Aims**

The RSE programme seeks to:

- enhance each pupil’s personal development, self esteem and wellbeing
- 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 understand risk taking behaviours

## **Objectives**

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

- understand human physiology in relation to puberty, fertility, sexual intercourse and reproduction
- understand contraception, abortion and sexually transmitted diseases
- understand sexual development and identity including gender issues, stereotyping and cultural influences including the media
- appreciate differing family structures and patterns
- explore their own and others’ feelings and emotions
- acquire and develop appropriate vocabulary to discuss sexual feelings
- 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 and threats to personal safety
- develop an awareness of morals and values
- develop skills to protect oneself from/deal with sexual abuse
- develop a critical understanding of external influences on decision making re lifestyle choices
- develop an awareness of the rights and responsibilities involved in relationships
- acquire knowledge of the services and support available from relevant agencies
- understand family issues re parenting, childcare and lifelong responsibility

### **Relationships and Sexuality Education in the Curriculum**

The RSE Programme is delivered primarily through the Personal Development strand of the Revised 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 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.

Teaching methodologies are in accordance with the collaborative and active thrust of the Revised Curriculum. Aspects of the RSE 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 RSE 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 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 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
- The RSE Coordinator monitors the effectiveness of the external agency
- All agencies are informed of School's Child Protection procedures regarding pupil confidentiality and disclosure

### **Responsibilities**

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**  
**Phillip Elliott** is the Vice-Principal Pastoral and RSE Coordinator; and as such he is responsible for coordinating all issues related to the RSE Policy and programme development. He is also responsible for its monitoring and evaluation. He is also the Designated Teacher for Child Protection.

- **Personal Development Coordinator**

**Lorraine Burch** is the Personal Development Coordinator and her role in relation to Relationships and Sexuality Education involves:

- I. planning and coordination of curricular provision
- II. liaison with external agencies re curriculum provision
- III. liaison with Principal, Designated Teacher for Child Protection, LLW Coordinator and Vice Principal Pastoral on RSE matters
- IV. attendance at in-service training and dissemination of appropriate information to relevant staff
- V. organisation of training for staff as appropriate
- VI. liaison with LLW Coordinators and Curriculum Committee regarding RSE as part of Personal Development (Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4)

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

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

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The Vice-Principal Pastoral, Phillip Elliott, in conjunction with the Personal Development Coordinator, L Burch, is responsible for evaluating the provision of RSE within School, including appropriate consultation with governors, teachers, pupils and parents.

The aim of the evaluation process is to ensure that:

- the RSE Policy continues to comply with legislation and guidelines
- classroom practice continues to reflect the Policy and the needs of pupils
- teaching resources are regularly reviewed and updated
- external agency input is evaluated regularly
- the views of pupils are respected
- external agencies are informed of School procedures re pupil disclosures

### **Child Protection**

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 Child Protection Policy.

### **Confidentiality in the Classroom**

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.

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.

### **Homosexuality**

*"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

Heterosexual relationships will be presented in teaching programmes as the main context for sexual intimacy. Respect for all people, regardless of sexual orientation, will be promoted in line with School's ethos. Pupils have the right to hold different views in a peaceful manner. Bullying or any other form of homophobic abuse will not be tolerated. Sexual orientation will be handled in a sensitive manner and all teachers have a responsibility to counteract prejudice and support the development of self-esteem and personal responsibility in all pupils.

