

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

1. Introduction

(a) 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. The learning process begins informally with our parents (or those holding parental responsibility) long before any formal education takes place at school.

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, in a more general way the aptitude for forming relationships with others. It is a complex dimension of human life and relationships." CCEA Guidance for Primary Schools, Relationships and Sexuality Education 2001.

(b) Rationale

Education is concerned with the personal, social, emotional, spiritual and moral development of young children's lives. The inclusion of RSE within the curriculum is essential in preparing them for their adult life.

Our programme of RSE will not be value free, it will provide a framework of values and ideals within which the children will be given positive messages about family life, relationships and responsibilities reflecting the Christian ethos which permeates the work of the school.

(c) Ethos

The ethos of the school acknowledges the importance of RSE and places great value upon the development of the "whole" individual. We believe in the development of pupil's confidence, self esteem, self respect, self discipline and awareness of socially acceptable standards. The importance of personal development and being able to behave in a responsible and sensitive manner is paramount and central to the school's ethos. Showing thoughtfulness and a caring attitude towards others is nurtured in the children and is promoted by all members of staff.

(d) Aims

The aims of RSE are to:-

- Support the children's personal development and self esteem
- Help the children to develop healthy and respectful friendships and relationships
- Enable children to learn about human development as appropriate to their age
- Develop responsible behaviour and the ability to make informed decisions
- Help the child to value family life and marriage
- Appreciate the value of human life and the responsibilities of parenthood

2. Specific Issues

(a) The status of the family (marriage/co-habitation)

The school will promote the institutions of marriage and family while being aware that this is a sensitive issue for some of our pupils. This means that happy marriages will be presented as the ideal to which most aspire. Sexual abstinence before marriage and fidelity within it will be presented as a positive and desirable option and an achievable reality.

(b) Confidentiality and Child Protection Issues

In keeping with our Child Protection Policy confidentiality cannot be guaranteed and this must be made clear to children making disclosures. If a child says something or indicates that they or others may be at risk staff will immediately consult with the Designated Teacher for Child Protection and Principal. Further guidance may be sought from the NEELB's Child Protection Officer.

(c) Programme Issues

- Curriculum

RSE is included on a statutory basis within the Northern Ireland Curriculum through the science programme of study, health education cross-curricular theme and Religious Education.

- Parental Involvement

If, however, a parent has any concerns regarding some of the more sensitive areas of the programme they will have the opportunity to discuss these with the Principal or class teacher. The programme has already been drawn up and parents have had an opportunity to look at the materials. Parents will be given further information prior to the delivery of the lessons. If their concerns

remain they should arrange to speak to the Principal about possible alternative arrangements.

- Programme Content

The content of the programme has been decided following consultation with staff, parents and governors. The programme will include material on the physical and emotional changes of puberty. It will not include material on intercourse. We realise that children may have further questions and in this area the support of parents will be appreciated.

- Terminology

All teachers will use the correct biological terms for the body as appropriate during the teaching of these lessons.

- Use of Visitors

Anyone coming into the school to support this programme shall adhere to the school's policies.

The boys and girls in Primary 7 will receive separate lessons as a direct result of parental consultation. These may be given by the class teacher with the possible support of the school nurse programme. As is the case with all visitors parents will be asked to complete a consent form for their child's attendance at any presentation given by outside agencies.

- The sacredness of life

Life is sacred and this is reflected in our RSE Policy and Programme and based upon moral and spiritual principles and in no way can this be compromised.

- Homosexuality

This will not be discussed at Primary School level, however, given the media influence children are much more aware of certain terminology such as 'gay, queer or lesbian'.

Our policy will discourage the use of perjorative terminology.

3. Implementation

(a) Monitoring and Evaluating

All teachers will be involved in the monitoring and evaluating of RSE initially after the first year of its implementation and then every two years. It shall be monitored and evaluated against the aims of the programme. This shall be based

upon evidence of staff, pupil and parent questionnaires at the end of the first year of the programme.

(b) Staff Training

Where appropriate staff will receive training from doctors, school nurses or the NEELB CASS team. This will be in keeping with the ethos of the school and statutory guidelines from CCEA.

Past practice and skills from other areas of the curriculum eg RE, Health Education, PE, Science etc. will be utilised when possible.

(c) Roles and Responsibilities

1. Board of Governors

Works in collaboration with teachers and parents.

- Examines and approves the policy.
- Reviews policy.
- Has a sensitivity in a religious and cultural manner.
- Ratifies policy and programme.

2. Principal

- Consults with governors, staff, parents and appropriate outside agencies.
- Assists RSE coordinator in writing a draft policy to be given to governors, staff and parents
- Assists RSE coordinator in Reviewing policy
- Co-ordinates approach to RSE

3. RSE Co-ordinator

- Be familiar with statutory content
- Draw up and review policy
- Contact outside agencies
- Attend relevant training and disseminate to staff
- Monitor programme
- Liase with principal in implementing any changes

3. Staff

- Complementary role with parents
- Attend training where and when appropriate
- Planning and implementation of RSE
- Develop a programme of study
- Consultation with pupils

(d) Writing up a Programme

The current situation is that requirements of RSE are being taught through the programme of Study for Science, Health Education, PE, RE, Circle Time and on any other appropriate areas of the curriculum.

The programme will be available to all pupils, including those with Special Education Needs.

All teachers will be responsible for teaching RSE.

(e) Communicating with Others

All the teaching staff were involved in formulating statements regarding the sensitive issues.

All parents were invited to a meeting in school attended by representatives from staff, BOG and NEELB to discuss these sensitive issues. Opportunities were given to clarify any concerns.

Parents also had the opportunity to complete a questionnaire prepared by the teaching staff. The views expressed were taken into consideration by teaching staff in finalising the programme of RSE lessons.

A draft copy of the RSE Policy and Programme of Study has been given to each family, each governor and each teacher.

This RSE policy forms a part of the school's Pastoral Care Policy - which is the overarching document.

Appendices:

RSE Programme of Study