

CARRICKFERGUS MODEL SCHOOL



RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE) POLICY



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INTRODUCTION

It is a statutory requirement that all schools in Northern Ireland have a 'Relationships and Sexuality Education' (RSE) policy.

This policy has been written in line with Department of Education Ni requirements and through consultation with parents/carers, staff, and governors and has been ratified by the Board of Governors.

The NI Curriculum aims to prepare young people for all aspects of life and the Department of Education recognizes the importance of delivering appropriate age-related relationship and sexuality education within a clear values framework as a means of developing the child as a whole.

Effective relationships and sexuality education is essential if children are to value themselves as individuals and are to make responsible and well informed decisions about their lives. RSE in primary schools should provide children with opportunities 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.

(RSE Guidance, CEEA 2015, Section 1)

Relationships and Sexuality Education is an integral part of the Northern Ireland Curriculum in both primary and post-primary schools and must be delivered in a sensitive manner, which is appropriate to the age and understanding of pupils and the ethos of the school.

This new policy also reflects the evaluation report conducted by ETI in July 2016 on RSE in Primary and Secondary Schools and recent guidance from CCEA IN 2015.

DEFINING REALTIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION

Relationships and Sexuality Education 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.

Relationships and Sexuality Education 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; Relationships and Sexuality Education 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.

RSE PROMOTES:

- A better understanding of diversity and inclusion;
- Helps children to keep themselves safe in a digital world;
- Provides reliable and timely age-appropriate information;
- Promotes the use of appropriate language; and
- Helps children to recognise inappropriate behaviour and touch or attention that makes them feel uncomfortable in any way.

AIMS

The aims of RSE are to:

- Enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child;
- Help the child develop healthy and respectful friendships and relationships;
- Foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, social and spiritual framework;
- Promote responsible behaviour and the ability to make informed decisions;
- Help the child come to value family life and marriage;
- Appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood;
- Promote an appreciation of the value of human life and the wonder of birth.

SKILLS

Pupils need opportunities to develop:

- **Practical skills** for everyday living; for supporting others; for future parenting;

- **Communication skills** – learning to listen, listening to others points of view; putting one’s own view forward clearly and appropriately; giving and receiving feedback; handling and resolving conflict peacefully; being assertive;
- **Decision-making and problem-solving skills** for sensible choices made in the light of relevant information; making moral judgements about what to do in actual situations and putting these judgements into practice; acting responsibly and with initiative as an individual or as a member of a variety of groups;
- **Interpersonal skills** for managing relationships confidently and effectively; for developing as an effective group member or leader.

MORALS AND VALUES

RSE should enable pupils to clarify what they believe and why they believe it and develop a respect for and interest in the beliefs of others. The following values will be encouraged;

- A respect for self;
- A respect for others;
- Non-exploitation in relationships;
- Commitment, trust and bonding within relationships;
- Mutuality in relationships;
- Honesty with self and others;
- A development of critical self-awareness for themselves and others;
- An exploration of the rights, duties and responsibilities involved in relationships;
- Compassion, forgiveness, mercy and care when people do not conform to their way of life; and
- Self-discipline

THE SCHOOL ETHOS

At the Model Primary School we value all children equally. The ethos of our school is rooted in the Christian faith. Tolerance and respect for others is paramount. It is our intention that everyone feels valued and our pupils are encouraged to develop their full potential in a caring and supportive environment.

We also recognise the importance of home background and actively encourage the participation and engagement of parents in the education of their child. Family life may often be presented orally, in reading / text books and in other resources as consisting of Mum and Dad who are married to each other and have children. However, we recognise for a variety of reasons, many families have a different composition and structure. At the Model we respect the home background of all children and will seek to be extremely sensitive to all issues which arise.

This policy compliments our Ethos policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy, Positive Behaviour Policy, Drugs Policy and E-Safety Policy.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN HOME, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

It is understandable that many parents or carers are anxious about when, what and how their children will be taught in Relationships and Sexuality Education. 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. The effectiveness of this policy and its implementation is dependent on a collaborative

process involving teachers, parents/carers, governors and other educational and health professionals. Each of the partners has distinctive contributions to make.

WITHDRAWAL FROM RSE

Since RSE is a statutory requirement, it should be inclusive. As a school we actively promote the implementation of RSE and strongly discourage withdrawal. The school will, however, take account of parent/carer concerns.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF PUPILS

To ensure that the learning experiences are effective, positive and relevant to all pupils, the RSE programme should be developmental, accessible and be appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils. It should meet the needs of both genders and be a positive experience for all participants.

DEVELOPING RSE AT WHOLE SCHOOL LEVEL

The philosophy behind our RSE programme will be on display at whole school system level in day to day activities. For example:

- Each Friday, Pupil of the Week certificates celebrate the many varied gifts and talents of our children;
- The fact that every Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 child is on stage for Christmas nativities whatever their ability shows an inclusive mind-set;
- Differentiated activities in class;
- Individual and small group support breaks down barriers to learning;
- The aspiration to include all children in day and residential visits; and
- Both girls and boys may represent the school in any event.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- The Board of Governors examines and ratifies the school's RSE policy;
- The Principal and Senior Leadership Team co-ordinates the school's approach to RSE and consults with the Board of Governors, staff, pupils, parents/carers, and health professionals; and
- The staff provide a link and have a complementary role with parents/carers and deliver the school's RSE programme within the context of the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

In general our RSE programme will be delivered by the class teacher. However, occasions will arise where the expertise of outside agencies and other professionals will be used eg NSPCC, Childline, Health visitor, School Nurse or Police personnel.

SENSITIVITY

RSE will be delivered in a holistic, cross curricular way, ensuring that teaching is at all times appropriate to the maturity and understanding of the pupils. Teachers will ever be alert to the personal and emotional circumstances of the pupils. RSE will include the physical and emotional changes that occur at puberty but will not include sex education. However, the girls in Carrickfergus Model receive 'the growing up talk' in the summer term of their P6 year and the P7 boys receive their talk in the summer term of P7. Only children with written parent/carer consent receive this talk. The school nurse deliver the talks with a member of the teaching staff present in each case.

CURRICULUM ORGANISATION AND DELIVERY

The topics covered through the delivery of the NI Curriculum are also part of the Health Education curriculum, PDMU, RE, the World Around Us, PE, Drama or in reaction to specific situations.

THE SELECTION OF TEACHING MATERIALS

The selection of teaching resources should be:

- Consistent with the school's RSE policy and the aims and objectives of the RSE programme;
- Consistent with the school's morals and values framework;
- Appropriate to pupils' age, level of understanding and maturity;
- Factually correct and respectful of its audience;
- Likely to appeal to pupils in terms of appropriate language level, images, attitudes and values, maturity, contexts and situations, and the knowledge required;
- Complementary to the existing programmes which the school offers; and
- Encouraging consideration of a range of issues, attitudes and beliefs pertinent to the topics covered.

TEACHING RSE IN THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

In Carrickfergus Model Primary School we believe it is essential that teachers create a classroom environment which is supportive, where self-esteem is fostered and where the pupils feel valued and affirmed. The climate of the classroom needs to promote mutual respect and the dignity of each individual. It is important to create an atmosphere in the classroom which allows all pupils to feel comfortable to express opinions and feelings in a secure and safe manner and to explore issues which may be sensitive and personal. Every effort should be made to ensure that the whole group is at ease, with pupils showing respect for each other and realising their responsibilities to each other.

Ground rules should be agreed to help minimise embarrassment and encourage the respect of each other's opinion. Realistic scenarios, case studies, role-play, drama, videos and stories can be used to enable pupils to discuss issues without personal disclosure.

RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS IN RSE

When teaching Relationships and Sexuality Education, the natural inquisitiveness of children often results in the teachers being asked many questions which they had not planned for. These questions may challenge the teacher's own values system. It is this fear of the unknown which often makes teachers apprehensive and uneasy about delivering Relationships and Sexuality Education.

There will be occasions when teachers will have to use their own discretion and judgement about how to deal with particular questions raised by a pupil or a group of pupils. Teachers should 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.

TERMINOLOGY

In teaching issues related to RSE, teachers will use the correct biological terms for parts of the body.

DEALING WITH CONFIDENTIALITY AND DISCLOSURES

The foundation for the effective delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education 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 also 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'. Teachers must take decisions relating to personal disclosures in accordance with the procedures set out in the Department of Education's booklet *Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection* (Circular 1999/10).

In summary these are:

- The staff member should immediately inform the designated child protection teacher/member of the safeguarding team.
- The designated child protection teacher/member of the safeguarding team must inform/consult with Social Services and/or the PSNI.
- No staff member should take on the role of investigator – this is the responsibility of Social Services and the PSNI.
- Staff members should explain their responsibilities to refer cases of alleged abuse to the appropriate authorities, but they also must ensure that the matter will only be disclosed to the people who need to know about it.
- Staff members should give the pupil time to talk without interrupting or probing, recording exactly what the pupil says, whilst not promising confidentiality.

It is very important that any pupil who feels that they cannot talk to or does not wish to talk to their parents or carers has access to other sources of support. Parents or carers should also be made aware of how pupil disclosures are addressed by the school.

SPECIFIC ISSUES NOT TAUGHT

There will be no direct teaching of issues such as homosexuality, AIDS, contraception, trans-gender etc. However, if these issues are raised by pupils, the teachers will address them sensitively and take advice from the senior leadership team if necessary.

RESOURCES WHICH HELPED FORM THIS POLICY

- DE Circular 2001/15
- DE Circular 2010/01
- CCEA Guidance Material (DE Circulars 2001/15a and 2001/15b)
- Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006
- Circular 2013/16

These circulars are available on the Department's Website: www.deni.gov.uk. Guidance and resources on RSE are also provided on the NI Curriculum website at www.nicurriculum.org.uk/.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THIS POLICY

The RSE policy will be evaluated by the Principal in light of new guidance/legislation.