



Cookstown High School

Relationships & Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

Reviewed: October 2024
Next Review: October 2025

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POLICY OVERVIEW

DETAILS

TITLE	RSE Policy
TARGET AUDIENCE	Governors', Staff, Parents/Carers
REVIEW DATE	October 2024
REVIEW LEAD	Principal
POLICY DEVELOPED BY	Senior Leadership Team
POLICY RATIFIED BY THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS ON:	October 2024
EFFECTIVE FROM:	January 2025
REVIEW FREQUENCY:	Every year
REVIEW DATE:	October 2026
PRINCIPAL	Miss G J Evans
CHAIR OF BOARD OF GOVERNORS	Mrs L Dripps

RECORD OF POLICY AMENDMENTS

The following table outlines any significant changes/amendments made to this procedure since it was ratified by the Board of Governors on:

DATE OF REVIEW OR AMENDMENT	SUMMARY OF CHANGED / AMENDMENTS TO PROCEDURE	AMENDED BY

School Ethos

As a school founded upon Christian principles, we believe in and celebrate the uniqueness of each individual and encourage all members of our community to show respect for all.

We seek the development of Character through Knowledge believing each individual has a duty to build a community, to strive to do their best, to show compassion for those in need and to take responsibility for their own words and actions. The school ethos places an emphasis on respect for self and others, individual responsibility and harmonious community regardless of background, belief, age, sexual orientation or disability. Cookstown High School seeks to develop young people who are independent learners and active citizens.

This policy aims to show how the school addresses Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) within the curriculum and the moral and values framework within which it is set.

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

Cookstown High School offers a broad and balanced curriculum which promotes the academic, social, moral and spiritual development of our pupils through education of the whole person and assisting the development of sound character. All pupils have a right to 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 a statutory component of both Personal Development and Home Economics within the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

The moral and values framework for RSE is influenced by the overall aim of the school and its ethos and values.

RSE is therefore approached in a setting of a broad Christian ethos and with expectations that each pupil will act with integrity and show mutual respect towards others. This approach encourages:

- A respect for self and a development of critical self-awareness for him/herself and others
- An appreciation that friendships and relationships should be based on honesty, mutual respect, non-exploitation, trust and commitment
- An exploration of the rights, duties and responsibilities involved in relationships
- 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
- Abstinence as a positive option
- The importance of respecting the sexual choices of others.

The RSE Curriculum

Aims of Relationships and Sexuality Education

The RSE programme seeks to:

1. Enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being
2. Promote positive attitudes towards sexuality, personal health and relationships within a moral, social and spiritual framework;
3. Encourage healthy friendships and relationships based on acceptance, tolerance, sensitivity, honesty, trust and mutual respect;
4. Develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of themselves and others as individuals;
5. Develop positive attitudes of self-respect, self-confidence and self-discipline;
6. Promote relationships based on responsible behaviour and informed decision making;
7. Develop positive and informed attitudes towards committed relationships, family life and the responsibilities of parenthood;
8. Promote an appreciation of the value of human life;
9. Prepare pupils for adult life;
10. Identify and understand risk taking behaviours.

Objectives of Relationships and Sexuality Education

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;
- know and understand the essential importance of consent in all forms of sexual conduct;
- 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 and/or 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.

The RSE curriculum forms part of the statutory statements of requirement in Personal Development strand of the Revised Curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4. The RSE Programme is delivered primarily through the Personal Development strand of mixed-gender LLW lessons at Key Stage 3 and 4. Opportunities for RSE also occur across the curriculum where a range of subjects such as English, Science, Home Economics, Physical Education and Religious Education explore issues from a variety of perspectives.

Aspects of the RSE programme are delivered by external agencies. These programmes supplement and complement internal provision. Workshops are delivered to single-gender and mixed-gender audiences. 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.

The objectives and skills of the RSE programme are also reinforced in the daily interaction between pupils and staff, both inside and outside the classroom.

The Right to Withdraw a Child from Sex Education

Cookstown High School respects the rights of parents/carers to withdraw their child from all or part of Sex Education. Parents will be informed by the LLW Co-Ordinator that Sex Education is to take place and extend the right to withdraw if applicable.

Requests to withdraw should initially be directed to Heads of Year who will then inform the LLW Co-Ordinator if a child has been withdrawn.

Responsibilities

At Cookstown High School, the responsibility for Relationships and Sexuality Education is appropriately shared with contributions from teachers, male and female, 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 Board of Governors

It is the responsibility of the Board of Governors to ensure that they adopt and maintain an RSE policy and that it is interpreted appropriately and monitored and reviewed regularly.

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.

The Vice Principal

The Vice Principal Pastoral has overall responsibility for the RSE programme; and is responsible for coordinating all issues related to the RSE Policy and programme development. She is also responsible for its monitoring and evaluation.

Personal Development Coordinator

The Personal Development Coordinator's role encompasses (but is not confined to):

- i planning and coordination of curricular provision;
- ii liaison with external agencies re. curriculum provision;
- iii liaison with Principal, Designated Teacher for Child Protection, and Vice Principal Pastoral on RSE matters;
- iv attendance at in-service training /TPL and dissemination of appropriate information to relevant staff;
- v organisation of training for staff as appropriate;

Members of Staff (teaching and support)

All members of staff should be familiar with RSE Policy and the outline of the RSE curriculum. Where appropriate departments should make links between subject specifications and the RSE curriculum. All staff should be familiar with the procedures around Child Protection disclosures and the values and approach promoted by this policy.

Safeguarding

While most issues dealt with in RSE do not give rise to safeguarding concerns per se it is possible that a safeguarding concern may be identified through exploration of some of the issues. 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, the teacher/facilitator must follow the procedures as outlined in the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy.

While 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 the School's ethos. Schools are places of learning where free thinking and free speech are to be encouraged and pupils therefore have the right to hold and articulate different views in a respectful manner. Bullying or any other form of abuse based on any aspects of a pupil's sexual orientation or gender identification will not be tolerated. Sexual orientation and gender identity will be handled in a sensitive manner and all teachers have a responsibility to actively counteract prejudice and support the development of self-esteem and personal responsibility in all pupils.

In accordance with the School mission statement and ethos we regard pupils as individuals with agency. Pupils who seek help or support with any matter related to RSE will be accepted and treated as individuals on a case-by-case basis in a manner consistent with good practice, this policy and the school's values, mission and ethos.

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.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Vice-Principal Pastoral (in conjunction with the Personal Development Coordinator and other appropriate senior staff) 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 appropriate and 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 etc.

The Policy sits within the context of:

- The School's Pastoral Care, Safeguarding & Child Protection policies
- DENI Circulars 2010/01, 2015/22, and 2024/1
- CCEA Guidance for Post-Primary Schools: Relationships and Sexuality Education
- CCEA Personal Development NI Curriculum 2007
- Equality Commission's Eliminating Sexual Orientation Discrimination in N Ireland March 2009
- Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 – revised February 2009
- CCEA (non-statutory) guidance: Teaching Controversial Issues at KS3 (2015)

Links to Other Policies

In the development and implementation of this Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy, the Board of Governors has been mindful of related policies, including:

- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Drugs and Substance Abuse Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Health and Safety Policy