



Cookstown High School

Relationships and Sexuality Education policy

Review: October 2021

Next review: October 2024

PROCEDURE OVERVIEW

DETAILS

TITLE	Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy
TARGET AUDIENCE	Parents/Guardians, School Stakeholders, Staff
REVIEW DATE	Oct 21
REVIEW LEAD	Mrs C Allen
PERSONNEL INVOLVED IN THE REVIEW OF THIS PROCEDURE:	Senior Leadership Team
POLICY PRESENTED TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS ON:	7 December 2021
POLICY RATIFIED BY THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS ON:	7 December 2021
EFFECTIVE FROM:	8 December 2021
REVIEW FREQUENCY:	Every three years (minimum)
PRINCIPAL	Miss G J Evans
CHAIR OF BOARD OF GOVERNORS	Mrs L Dripps

This procedure has been reviewed to include reference to the remit of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) in investigating complaints from members of the public in relation to maladministration in publicly-funded schools.

RECORD OF PROCEDURE 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

Introduction

Cookstown High School offers a broad and balanced curriculum which promotes the intellectual, moral and spiritual and emotional 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. In learning and growing together, pupils can be prepared to give back to their community the benefits of such an education.

The High School is proud of its academic success but has never seen academic success as the sole measure of success in the school. The school believes that true education enables young people to develop morally, socially, spiritually and physically as well as academically. Through a variety of curricular, personal development and extracurricular activities, the High School seeks to educate its students recognising that relationships are of central importance. As a school underpinned by a Christian ethos, we recognise the intrinsic worth and potential of each individual characterised by respectful relationships.

The Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) policy is designed to reflect the ethos and values of the School and be compatible with the rights of the child as detailed in the Children (Northern Ireland) Order, 1995. It aims to encourage pupils to develop mutual respect, self-esteem and wellbeing within the context of healthy and respectful friendships and relationships and in doing so develop responsible behaviour and the ability to make informed decisions. It seeks to foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude towards, human sexuality and relationships within a moral, social and spiritual framework and to help the child come to value family life and marriage and to appreciate the responsibility of parenthood.

The School will abide by the guidelines laid down by the Department of Education and the specifications provided by CCEA. In particular, this policy has been written in accordance with the guidance provided in DE Circulars 2001/15, 2001/15a, 2001/15b, 2010/01, 2013/16, 2015/22 and Relationships and Sexuality Guidance (CCEA September 2018) The Equality Act (sexual orientation) regulations (Northern Ireland 2006.)

Teacher in charge of Learning for Life and Work (LLW) & Senior Leadership Team (SLT) line manager will ensure that Heads of Year are responsible for ensuring the effective delivery of RSE to their Year Group, as well as through Personal Development. This will involve monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning, providing resources for teachers, drawing up appropriate programmes of study/schemes of work in line with the most up-to-date DE and CCEA requirements and ensuring staff involved in teaching the programme receive appropriate training.

Rationale

Young people are being constantly bombarded by a mass of material on sexual matters from all areas of the media: teenage magazines, the Internet, satellite television, video and music as well as by their peer groups. Such media frequently cause great concern among parents about the unhelpful and confused messages that they convey.

The school's RSE programme will aim to present facts in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner and will be set within a framework of Christian values and an awareness of the law on sexual behaviour. Pupils will, therefore, be encouraged to appreciate the value of a stable family life, marriage and the responsibilities of parenthood. They will be helped to consider the importance of self-restraint, dignity, respect for themselves and others, acceptance of responsibility, sensitivity towards the needs and the views of others, loyalty and fidelity. They will be helped to recognise the physical, emotional and moral implications, and risks, of certain types of behaviour, and to accept that both sexes must have a responsibility in sexual matters.

The school recognises that some pupils will come from backgrounds that do not reflect these values and experiences. It will deal sensitively with such pupils to avoid causing hurt or offence to them or their families. All teaching will emphasise the value of life and the implications that this has in relationships. Pupils will be encouraged to consider what effect this has, or will have, on their relationships, particularly in relation to conception and abortion.

Morals and Values

The following values will be supported by RSE programme:

- An appreciation of the value of a stable family life, marriage, a permanent loving relationship based on trust and commitment and the responsibilities of parenthood.
- An appreciation that rights, duties and responsibilities are involved within any relationship.
- The deferment of sexual activity until young people are physically and emotionally mature enough to understand the inherent responsibilities.
- An appreciation of the value and sacredness of human life.
- An acknowledgement of singleness and celibacy as equally valuable and fulfilling options and a recognition that sexual abstinence before marriage is a positive and desirable option which is an achievable reality to which young people can aspire.
- Heterosexual relationships will be presented in teaching programmes as the main context for sexual intimacy.
- Respect for all people regardless of sexual orientation and an appreciation of the need to treat others with dignity and respect the right of others to hold different views from oneself without aggression or antagonism.
- Recognition of the positive benefits of seeking sexual fulfilment within a permanent committed relationship with one person.
- An appreciation that self-discipline, self-restraint and non-exploitation are important values in developing responsible behaviour in sexual matters.

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 wellbeing”. CCEA Personal Development NI Curriculum

RSE is therefore a major element in the Personal Development Programme important because:

- It is important that young people are provided with appropriate factual information and have opportunities to discuss their feelings and concerns and help them to be better able to manage the emotional and physical changes at puberty.
- RSE can help young people develop self-esteem by creating a climate of trust and acceptance in which each person is valued and respected and encouraged to feel good about themselves, to recognise their own needs and to respect the needs of others.
- RSE can help to promote a positive view of sexuality and sexual health by helping young people to feel good about themselves, to respect others and to be able to develop safe, responsible and satisfying relationships.
- RSE can provide opportunities for pupils to examine their own values and beliefs in the light of those held by others, to separate fact from fiction, to recognise prejudice and to respect the views, emotions and feelings of others.
- The school can provide opportunities for pupils to consider media and peer messages and pressures and ensure they receive accurate information.

Curricular Delivery of RSE

RSE will be delivered primarily through LLW (Personal Development) although issues relating to relationships and sexuality will also be dealt with in Home Economics, Biology, English and Religious Education. Generally, RSE will be taught in mixed groups, so that boys and girls are encouraged to work with each other and gain an understanding of each other’s perspectives. On occasions pupils may work in single gender groups so that they can explore and consider gender specific issues. The school recognises that the home has a major influence on all aspects of a young person’s life, and especially so in the domain of relationships and sexuality. Where sensitive issues are being addressed, parents may be informed about the content to be covered and the activities which pupils will undertake.

Sensitive Issues

Sensitive issues will be presented in a way which is free from sensationalism and bias, and sensitively pitched to the needs of the pupils and situations. Pupils will be provided with a balanced and non-judgemental view that respects a range of religious beliefs and the possible experiences of the pupils.

Parental Partnership

We recognise that parents have the prime responsibility for bringing up their children and we will therefore seek to ensure that the RSE programme complements and is supportive of the parent's role. We work in partnership with parents, particularly in relation to any sensitive issues outlined above.

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 and pupils will be advised to seek advice from parents or medical practitioners.

Child protection

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

Sexual Identity and 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

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.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of the programme is essential. This will take place at a number of levels:

- Discussions at departmental / pastoral meetings
- Completion of questionnaires
- Feedback from pupils and staff on past teaching