

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUAL EDUCATION POLICY

FOR

Carrickfergus Academy



Version	Date	Revision Authors	Summary of Changes
1	November 2021 April 2022	A Irvine	Draft for consultation Consulted on with all KS3 students through PD and student council January to April 2022. Communicated to parents and BOG. Signed off April 2022

Introduction

The School Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy is drawn up within the context of our Mission Statement and ethos.

The Policy is set within the context of:

- The School's Pastoral Care, Child Protection Policies
- DENI Circulars 2001/15, 2010/01, 2013/16 and 2015/22
- CCEA Guidance for Post-Primary Schools: Relationships and Sexuality Education (2015)
- Every School a Good School, Together Towards Improvement and Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education Policy (www.deni.gov.uk)
- CCEA Personal Development NI Curriculum 2007
- DHSS Sexual Health Promotion: Strategy and Action Plan 2008 – 2013 December 2008
- The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006.
- Equality Commission's Eliminating Sexual Orientation Discrimination in Northern Ireland March 2009
- Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 – revised February 2009.
- www.rsehub.org.uk

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)

The DE Circular 2013/16 states that: Relationships and Sexuality Education ‘should be taught in harmony with the ethos of the school and reflect the moral and religious principles held by parents and school management authorities.

(NI Curriculum)

Rationale

Carrickfergus Academy 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 key values of the school to include *Respect* and *Support*. 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 Carrickfergus Academy'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 including consent
- 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.

Teaching 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.

At Carrickfergus Academy we have been fortunate to have enrichment opportunities for pupils and staff from the following agencies:

LM Therapeutics – Year 8 Girls' Health & Hygiene

YJS – Year 9 Online World and the Law

Cara Friend – Year 9 LGBTQ+ and Anti Bullying Workshops and staff training for awareness and handling sensitive issues which can sometimes be personally challenging for staff.

Love for Life – Year 10 Icebergs and Babies

The programme of Relationships and Sexuality Education is kept under review.

The RSE curriculum is also covered through discrete provision made in LLW, in the Personal Development unit, Relationships and Sexuality.

Topics covered include:

- Different types of Sexual Identity
- Impact of Sexual Identity on Relationships
- Gender Identity and expression
- Sexual Orientation
- Reactions to differences in gender orientation
- Physical and Emotional effects of Sexual orientation or identity on a person
- Case study on Homophobic Bullying
- What the physical and emotional effects that unhealthy relationships
- What support is available for people in unhealthy relationships

Other topics covered discretely include:

- Risks
- Sexual Abuse,
- Exploitation,
- Assault,
- Prostitution,
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Parenting,
- Family structure,

- Different types of families

In RE the discrete provision includes:-

- The Meaning of Sexual Relationships
- Christian attitudes to Sexuality
- Role of Celibacy
- Same Sex Relations
- Marriage
- Same Sex Marriage
- Challenges of Marriage
- Civil Partnerships
- Marriage Guidance Services

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 Carrickfergus Academy 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 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 Senior Leadership Team

The SLT are responsible for coordinating all issues related to the RSE Policy and programme development. They are also responsible for its monitoring and evaluation. Amanda Irvine is the Designated Teacher for Child Protection.

- Personal Development Coordinator

Cathryn Thacker is the KS3 Personal Development Coordinator and her role in relation to Relationships and Sexuality Education involves:

- planning and coordination of curricular provision
- liaison with external agencies re curriculum provision
- liaison with Principal, Designated Teacher for Child Protection, LLW Coordinator Lynda Shannon and Vice Principal Pastoral on RSE matters

- attendance at in-service training and dissemination of appropriate information to relevant staff
- organisation of training for staff as appropriate
- 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 SLT in conjunction with the Personal Development Coordinator (C Thacker) and Head of Learning for Life and Work (L Shannon), are 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 – the evaluation of the policy will be discussed with the school council.
- 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.

LGBTQ+

“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 homophobia 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. We promote equality of opportunity for all pupils.

Carrickfergus Academy is committed to providing equality of support for all young people in our care and as such we are also supporting transgender young people in school providing opportunities to experience their preferred gender and providing specific facilities, such as non-gender specific toilets, change of pronoun, and preferred names as well as alternative arrangements for uniform.

Responding to sensitive issues

We recognise that, on occasion, certain sensitive issues may require consideration. When attempting to deal with these issues the following positions and procedures will be adopted:

(1) Pregnancy

We aim to support any young women who may become pregnant whilst enrolled at our school. Following consultation and agreement with the young mother to be, referral may be made to the EA’s SAM (School Age Mothers) Project. Where

possible, the school will liaise closely with the parents of the pupil. In the event of a young woman informing the school that she is pregnant we will consider if child protection is an issue. Advice will initially be sought from the school's designated teachers for child protection Mrs A Irvine and if it is deemed necessary the school will follow its child protection guidelines.

We also do our best to support Young Men who find themselves as young fathers. In these circumstances, and in consultation with the young man and his family, we will refer for support to external agencies. As with our young women we will consider referral to Gateway if there is a Child Protection issue.

(2) Sexual Identity and Orientation

All pupils have the right to learn in a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment, to be treated with respect and dignity and not to be treated any less favourably on grounds of their actual or perceived sexual orientation.

Bullying on the grounds of sexual orientation, is as unacceptable as it is in any other situation where someone is mistreated or bullied because of their differences from those who are perceived to be the majority. All issues relating to bullying on the grounds of sexual orientation or any other form of homophobia will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in line with the school's Anti-Bullying Policy.

(3) Sexting

'Sexting' is creating, sharing and forwarding sexually suggestive, nude or nearly nude images through mobile phones and the internet (Lenhart, 2009). In PD young people are given the opportunity to explore the issue of 'sexting' Through RSE young people are taught how to safely navigate the digital landscape which plays such an integral role in their lives. This enables them to be able to:

- Identify potential threats or dangers, including all forms of emotional, physical and sexual abuse and exploitation.
- Make informed choices and decisions
- Build their resilience, and
- Be aware of strategies which they can use to protect themselves Pupils affected by such issues are given appropriate support.

(4) Child Sexual Exploitation

According to recent reports, child sexual exploitation is increasingly evident and is an issue of serious concern in NI (Beckett 2011; Webb and Montgomery-Devlin, 2013)

Child sexual exploitation is 'a Form of sexual abuse in which a person(s) exploits, coerces and/or manipulates a child or young person into engaging in some form of sexual activity in return for something the child needs or desires and/or for the gain of the person(s) perpetrating or facilitating the abuse'. (SBNI 2014) Through RSE we enhance pupils' awareness of these issues and help them to recognise and challenge inappropriate and unwanted attention from others.

Parental Partnership

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

Responsibilities:

- Head of LLW

Mrs L Shannon is Subject Leader for LLW and her role in relation to Relationships and Sexuality Education involves;

- Planning and coordination of curricular provision
- Liaison with external agencies re curriculum provision
- Liaison with Principal, and Vice Principal on RSE matters
- Attendance at in-service training and dissemination of appropriate information to relevant staff
- Organisation of training for staff as appropriate
- Liaison with LLW teachers regarding RSE as part of Personal Development (Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4)

Monitoring and Evaluation

The RSE programme is kept under review. 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 the pupils are respected and sought

Related School Policies

This policy is set within the broader school context of Pastoral Care and as such should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Safeguarding and child protection policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Behaviour policy
- Drugs education policy