

# RSE Policy



Sacred Heart Primary School  
Dundrum

(Updated 2016)

## **INTRODUCTION**

The aim of education at Sacred Heart Primary School is to contribute towards the development of all aspects of the individual, to allow them to develop socially, spiritually, morally, intellectually, emotionally etc. for personal and family life, for working life, for living in the community and for leisure. Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is clearly a part of this general aim.

## **PURPOSE**

The provision of RSE is an equal opportunities issue. All pupils have a right to an education which adequately prepares them for adult life, and RSE plays an integral part. Health, education and social services professionals have identified a particular need for boys and girls, to receive an adequate preparation for the emotional and physical changes at puberty. Many children are maturing earlier and it is therefore important that, with the agreement of parents, pupils are provided with appropriate factual information and have opportunities to discuss their feelings and concerns. This preparation should help pupils to be better able to manage the emotional and physical changes at puberty.

RSE can have a positive effect on self-esteem. RSE therefore is important at any stage of schooling but is particularly important at Key Stage 2 within the primary school context. We can help develop the self-esteem of pupils by creating a climate of trust and acceptance in which each person is valued and respected and encouraged to feel good about themselves. Pupils are encouraged to recognize their individual needs, to respect the needs and wants of others, and to develop the skills and self-esteem to become confident adolescents.

RSE plays a part in increasing informed choice by providing opportunities for pupils to examine their own values and beliefs in the light of those held by others. Deeper understanding of the values and beliefs that they hold can help pupils to clarify why they think and behave as they do, to separate fact from fiction, to recognize prejudice and to respect the views, emotions and feelings of others. Many pupils cannot or are unwilling to talk to their parents about growing up and about sexual matters. We can offer information and provide opportunities to consider feelings and concerns within a secure environment.

Although some pupils may have experienced sexual abuse, this is not a reason for avoiding education about relationships and sexuality. Through RSE and other related programmes, we can attempt to enable pupils to challenge inappropriate and unwanted attention from others. Parents are frequently concerned about the unhelpful and confused media and peer messages and pressures experienced by their children. At Sacred Heart Primary School, we can attempt to provide opportunities for pupils to consider these messages and ensure they receive accurate information.

## **CONTEXT**

The Northern Ireland Curriculum aims to empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives. Elements of RSE are embedded in many areas of the curriculum, such as Personal Development and Mutual Understanding, the World Around Us and Religious Education.

## **CROSS CURRICULAR LINKS**

This document reflects the core principles of other related policies, and aspects of RSE are likely to be addressed already within school's Code of Conduct for Employees, Code of Conduct for Students and Intimate Care Policy, all of which are circulated to all teaching and non-teaching staff.

## **AIMS**

The aims of RSE are to:

- Enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child.
- 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.
- Appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood.
- Promote an appreciation of the value of human life and the wonder of birth.

- To form values and establish behaviour within a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- To learn how to develop and enjoy personal relationships and friendships which are based on responsibility and mutual respect.
- To build the foundations for developing more personal relationships in later life.
- To make positive, responsible choices about themselves and others and the way they live their lives.

## **SKILLS**

The RSE curriculum and other related disciplines will contribute toward enabling pupils to develop the skills necessary to form and maintain relationships and to make informed choices and decisions regarding health and well-being. Pupils should also be helped to develop skills to critically evaluate the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values.

They 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 judgments about what to do in actual situations and putting these judgments into practice; acting responsibly and with initiative as an individual or as a member of a variety of groups.
- Inter-personal skills for managing relationships confidently and effectively; for developing as an effective group member or leader.

## **RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN HOME, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY**

The effectiveness of this RSE policy and programme is dependent on a collaborative process involving teachers, parents, governors and other educational and health professionals. Each of the partners has distinctive contributions to make. Teachers, governors and parents can raise any concerns they might have about RSE issues and the Senior Management will address these or refer to the BOG if necessary.

## **THE ROLE OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT**

A planned, structured and coherent approach to RSE will be sought throughout the school, in conjunction with CCMS. Implementing this and other related policies will be managed by the Designated & Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection. Consultation will need to be initiated with governors, staff, parents, health professionals and other relevant community representatives as necessary.

## **THE ROLE OF GOVERNORS**

The governors will try to foster and support the development of our RSE policy and similar related policies by collaborating with teachers and parents. They shall facilitate the consultative process whereby the school community can respond and contribute on relevant issues. The governors of the school will seek to accommodate and be sensitive to the religious and cultural beliefs of both teachers and parents while fulfilling their responsibility to ensure the availability of adequate RSE for all children.

## **THE ROLE OF TEACHERS**

The classroom teacher has a significant and diverse role to play in the planning and implementation of RSE in the school. At all times, the role must be considered to be complementary to that of parents, taking cognisance of the individual needs, age, maturity, stage of development and family background of the child. The class teacher will strive to promote the aims of this policy and other related policies and deliver the requirements of RSE at the level appropriate to their particular class.

## **INVOLVING PARENTS**

Our aim is to develop a structure which enables both parents and teachers to work together. The home exerts a major influence on all aspects of a child's life, and especially so in the domain of relationships and sexuality. Parents are often concerned about the information their children are receiving from their peers and from television, videos, newspapers and magazines. We will attempt to provide opportunities for pupils to consider this information and ensure they receive accurate information. Where puberty-related changes are being covered with P7 classes, parents will be informed about when these talks will take place, the content to be covered and the activities that pupils will undertake.

## **THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS**

We will strive to facilitate the following rights of the parents; Parents of pupils in grant-aided schools have a right to have their children educated in accordance with their (the parents') wishes, in so far as this is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure. Parents also have a duty to cause their child to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude and to any special needs he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. We will endeavour to take account of the wishes of any parent who wishes their child to be excused from particular, or all, sex education classes. Any issues raised regarding the content of an element of RSE, or other related programmes, will be addressed and resolved in a positive manner as part of the consultation process. Although full consultation may have been undertaken, a parent may still request that their child is excused from participating in some or all of the RSE lessons. In this circumstance, the school should discuss the nature of the parent's concerns, attempt to deal with any misunderstandings, identify the specific issues and lessons which are problematic and explain the implications for the pupil in terms of the parts of the statutory programmes of study which will be missed. The social and emotional effects of exclusion should be considered, as well as the likelihood that pupils will discuss the content of RSE lessons outside the classroom.

## CURRICULUM ORGANISATION

The primary curriculum offers opportunities to develop an RSE programme in a holistic and cross-curricular way. Issues can be integrated within specific topics, discussed in subject-related contexts, addressed through health education, pastoral work and at assembly time as well as during visits from the school nurse or other agencies. It is important, therefore, for schools to consider the links that exist between RSE and the other curricular areas at each Key Stage. A review of existing provision will reveal where aspects of their proposed content are being covered already and where there are gaps in provision. In many instances, RSE shares content with WAU, Science, Religious Education, Physical Education and English, as well as PDMU. Circle Time may be used as an appropriate tool to engage children in RSE.

### AN OUTLINE OF PROGRAMME FOR KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

Key Stage 1  
Myself • Myself, how I grow, feed, move and use my senses; caring for myself, for example, hygiene, sleep, exercise • Naming parts of the body (basic), developing an agreed language for our bodies • Being myself - I am unique, my self-esteem, self-confidence, independence, respect and caring for myself • Similarities and differences between myself and others, for example, uniqueness, fingerprints, gender issues, different rates of growth • An introduction to the stages of human development, changes as we grow, for example, baby, child, teenager, adult, mother/father, grandparents. • Recognising moods, feelings and concerns and developing a language and an appropriate manner of expressing them, for example, What do I do if I feel sad or angry? • Personal likes and dislikes.  
My Relationships • My family, special people in my life - what they do for me and what I do for them • Friendships - getting on with each other, for example, communicating, playing together, listening, co-operating and sharing • Ageing - how do we know that things are alive, dead, young and old • Loss and mourning - death of a person or a pet. (Note: the situations of the pupils should be taken into account prior to introducing this topic.) • Respect and caring for family members and friends, for example, caring for a new baby • Bullies and what to do about them • Personal safety - simple skills and practices to maintain personal safety • Realise that adults and older children are not always friends and the potential danger of relationships with strangers or acquaintances • Strategies which pupils might use to protect themselves from potentially dangerous situations  
My Community/Environment • Awareness of different types of families and the roles of individuals within families •

Keeping safe, for example, dangerous places, dangerous situations, the adults who will help, how to get help from others • Rules at home, at school and in the community • Respect and caring for people in the community, e.g. elderly people

Key Stage 2 Myself • My body, how it works and how to keep it healthy • The physical, social and emotional changes which occur during puberty (girls and boys) • Myself and my peers - Different rates of growth and physical development, maturity • Valuing and respecting myself, identifying personal strengths and weaknesses • Feelings, for example, things that make me happy, sad, excited, embarrassed, angry, scared • Expressing our feelings, showing love and affection • Gender roles • Making choices - the influences on me and the consequences of actions for oneself and others • Distinguishing between right and wrong • Secrets - knowing the difference between good and bad secrets, what to do about bad secrets My Relationships • Identifying the positive traits of friendship and their corresponding values • Differences and similarities in people; the need to respect other people's views, emotions and feelings • Families and how they behave. What family members expect of each other • The meaning of friendship and loyalty; making and maintaining friendships and social relationships, for example, identifying and understanding pressures and influences, taking account of other people's point of view • Handling difficult situations, for example, teasing, bullying, or death of a family member • The meaning of relationships within families, between friends and in the community • Behaviour - what constitutes appropriate and non-appropriate physical contact • Identifying dangers and risks within relationships • Being assertive in defending individual rights and beliefs • People who can help pupils when they have anxieties, concerns or questions My Community/Environment • Appreciation of the family in relation to the school and the wider community • Cultural differences in families and family relationships • Helping agencies which can support families and individuals in different circumstances • Messages and images about health, gender roles and sexuality from the media, family and peers

## **CONFIDENTIALITY IN THE CLASSROOM**

At Sacred Heart Primary School, we respect the child's right to privacy. A key rule to agree in advance of any discussion is that no one will be expected to ask or answer any personal questions. It is equally important that the teacher shares this right and never feels obliged to impart

information about his/her own personal life. However, as teachers, we should not promise confidentiality. A child does not have the right to expect that incidents in the classroom or in the wider context of the school will not be reported, as appropriate, to his or her parents and/or the Principal. Both pupils and parents should be informed that confidentiality cannot be maintained if:

- Physical or sexual abuse is suspected
- A child confides in a member of staff and requests that the information is kept secret. The child must be told, sensitively, that the matter must be reported.

The Principal or Designated Teacher must be informed of any disclosures which might suggest that a pupil is at risk and the appropriate agencies will be contacted.

Teachers can provide general educational advice to all pupils as part of the curriculum. This general advice can be given to pupils individually or within group situations. It is important that the type of advice and the manner in which it is given is supportive of the role of the parents. There will be occasions when teachers will have to exercise their discretion and judgment about how to deal with particular issues raised by an individual or by a group of pupils. An initial judgment will need to be made about whether or not it is appropriate to deal with the issues with the whole class. The teacher may wish to discuss the issues with the parents to see how they would like the matter to be handled. Teacher colleagues or the school nurse may be approached for advice. It may be appropriate to respond to the issues with individual pupils, or to arrange time for group discussion outside class time. In all cases, teachers should encourage pupils to discuss any issues and concerns they might have with their parents, if this is appropriate. The first concern of parents is likely to be for the safety and well-being of their children. It is important that if pupils cannot talk or do not wish to talk to their parents, they have access to support from sympathetic teachers at school.

## **ANSWERING PUPILS QUESTIONS**

As a school we may need to consider our responses to specific issues. Topics such as conception, birth, fertility, family planning, sexual orientation and HIV/AIDS are often part of the storyline of television programmes and it is therefore possible that older pupils will raise

questions about these issues. At Sacred Heart Primary School we encourage the use of a Worry Box, where pupils can place their questions anonymously at any time. This strategy gives teachers time to consider an appropriate depth of response and, if necessary, to consult with parents.

## **SUPPORTING THE NEEDS OF BOYS**

From an early age, boys and girls learn what is considered to be appropriate behaviour from the significant adults in their lives. However, sex education has tended to focus primarily on the concerns of girls. In order to redress this imbalance, it is important that within the RSE programme activities are included to allow boys to talk about their interests, concerns and feelings. Formal and informal opportunities can be used for pupils to explore attitudes, emotions, relationships, stereotyping and parenting from a male perspective. It is important to acknowledge that male and female perspectives may exist on issues and to respect the reasons for such differences. Sessions (with the relevant health professional if possible) will also be included to explain the physical and emotional changes at puberty to boys.

**This policy will be updated annually.**