



Relationships and Sexuality Policy

2020/2021

We in Woods Primary School view the development and implementation of a policy in Relationships and Sexuality (RSE) as an important step towards achieving our aim to develop all aspects of a child's personality and growth. The morals and values of our school Mission Statement are the core principles that underpin the teaching of RSE. Sexuality includes all aspects of the human person that relate to being male or female and is subject to change and development throughout life. It is a complex dimension of human life and relationships. As the learning process begins informally in the home we will endeavour to engage with parents regarding the aims, objectives and teaching programme of this policy and their views will be considered when implementing and reviewing the policy.

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 N.I. requirements and through consultation with parents/carers, staff, and governors and has been ratified by the Board of Governors.

The general aim of education is to contribute towards the development of all aspects of the individual, including the aesthetic, creative, critical, cultural, emotional, intellectual, moral, physical, political, social and spiritual development 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 (RSE Guidance for Primary Schools).

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

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 good RSE plays an integral part. It can have a positive effect on self-esteem. Schools can help to develop their pupils' 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. Pupils are encouraged to recognise their individual needs, to respect the needs and wants of others, and to develop the skills and self-esteem to become confident adolescents.

RSE in schools can increase 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 recognise prejudice and to respect the views, emotions and feelings of others.

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.'

TEACHING RSE SHOULD PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES THAT ENABLE PUPILS TO:

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

AIMS:**In Woods Primary School we aim to:**

- Develop a loving pride in one's family and religious beliefs.
- Promote an appreciation of the importance of the family unit (regardless of structure/composition).
- Enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of each child.
- Help the children to develop healthy and respectful friendships within the school and at home.
- Develop an understanding of how human relationships grow and deepen through friendship, love and affection.
- Promote responsible behaviour and the ability to make informed decisions
- Promote an appreciation of the value of human life and the wonder of birth.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:**The RSE curriculum should enable pupils to:**

- Develop knowledge and understanding of self.
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth.
- Develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well-being of others.
- Develop personal skills which help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships
- Understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and in wider contexts. Understand different family patterns.
- Acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction
- Develop strategies to make decisions, solve problems and implement actions in various contexts.
- Acquire and use an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development.
- Become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change.
- Develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making.
- Develop some coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse.

SKILLS:

The RSE curriculum should enable pupils to develop 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:

- Communication skills – putting one’s own views clearly and appropriately; listening to others’ points of view; handling and resolving conflict peacefully.
- Decision making and problem solving skills – for sensible and responsible choices; making moral judgements about what to do in actual situations.
- Inter–personal skills for managing relationships confidently and effectively; for developing as an effective group member or leader.
- Practical skills – for everyday living; for supporting others; for future parenting.

MORALS AND VALUES:

Pupils need opportunities to explore values and attitudes and to consider how they affect them, and others. **Children should be taught RSE within a framework which models and encourages the following values:**

- A respect for self.
- A respect for others.
- Non-exploitation in relationships
- Honesty with self and others.
- Self-discipline.
- The difference between right and wrong.
- The responsibility for ones’ own actions.
- The recognition of the moral dimension to situations.
- An understanding of the long term and short term consequences of their actions.

THE SCHOOL ETHOS

The ethos of Woods Primary School is founded on principles where 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.

At Woods Primary School teachers, parents and governors work together to develop each child spiritually, morally, intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically within our school ethos so that by realising their potential, they can maximise it and have an appreciation of self-worth and self-learning. This policy reflects the ethos of our school.

HOW WILL WE ACHIEVE OUR AIMS?

Children will learn on a day-to-day basis from the example set by adults:

- **At home:**
As first educators, parents are expected to lay the foundations for all acceptable patterns of behaviour, leading by example, and sharing with school the joint task of bringing the child through to the age of eleven with a balanced understanding of life and a healthy appreciation of the human relationships they form in years to come.
- **At school:**
 - ◆ The friendly school environment created by the staff in the building.

- ◆ The messages we give out to children through religious celebrations, assemblies, discussions, workshops, cross-community and shared education activities etc.
- ◆ The encouragement we give and the standards we uphold in terms of sportsmanship, fair play, accepting decisions, taking both winning and losing in the same spirit.
- ◆ The respect we have for and show to all members of our community.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN HOME, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

The effectiveness of this RSE Policy and its implementation is dependent upon a collaborative process involving staff members, parents/carers, Governors, volunteers and other educational and health professionals. Each of the partners has a distinctive contribution to make.

Keeping parents/carers informed about the school's provision for health education is a vital element of RSE. Parents/carers are invited to consider issues such as the readiness of children for aspects of the RSE programme, the appropriateness of resources, the content and methodologies proposed, and the handling of sensitive topics.

The delivery of RSE must prepare pupils to view relationships in a responsible and healthy manner and should be taught in harmony with the ethos of the school and reflect the school's moral and religious principles. The Department of Education Circulars providing advice on developing or reviewing the RSE policy is provided in:

- ◆ Circular 2001/15 Relationships and Sexuality Education;
- ◆ Circulars 2001/15a and 2001/15b);
- ◆ 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/.

LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES

Other relevant policies include:

- ◆ Teaching and Learning
- ◆ Child Protection/Safeguarding Children
- ◆ Pastoral Care
- ◆ Health Education
- ◆ Drugs
- ◆ PDMU
- ◆ Equality Policy
- ◆ E-Safety

RSE builds, in a developmentally appropriate way, on children's existing knowledge and experience of their bodies, relationships and the world around them. RSE and Health Education are complementary since both emphasise the development of a positive self-

image, and a respect for self and for others, as well as the provision of appropriate and accurate information.

The RSE programme will provide structured opportunities for pupils to learn about:

- ◆ themselves as unique human beings;
- ◆ their spiritual, social, emotional and physical growth;
- ◆ their friendships and relationships with others; and
- ◆ the various changes that occur as they progress towards adolescence and adulthood, particularly the emotional and physical changes which occur at puberty.

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.

ROLES 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.
- ◆ 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.

CONTENT OF RSE

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. The programme will be delivered through PDMU (see related scheme for content), RE, WAU and the Arts. Pupils will also have the opportunity to provide feedback about the content of the programme of RSE delivered by the school so that it can be responsive to their needs. In Woods Primary School this will be done through consultation with the Primary 6 and 7 members of the Pupil Council and Eco Committee.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Generally, RSE will be covered in mixed groups, so that pupils are encouraged to work with each other and gain an understanding of each other's perspectives. All activities will be

available to all members of the school community. However, there will be times that teachers or the school nurse will work with single gender groups e.g. P6/7 puberty and growth programme exploring physical and emotional changes. Only children with written parental/carer consent will receive this talk. The programme of RSE delivered will be accessible to all pupils regardless of age, culture, disability, sexual orientation, gender or social class.

SELECTION OF TEACHING RESOURCES

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;
- ◆ encouraging consideration of a range of issues, attitudes and beliefs pertinent to the topics covered;

TEACHING RSE – THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

In Woods 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 to 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.

Important considerations are the:

- ◆ degree of trust, respect and positive regard for pupils;
- ◆ relationships between the teacher and pupils, and between the pupils themselves;
- ◆ need for clear expectations, goals and learning objectives;

- ◆ use of teaching and learning methods which involve pupils actively in their own learning and encourage the consideration of attitudes and values and the ability to make informed and healthy decisions; and
- ◆ need to be aware and take account of the current youth culture.

TERMINOLOGY

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

FAMILY STATUS

Pupils will be encouraged to appreciate the value of family life. We acknowledge the different family units that are represented in school and will endeavour to treat all situations sensitively.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND CHILD PROTECTION/SAFEGUARDING

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Where there is disclosure by a child of abuse, Child Protection/Safeguarding Children procedures will be implemented.

The classroom is an open environment and confidentiality cannot be maintained. Therefore, staff and pupils are not encouraged to talk about their personal relationships or experiences during class discussions.

The child's right to privacy must be respected at all times by both the teacher and all other pupils in the class. 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:

- ◆ teachers cannot 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/carers and/or the principal. **(Refer to our Safeguarding Policy).**
- ◆ the principal or designated teacher for Child Protection/Safeguarding Children Policy must be informed of any disclosures which might suggest that a pupil is at risk or that physical or sexual abuse is suspected. If 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 to the appropriate agencies. Decisions can then be taken in accordance with the procedures detailed in the school's Safeguarding Policy.
- ◆ there will be occasions when teachers will have to exercise their discretion and judgement about how to deal with particular issues raised by an individual or by a

group of pupils. An initial judgement 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/carers to see how they would like the matter to be handled. Teacher colleagues or a member of the school's Leadership Team/Safeguarding Team might also provide useful guidance. 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/carers;

- ◆ teachers are not medical professionals and will not give detailed personal medical advice to any pupil. Only doctors and health professionals should give medical advice to pupils;
- ◆ Teachers should encourage young people, where possible, to discuss their concerns with parents/carers.

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.

SACREDNESS OF LIFE

The value of human life and the uniqueness of each individual will be at the heart of RSE teaching.

SPECIFIC TOPICS

There will be no direct teaching of issues such as homosexuality, sexually transmitted infections, contraception etc. However, if these issues are raised by pupils, the teachers will address them sensitively.

USE OF VISITORS

Where appropriate, we may use the skills and expertise of outside agencies and professionals. Where this occurs, the school will be satisfied that contributions from informed outsiders are an integral part of the whole programme and in harmony with the aims and ethos of the school.

STAFF TRAINING

Training needs will be considered and will be accessed using the Education Authority, Public Health Agency and/or other appropriate health agencies. Where outside Agencies are used for training purposes, their remit will be clear and will reflect the ethos of the school.

MONITORING REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF THIS POLICY

This policy will be reviewed every three years or as required. Any changes in provision or policy will be relayed appropriately. The review process will be assisted by the information from teachers, which will have been gained through the teaching situation. Feedback from parents, governors, outside agencies and pupils will also impinge on the process. Necessary changes in policy will be implemented.

Reviewed: June 2021

Signed: _____

Chairperson Board of Governors

Principal: 