



# Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

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The Education (Curriculum Minimum Content) Order 2007 (Northern Ireland) provides for the statutory minimum content that must be taught in all schools from Foundation to Key Stage 4 as part of the revised curriculum<sup>2</sup>. The 2007 Order describes the revised curriculum as a balanced and broadly based curriculum which:

- (a) Promotes the spiritual, emotional, moral, cultural, intellectual and physical development of pupils at the school and thereby of society; and prepares such pupils for the opportunities,
- (b) Responsibilities and experiences of life by equipping them with the appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) forms a strand of the 'Personal Development' area of learning through the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PD&MU) area of learning at primary level.

New guidance was published in August 2015 by CCEA - Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance - An Update for Primary Schools. Landhead Primary School will follow the updated guidance.

### RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION IN THE N.I. CONTEXT

RSE is not a new area of the curriculum. The framework for sex education was initially established by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DENI) in a Guidance Circular 1987/45. The main recommendation of this Circular was that each school should have a written policy on sex education which is endorsed by staff and governors and communicated to parents. It also stated

*“sex education should be taught in a sensitive manner which is in harmony with the ethos of the school and in conformity with the moral and religious principles held by parents and school management authorities”*

The Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 further set out the legislative basis, requiring all grant aided schools to offer a curriculum which:

- promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, intellectual and physical development of pupils at the school and thereby of society ...and...
- prepares such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life

The general principles which underpin our work are those set out in Departmental guidance and the following Circulars:

Circular 2001/15: Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Circular 2001/15-2: Guidance for Primary Schools - Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Circular 2010/01: Guidance on Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Circular 2013/16: Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy in Schools

Circular 2015/22: Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Guidance

We further recognise the importance of working in partnership with parents/carers in this area of personal development and acknowledge the contribution that can be made by outside agencies with skill and expertise in particular areas of the curriculum (NSPCC, Women's Aid and School Nursing Service).

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. The learning process begins informally with our parents (or those holding parental responsibility) long before any formal education takes place at school.

RSE is included on a statutory basis within the NI curriculum through PDMU, Health Education, the World around Us and Religious Education. Health Education is taught mainly through the medium of PDMU in the Personal Understanding and Health strand. In RSE all pupils will be taught in an atmosphere of mutual respect. The value of a stable family life, marriage and the responsibilities of parenthood will be presented. As they mature, pupils will be encouraged to appreciate the importance of self-discipline, dignity, respect for themselves and others. Through PDMU and the World Around Us children will learn about changes in their bodies as they grow older and, in Y7, will be given the opportunity for a talk about puberty to prepare them fully for post-primary schools and the emotional and physical changes they may expect to experience over the next few years.

Teaching at all times will be appropriate to the maturity and level of understanding of the pupils concerned. Teachers will be aware of, and take into account, the variety of existing pupil knowledge, the different attitudes and beliefs and the pupil's capacity to understand the 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, in a more general way, the aptitude for forming relationships with others. It is a complex dimension of human life and relationships.

Teaching RSE should provide opportunities which enable pupils:

- to form values and establish behaviour within a moral, spiritual and social framework;

- to examine and explore the various relationships in their personal lives;
- 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.

### AIMS

The aims of RSE are to:

- Enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child;
- Help the child develop healthy and respectful friendships and relationships;
- 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 and marriage;
- Appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood;
- Promote an appreciation of the value of human life and the wonder of birth.

RSE in our school is part of the personal, social and health education. This is integrated within the wider school curriculum and complements and overlaps with the general ethos and life of the school.

To provide a planned, age appropriate scheme of work, designed to capitalise on the fascination and interest that children have about themselves, their own growth and development and to offer reassurance that such changes are normal and natural.

In planning and presenting our RSE we provide the opportunity for pupils to express themselves within a trusted and safe environment, following agreed ground rules. We want to reassure children of their value and self-worth including aspects of dignity, self-respect and self-restraint, help them to have a responsible attitude towards personal relationships including mutual respect and care and to develop sensitivity towards the needs of others, provide knowledge of loving relationships and human reproductive process.

We aim to inform children on matters of personal hygiene and related health issues, encourage exploration of values and moral issues taking into account physical and moral risks associated with certain behaviour, educate against discrimination and prejudice and help prepare children to make informed choices about relationships.

We aim to:

- Raise and promote positive self esteem
- Help pupils develop their skills and confidence in making decisions, communication, assertiveness, self-expression, respect for self and others
- Help pupils communicate and understand their feelings and emotions
- Provide pupils with skills necessary to keep themselves happy and safe
- Prepare pupils for the physical and emotional changes of growing up
- Offer opportunity for pupils to develop and clarify their attitudes and values
- Counteract myths and misinformation
- Challenge media stereotypes, oppression and prejudice and promote equal opportunities
- Explain the meaning of words in a sensible and factual way, using correct names
- Provide reassurance that change is part of the lifecycle and help pupils accept variations
- Raise awareness of sources of help, support and advice

We teach children, in an age appropriate way, about:

- The physical development of their bodies as they grow into adults, reassuring them that such changes are normal and the correct terminology for body parts ;
- The need to discuss RSE issues, at home or school, without embarrassment;
- Counteracting misleading or false information and challenging sexism or prejudice;
- The way humans reproduce;
- Respect for their own bodies and the importance of sexual activity as part of a committed, long-term, and loving relationship;
- The importance of family life and proper care of all young creatures;
- Moral questions;
- Relationship issues, including issues of self-esteem and assertiveness;
- Equal opportunity issues;
- Exploring attitudes and emotions;
- Respect for the views of other people;
- Sex abuse and what they should do if they are worried about any sexual matters.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The RSE curriculum should enable pupils to:

- acquire and 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;

- understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and in wider contexts;
- develop an awareness of differing family patterns;
- develop strategies to make decisions, solve problems, and implement actions in various personal, social and health contexts;
- become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change and understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity;
- develop personal skills which will help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships;
- develop some coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse;
- acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction;
- acquire and use an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality (including homosexuality and transgender issues that arise), growth and development;
- develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making.

### SKILLS

The RSE curriculum should enable 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 judgements about what to do in actual situations and putting these judgements 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.

## MORALS AND VALUES

RSE should enable pupils to clarify what they believe and why they believe it and develop a respect for and interest in the beliefs of others. Pupils need opportunities to explore values and attitudes and to consider how they, and others, are affected by them.

The importance of a moral framework is emphasised in the DfEE Circular No 5/1994 Education Act 1993 : Sex Education in Schools:

*“Sex education . . . must not be value free; it should also be tailored not only to the age but also to the understanding of pupils. School’s programmes of sex education should therefore aim to present facts in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner, set within a clear framework of values and an awareness of the law on sexual behaviour. Pupils should accordingly be encouraged to appreciate the value of stable family life, marriage and the responsibilities of parenthood. They should be helped to consider the importance of self-restraint, dignity, respect for themselves and others, acceptance of responsibility, sensitivity towards the needs and views of others, loyalty and fidelity. And they should be enabled to recognise the physical, emotional and moral implications, and risks, of certain types of behaviour, and to accept that both sexes must behave responsibly in sexual matters”. Teachers are reminded: “to acknowledge that many children come from backgrounds that do not reflect such values and experiences. Sensitivity is therefore needed to avoid causing hurt and offence to them and their families, and to allow such children a sense of worth”.*  
(Paragraph 8)

## OTHER RELEVANT POLICIES

This policy complements and supports a range of other school policies including:

- Positive Behaviour/Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Use of Reasonable Force
- Special Educational Needs
- Health and Safety Policy
- Use of Mobile Phones/Cameras
- ICT and access to the internet
- Intimate Care



## SPECIAL NEEDS

It is particularly important for teaching staff to be aware of the fact that physical development may outstrip emotional maturity in the case of pupils with Special Needs and to accommodate this disparity in class lessons and experiences.

## WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

It is our belief that RSE is the responsibility of all staff and should be an integral part of the teaching and learning process in order to prepare children to cope with the physical and emotional challenges of growing up and give them an

understanding of human reproduction. It should be provided for all children including those with physical, emotional or learning difficulties. We believe it should encourage the exploration of values and moral issues, along with considerations of sexuality, sexual health and relationships. It should develop decision-making and communication skills, foster self-esteem, self-awareness and respect for oneself and others.

Questions will be responded to as they arise in a straightforward way, giving simple and correct information, using correct terminology for body parts and functions appropriate to the age of the child. This includes questions in sensitive areas, such as HIV, AIDS and abortion which may arise during the work undertaken through schemes of work.

School staff have the right not to feel under pressure to answer difficult questions on the spot and will use distancing techniques and allowing time for discussion about the most appropriate way to answer. Any concerns arising related to a child or any indications that a child or children are at risk of harm or in danger will be discussed with the Principal or DT lead in accordance with the Child Protection Policy.

### EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

At Landhead Primary School the notion of equality of opportunity is highly valued. RSE should offer children the opportunity to clarify and develop their attitudes and values relating to:

- gender roles
- stereotyping

Taking into account the following equality issues:

- Sex, race and culture, disability, ability e.g. differentiation, religion and sexual orientation.

RSE education may help to counteract certain assumptions and influences in society such as:

- females being more passive than males;
- women always being the homemaker;
- men always working as the “breadwinner”
- males being aggressive and dominant.



## DELIVERING THE RSE PROGRAMME

The following includes extracts from the N.I. Primary Curriculum - Personal Development and Mutual Understanding  
Strand - Personal Understanding and Health

### FOUNDATION STAGE

Self-Awareness - Exploring who they are, what they can do, identifying favourite things, what makes them special

Feelings and Emotions

- beginning to recognise how they feel
- knowing what to do if sad or lonely, afraid or angry
- telling others about feelings
- realising what makes people sad or unhappy, recognising how people feel

Health and Safety

- Being aware of caring for his/her own body
- recognising good hygiene practices
- understanding growth and change
- exploring appropriate personal safety strategies, road safety,
- medicines and drugs -safety rules

### KEY STAGE 1

Self-Awareness

- Feeling positive about oneself
- awareness of own strengths, abilities, qualities, personal preferences
- recognising own feelings and emotions
- recognising and managing the effects of strong feelings – anger, sadness, loss
- acknowledging that everyone makes mistakes
- recognising how they can develop and improve learning

Health, Growth and Change

- Recognising and valuing the options for a healthy lifestyle
- having respect for their bodies and those of others
- being aware of the stages of human growth and development
- recognising how responsibilities and relationships change as you grow older
- understanding medicines and drugs
- understanding that, if not used properly, all products can be dangerous
- being aware that some diseases are infectious and some can be controlled

## KEY STAGE 2

### Self-Awareness

- developing self-awareness, self-respect and self-esteem
- confidently express own views and opinions
- identify current strengths and weaknesses
- face problems and try to resolve them
- examine and explore own and others' feelings and emotions
- recognise, express and manage feelings in a positive and safe way
- develop insight into potential and capabilities
- reflect on progress and set goals
- identify and practise effective learning strategies
- be aware of different learning styles
- Health, Growth and Change
- understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle
- recognise what shapes positive mental health
- know about the harmful effects of tobacco, alcohol and other illicit and illegal substances
- understand that bacteria and viruses affect health and know that basic routines can be followed to minimise risks
- know how the body grows and develops
- be aware of physical and emotional changes that take place during puberty (Y7 only)
- be aware of the skills and importance of good parenting
- recognise how responsibilities change as they become older and more independent

### Keeping Safe

- develop strategies to resist peer pressure
- recognise the nature of bullying and the harm which can result
- become aware of the potential danger from strangers and how their attention can make you uncomfortable
- recognise appropriate road use
- develop a pro-active and responsible approach to safety – at home, near water, on the internet, TV etc.
- know where, when and how to seek help
- being aware of basic emergency procedures and first aid (Y7 Heartstart)

Opportunities will arise in other areas of the curriculum, including WAU (Science) and PE.

## HOME/SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

Children are exposed to information and messages from TV, Internet, film, music videos, books and magazines. They are influenced by family and friends and significant adults. Part of our role is to ensure that children are able to understand and not misinterpret the information they acquire and to provide contexts where they are able to consider and evaluate the information they receive.

We believe that parents have the primary role in delivering relationship and sex education. It is hoped that the school curriculum and the ethos of the school complements and enhances home teaching and values, giving due regard to the value of family life, loving and stable relationships. We provide parents with opportunities to discuss the school's policy and practice. Parents will be informed about the timing of the delivery and offered an opportunity to look at resources. Parents are encouraged to discuss and ask questions.

Parents should make it clear which aspect of the programme they do not wish their child to participate in and put this in writing. Resources and information regarding further support and help will be made available. Any parents with concerns about this policy should discuss this directly with the Principal.

If parents have any cause for concern about the RSE Policy they will be asked to come into school to resolve the problem. In the unlikely event that the concern cannot be dealt with, the Governors can be contacted through the parent representatives.

## MONITORING, EVALUATING AND REVIEWING THE RSE POLICY

Landhead staff are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this policy. The RSE Policy will be reviewed and updated as necessary every 2 years.

Specifically important to the RSE Programme are:

- Pupil feedback
- Staff review and feedback
- Parental feedback
- Further Departmental guidance and legislative changes

