

# MAGHERAFELT PRIMARY SCHOOL



## Relationships and Sexual Education Policy

# Relationships and Sexual Education (RSE) 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 takes account of

- **DE Circular 2001/15 "Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)"**,
- **DE Circulars 2001/15a, 2001/15b** (and its addendum 2010/01)
- **DE Circulars 2013/16 and 2015/22**

The overall aim of education is to contribute towards the development of all aspects of the individual child, 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 a part of this general aim. This policy has taken the above into account and has been written and agreed through consultation with parents/carers, staff and governors.

Effective RSE is essential if children are to value themselves as individuals and have the skills to make responsible and well-informed decisions about their lives. RSE in primary schools should provide children with opportunities to:

- value themselves as unique individuals;
- respect themselves and others;
- begin to develop their own moral thinking and value systems;
- learn about friendships, healthy relationships and behaviours with others;
- recognise and communicate their feelings and emotions and those of others;
- learn about the changes that occur as they progress towards adolescence, particularly the emotional and physical changes at puberty;
- learn about keeping themselves safe and know what to do or who to go to if they feel unsafe.

## **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 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.

## **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 ways in which individuals grow and change and understand that their development 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, growth and development;
- develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision-making.

The aims and objectives of the RSE Policy should also be reflective of our school ethos and aims as outlined below.

## **The School Ethos**

The ethos of our school is founded on principles where tolerance and respect for others is paramount. It is our aim that everyone feels valued and our pupils are encouraged to develop their full potential in a caring and supportive environment.

## **The School Aims**

- To promote the intellectual, spiritual, moral, cultural and physical development of our pupils.
- To provide a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum for each pupil.
- To encourage pupils to develop a positive attitude to learning.
- To encourage pupils' independent endeavour through the development of lively, inquiring minds and confident application to tasks.
- To provide pupils with a range of worthwhile experiences to assist all areas of learning and having developed appropriate skills, find enjoyment in their participation and thereby fulfil their potential.
- To foster a development of a personal Christian faith.
- To enable pupils to appreciate their environment, both in the school context and the wider community.
- To encourage pupils to develop habits of self-discipline and acceptable behaviour, to have respect for the opinions of others and consequently acquire the capacity to become contributory members of the community, both in school and beyond it.
- To prepare pupils for their teenage years and adult life, at home, in the workplace and at leisure, as co-operative and useful members of the local community and society in general.

## 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 and 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 and 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 and 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 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;
- commitment, trust and bonding within relationships;
- mutuality in relationships;
- honesty with self and others;
- a development of critical self-awareness for themselves and others;
- an exploration of the rights, duties and responsibilities involved in relationships;
- compassion, forgiveness, mercy and care when people do not conform to their way of life;
- self-discipline.

## **Relationships Between Home, School and Community**

The effectiveness of this policy and its implementation is dependent on a collaborative process involving teachers, parents/carers, governors and other educational and health professionals. Each of the partners has distinctive contributions to make.

Keeping parents/carers informed about the school's provision for health education is a vital element of RSE. Informal sessions may then be arranged so that interested parents/carers could 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 moral and religious principles.

## **Links To Other Policies**

- Teaching and Learning
- Child Protection/Safeguarding Children
- Pastoral Care
- Personal Development & Mutual Understanding

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

- The Board of Governors examines and ratifies the school's RSE Policy.
- The Principal and Senior Management Team co-ordinate 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.

## **Curriculum Organisation and Delivery**

The following outline teaching programme illustrates the topics covered through the delivery of the Northern Ireland Curriculum in our school. Many of the aspects included below are also part of the Health Education Curriculum, PDMU, RE, the World Around Us, PE, Drama or in reaction to specific situations. Content and themes may be repeated at regular intervals. The sequence in which ideas are presented below is not intended to imply a teaching order

## **Foundation Stage and 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.
- The difference between good and bad touches.
- Realise that adults and older children are not always friends; 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 that 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 - for example, occupations and roles within the home
- 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, 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.
- Coping strategies in relation to messages and images about health, gender roles and sexuality from the media, family and peers.

## 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 ethos, aims, 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.

## The Classroom Environment

In Magherafelt 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;
- the 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.

## **Specific Issues**

### **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 Children**

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 Child Protection/Safeguarding Children 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 Child Protection/Safeguarding Children Policy.
- 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/carers.
- 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 Senior Management 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 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 discourage withdrawal. The school will, however, take account of parent/carer concerns.

## **Specific Issues**

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

## **Use of Outside Agencies**

Where appropriate, we may use the skills and expertise of outside agencies and professionals, for example the school nurse, NSPCC. 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 EA, 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.

## Policy Review

The RSE policy will be evaluated by the Board of Governors Pastoral Care Team.  
The Pastoral Care Team consists of:

Mrs Gillian Hatrick  
Mrs Donna Field  
Mrs Denise Doherty  
Mrs Lynsey Wilson

- The Pastoral Care / Safeguarding Team will review this policy annually or as appropriate in light of new guidance/legislation.
- The policy is approved by the Board of Governors.

Chair of Governors		Date	
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Principal		Date	
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