



Straidhavern Primary School

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

Date reviewed	April 2022
Date ratified by Governors	May 2022
Next review due	April 2024

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.

Relationships and Sexuality Education is an integral part of the Northern Ireland Curriculum in both primary and post-primary schools 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.'

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.

THE SCHOOL ETHOS

The ethos of our school will reflect Christian principles. We will also be directed by the RSE guidelines. It is our intention that everyone feels valued and our pupils are encouraged to develop their full potential in a caring and supportive environment.

This policy reflects the ethos of our school. We firmly believe that our pupils should have opportunities to develop as well-rounded individuals in an environment that is conducive to their intellectual, physical, social and emotional development. The school operates in a safe, family atmosphere, with pupils supporting each other both at work and at play in an environment that is both caring and stimulating.

RATIONALE

Straidhavern Primary School is committed to the education of children regardless of race, religion, gender or status. All pupils have a right to an education which adequately prepares them for adult life, and RSE plays an integral part.

In the Northern Ireland Primary School Curriculum, one of the areas of learning is Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU). An integral part of the PDMU curriculum is the provision of RSE. Pupils will be given opportunities to explore values and attitudes, and to consider how they affect others. Pupils are encouraged to recognise their individual needs to respecting the needs and wants of others.

RSE is a lifelong process that involves the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills and the development of attitudes, beliefs, morals and values.

AIMS

The aims of RSE are:

1. To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child
2. To help the child develop healthy and respectful and meaningful friendships and relationships with parents, siblings, teachers and peers, and to appreciate the responsibilities of relationships between family and friends
3. To foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, social and spiritual framework
4. To promote responsible behaviour, to develop a respect for their own and other people's bodies, and to be able to make informed decisions about their lives.
5. To understand the influences of peers and the media on one's own values and to develop skills to resist detrimental peer and media pressure.
6. To develop skills in recognising and protecting themselves from abuse
7. To promote an appreciation of the value of human life and the wonder of birth.
8. To help the child prepare for adult life by encouraging them to value family life and marriage.

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.

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 may include the physical and emotional changes that occur at puberty but will not include sex education. There will be no direct teaching of issues not covered by NI Curriculum. However, if such issues are raised by pupils, the teachers will address them sensitively.

An RSE programme should 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.

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

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.

TERMINOLOGY

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

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 affect them, and others.

Children should be taught RSE within a framework which models and encourages the following values:

1. a respect for self
2. a respect for others
3. non-exploitation in relationships
4. commitment, trust and bonding within relationships
5. mutuality in relationships
6. honesty with self and others
7. a development of critical self-awareness for themselves and others
8. an exploration of the rights, duties and responsibilities involved in relationships
9. compassion, forgiveness, mercy and care when people do not conform to their way of life
10. self-discipline.

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 Policy).
- the principal or deputy 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 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 encourage young people, where possible, to discuss their concerns with parents/carers.

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 deliver the school's RSE programme within the context of the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

HOME/SCHOOL LINKS

- 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.
- 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, reflecting the morals and values of the school.

LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES

RSE and a range of pastoral care policies, such as safeguarding and pastoral care policies are complementary since they 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.

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
- Circular 2015/22 Relationships and Sexuality Education

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

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE RSE POLICY

The RSE policy will be monitored and evaluated by the Principal.

The Policy will be reviewed on a regular basis or as appropriate in light of new guidance/legislation.

The policy is approved by the Board of Governors.

Policy Date: April 2022

Signature of Principal:



Signature of Chairperson of Board of Governors:

Review Date: April 2022