

St. Brigid's Primary School, Tirkane / Bunscoil Naomh Bríd



Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Chairperson of the Board of Governors)

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Principal)

St. Brigid's Primary School, Tirkane / Bunscoil Naomh Bríd will be a welcoming, child centred school and a community of good practice, where all feel valued and inspired. Our excellent staff will collaborate to meet the aspirations of our pupils through high quality learning and teaching. We will work in partnership with our parents, parish and community to meet the needs of our children in this rapidly changing global society. Our Catholic ethos, pastoral care and family atmosphere will permeate every aspect of school life to ensure the well-being and safety of every child. We will endeavour to support each child to reach their full potential"

We believe that each pupil is entitled to experience a school climate in which the quality of relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils themselves, is marked by honesty, personal identification, warmth, trust and security. We recognise that Education in Personal Relationships and Sex Education is a shared responsibility between home and school and is based on a scheme that all are comfortable to use:

- the parent in the home environment
- the teacher in the classroom
- and the child in both.

"The vision, the values, the human and Christian virtues, the revealed truths and the lived tradition which go to make up the Christian understanding of life cannot be taught without reference to sexuality and procreation and the responsible, respectful and loving use of these gifts of God."

(Episcopal Commission for Catechetics)

Principles Underpinning Relationships and Sexuality Education:

- The school should be seeking to communicate the Christian vision of human life and human relationships
- The school must recognise its role in this area as subsidiary to that of the parents
- The Catholic school should reflect Catholic moral teaching on sexual matters
- The dignity, privacy and modesty of each individual child must always be respected

- The sanctity of human life
- Sexuality is a gift from God
- Relationships should be based on love and self-giving
- The virtues of modesty and chastity
- The forming of conscience
- The values of respect, trust, honesty and compassion
- The importance of personal responsibility
- The importance of commitment/marriage and the family
- The value of abstinence outside marriage
- The importance of personal safety and the dangers of abuse

Statutory Obligation

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
- 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

Sept 2015: CCEA - Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance: An Update for Primary Schools

Within St. Brigid's Primary School, Tirkane / Bunscoil Naomh Bríd, RSE will be taught with Christian and Catholic values at the core and so will be taught through Religious Education and PDMU. 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 (e.g. Derry Diocesan Catechetical Centre/ NSPCC).

Rationale

Ethos statement

At St. Brigid's Primary School, Tirkane / Bunscoil Naomh Bríd Christ is at the foundation of our whole educational enterprise. We develop attitudes and values based firmly on the Gospel. We seek to develop each child spiritually, morally, intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically in order that they may realize their full potential and have an appreciation of their self – worth.

Given the current media climate and culture, where children have the opportunity to be misinformed about sexuality, RSE has been introduced. Through RSE and other relevant areas of the curriculum, we endeavour to equip, inform and prepare children for life in a moral and spiritual context, enabling them to make positive responsible choices about themselves and the way they live their lives.

Methodology/Approach

RSE taught through Religious Education and linked with other subject areas such as PDMU, WAU and PE addresses the current trends in relations and sexuality, albeit in a progressive and sensitive manner according to the age of the children.

The DENI Circular 2001 states that RSE is included on a statutory basis within the NI Curriculum, particularly through Health Education and Science and other spheres of influence. RSE must be taught in harmony with the ethos and values of the school. RSE is not value free and has family and marriage at its heart. Our RSE policy and programme links up with our school's Child Protection policy, our suite of Pastoral Care policies as well as other relevant documentation from DE, CCEA and the Derry Catechetical Centre.

Definitions

Relationships and Sexuality Education

As the title suggests there is an intricate entwining between relationships and sexuality, which is a life long process. The process involves the whole person in terms of belief, corresponding values and relationships in the personal and social domain. Skills, attitudes and parental influence are crucial. Sexuality impacts upon the physical, spiritual, social, psychological and cultural aspects of the human person. This gift of sexuality shapes and crafts relationships through the qualities of love, respect and future new life.

Sexuality in its essence is a gift from God. Our gift of sexuality calls us into a relationship with Christ, encompassing the whole person. We have a sense of belonging and identity particularly in our connectedness to others, the world, God and ourselves. Faith colours and influences our sexuality so we can interpret our relationships in and through Christ.

Morals: is essentially linked with behaviour and what we actually do. It is also directly connected with experience and faith.

Ethic(s): refers to a systematic structure such as the 'Christian Tradition', which provides a particular lifestyle with corresponding and inherent values.

Value: The characteristics of good moral behaviour e. g. respect for self, honesty with self and others.

Personal: Morality by its nature is personal but also public or social. It is about what we do every day and through example. The ethos of the school is concerned and caught up in the morality Christ presents.

Aims

- To help young people recognise their worth and dignity as children of God and to celebrate their own uniqueness.
- To help young people celebrate the God-given gift and sanctity of life.
- To help young people to appreciate their uniqueness and full potential as human beings.
- To enable young people to understand that love is the central basis of all relationships.
- To help young people become more confident in listening and talking about relationships and come to value family life and marriage.
- To help young people to grow in their understanding of how to develop, nurture and sustain relationships thereby building up God's Kingdom here on earth.
- To encourage and promote a deep respect for women and men within the context of the school among staff, pupils and parents.
- To enable young people to appreciate sexuality as a gift from God.
- To know by name, the various parts of the human body.
- To help young people recognise, understand and prepare for the body changes that they (and their friends) will undergo in the years ahead (puberty).
- To help pupils develop healthy lifestyles and learn how to keep themselves safe and to ask for help or advice when needed.
- To foster the growth of values which impact on moral behaviour.
- To develop a respect for difference, gender and race.
- To promote an appreciation of the value of human life, the wonder of birth and the responsibilities of parenthood.

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;
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- 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, 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.

Confidentiality and Child Protection/safeguarding Children (in keeping with school policy and legal obligation) is paramount. Links to other Policies-Religious Education, Pastoral Care, Anti-Bullying, Health Education, Teaching and Learning will be utilised. Links to relevant Department of Education legislation/guidelines/circulars etc. will be made.

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.

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

- Religious Education
- Positive Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Use of Reasonable Force/Safe Handling
- Special Educational Needs
- First Aid and the Administration of Medicines
- Health and Safety Policy
- Use of Mobile Phones/Cameras
- ICT and access to the internet
- Intimate Care
- PDMU

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.

DELIVERING THE RSE PROGRAMME

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

Religious Education

- Life is a gift from God (Catechism of the Catholic Church CC 2260).
- Stories which help children distinguish right from wrong and help children to make moral judgements about situations.
- Moral values such as sharing, caring, love, forgiveness and friendship.
- The importance of family and care of the earth.

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 Key
- 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

Religious Education

- My family is a gift from God.
- Christians respect their bodies and the bodies of others because they were created by God (CCC 364; CSRE 3a).
- The importance of looking after ourselves physically, emotionally and spiritually.

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 ABC for Life)

Religious Education

- The importance of looking after ourselves physically, emotionally and spiritually.
- Life is precious and God-given.

Withdrawal from class and supervision

The DENI circular 2001 clearly stipulates the right to withdraw from RE and children can be withdrawn from class by parents over the area of RSE, particularly if taught through RE. This may mean the child going to another class or supervised area for the duration of the lesson.

Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the RSE Policy:

Policy will be disseminated to parents and staff following ratification and biennial reviews. St. Brigid's Primary School / Bunscoil Naomh Bríd staff are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this policy. Specifically, important to the RSE Programme are:

- Religious sensitivity within our Catholic School Ethos in St. Brigid's Primary School/ Bunscoil Naomh Bríd
- pupil feedback
- staff review and feedback
- parental feedback
- further Departmental guidance and legislative changes