



**STRATHEARN SCHOOL**

**RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY  
EDUCATION POLICY**

Revised May 2007

# **RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION POLICY**

## **1 Introduction**

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a lifelong process, which encompasses the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills, the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about personal and social relationships and gender issues.

Sexuality includes all aspects of the human personality and has biological, cultural, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions. RSE is delivered in Strathearn in keeping with the ethos of the school and in furthering the school aim of respecting self and others.

## **2 Legislative context for RSE**

In 2001 the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) disseminated teacher guidance material on relationships and sexuality education for primary and post primary schools. In August 2001 the Department of Education issued Circular 2001/15 Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) to support the guidance materials. The circular states that:

*“The Department considers that every school should have a policy setting out how the school will address relationships and sexuality education within each pupil’s curriculum. The policy should be the subject of consultation with parents, and should be endorsed by the school’s Board of Governors. All teachers, whether or not they are centrally involved in teaching the programme should be aware of its details and their implications.”*

There is no statutory parental right to withdraw a pupil from RSE classes. The school, however, is willing to take account of any parental concerns expressed to it and will try, as far as possible, to make alternative provision for any pupil whose parent wishes her to be excused from particular, or all, RSE classes.

### **3 The Moral Framework of the Policy**

RSE is taught in a sensitive manner in conformity with traditional moral and religious principles.

Emphasis is placed on:

- The importance of permanent loving relationships;
- The responsibility of parenthood and the value of a stable family life;
- The deferment of sexual activity until young people are physically and emotionally mature;
- Abstinence as an achievable option.

Strathearn recognises that young people live in a diverse range of cultures, religions and family types. We recognise that our pupils have the right to be treated with respect and dignity regardless of their class, sexuality, culture, religion and gender. We are committed to an RSE programme which at all times will reflect the diversity and complexity of the lives and experiences of our pupils in our school and our community.

Strathearn also recognises that at times there may be conflict between the different value systems and at all times, whilst respecting difference, the staff will uphold the aims and policies of the school.

### **4 Aims and Objectives of the RSE curriculum**

*The aims and objectives of RSE are to;*

- Enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the pupils
- Acquire and develop a knowledge and understanding of self
- Help the pupils develop healthy and respectful friendships and relationships
- Promote responsible behaviour and the ability to make informed decisions within a moral framework
- Develop coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse
- Develop personal skills which will help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships
- Acquire a knowledge of the causes and prevention of sexually transmitted infections
- Acquire and improve skills of communication and social interactions
- Develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyle and decision making
- Develop skills for coping with peer pressure, conflict and threats to personal safety.

The provision of RSE is an equal opportunity issue. All pupils in Strathearn School will receive adequate preparation for the emotional and physical changes at puberty and beyond. Pupils with Special Educational Needs have the same needs as all pupils, however, the

programme will be tailored to the pupils' needs in terms of content, methodology and the resources used, if required.

## **5 Confidentiality**

There is no statutory legislation relating specifically to confidentiality. Strathearn School recognises that pupils need and expect a certain level of confidentiality, but as we have responsibility for the welfare and safety of our pupils within the school environment, it is not always possible to offer confidentiality. It is essential that at all times confidentiality operates within the boundaries of the school's Child Protection Policy and the Children's (Northern Ireland) order 1995. All teaching staff must follow the following procedures:

- Confidentiality must be discussed with pupils before beginning an RSE programme. Ground rules should be agreed with pupils.
- Pupils should be informed that there are instances when confidentiality cannot be held (for example in cases of suspected abuse). Pupils should be fully informed of action that will be taken.
- Pupils must be fully aware that they have the right to report inappropriate attitudes and/or behaviour by any member of the school personnel.
- Where teachers are unsure when confidentiality should not be maintained they should in the first instance consult with the designated teacher, Mrs Graham.

## **6 Development of Skills**

The RSE curriculum is designed to enable pupils to learn and to practise the skills necessary to form and maintain relationships and to make informed choices regarding health and well being. These skills will enable them to critically evaluate the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values. These skills will evolve as the pupils are given the opportunity and encouragement to reflect and practise them in a non-judgemental environment. They will assist in the development of the pupils' self-esteem and emotional maturity.

*Teaching RSE will provide opportunities for the pupils to:*

- Form values and establish behaviour within a moral, spiritual and social framework
- Examine and explore the variety of human relationships
- Learn how to develop and enjoy personal relationships and friendships which are based on responsibility and mutual respect
- Build the foundations for developing more personal relationships later in life
- Make positive, responsible choices about themselves and others and the way they live their lives
- Practise communication skills by listening to others, giving and receiving feedback, being assertive, handling and resolving conflict.

- Develop decision-making and problem-solving skills by making sensible decisions, making moral judgements about what to do, developing independence of thought and considering the consequences of actions.
- Exercise interpersonal and leadership skills by taking the initiative, managing others and managing relationships confidently.

## **7 Implementation of the RSE programme**

Many aspects of RSE are found both within the taught curriculum and within the ‘hidden curriculum’ of the school. Much of the content is delivered in a cross-curricular manner within the Science, Religious Studies, Physical Education, Home Economics, Art, Languages, Geography, ICT, History and English curricula (see Appendix). The content of the taught Tutorial programme is based on a spiral framework of teaching and learning when the pupils can reach a deeper understanding of more complex issues and concepts given their increased maturity and wider range of experiences.

Mrs H Graham, VP Pastoral, is responsible for co-ordinating all issues related to the RSE policy and programme development.

Her role includes:

- Ensuring that the programme is taught effectively and is appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils
- Liaising with the principal, Board of Governors, all staff and parents, health and educational visitors on RSE matters
- Attending in-service training and disseminating appropriate information to other members of staff
- Organising staff training as and when appropriate
- Liaising with outside agencies for curriculum purposes

The RSE programme is delivered as part of the Tutorial Programme (the Personal Development strand at Key Stages 3 and 4 of the Learning for Life and Work programme) by the Form Tutors.

It is intended that during Key Stage 3 pupils will achieve a basic knowledge and understanding of the content and begin to appreciate the issues pertaining to RSE.

The issues discussed at Key Stage 3 include:

- Growth and Development during puberty
- Marriage and Family life
- Forming and maintaining relationships
- Respect and Tolerance

The programme is supported by outside agencies, such as ‘Love for Life’ who deliver talks on personal health issues and safety.

Progression and continuity is achieved at Key Stage 4 by revisiting certain topics so that pupils can reach a deeper understanding of more complex concepts and issues given their increased maturity and wider range of experiences.

The issues developed at Key Stage 4 include:

- The nature of relationships
- The concept of love and sex in relationships
- Safer Sex and health risks
- The transmission of Sexually Transmitted Infections

The programme is supported at Key stage 4 by a presentation from the ‘Love for life’, team.

### **Resources**

The resources used are consistent with the aims and objectives of the RSE policy, and the school’s moral and values framework. As part of the curriculum, teachers can provide general information about sexual health issues, but will also advise pupils to seek advice from parents, the school nurse or medical practitioners. The pupils will also receive information about where, and from whom, they can receive confidential advice, treatment and support. Personal medical advice must not be given to individual pupils.

Signed.		
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Chairman	Principal	Date

