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# Strathearn School

## RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION POLICY

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Approved By Board of Governors – May 2017

Signed : \_\_\_\_\_

(Chair of Governors)



Review Date	Amendment

## 1 Introduction

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

Sexuality<sup>1</sup> includes all aspects of the human personality and has biological, cultural, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions. RSE is delivered in Strathearn School in keeping with the ethos of the School and in furthering the School aim of respecting self and others. The RSE Policy should be read in association with the School's Pastoral, Anti-Bullying, Positive Behaviour and Safeguarding & Child Protection Policies.

## 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. The Department of Education Circular 2013/16 requires every school to have an up-to-date written policy on how it will address the delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education. The circular also states that: Relationships and Sexuality Education 'should be taught in harmony with the ethos of the School and reflect the moral and religious principles held by parents and school management authorities'.

Furthermore, the School's Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy takes account of the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 and the guidance subsequently issued by the Equality Commission in 2009 on eliminating sexual orientation discrimination in schools in N Ireland. This legislation demands that all pupils have the right to learn in a safe environment, to be treated with respect and dignity and not to be treated any less favourably on grounds of their actual or perceived sexual orientation<sup>2</sup>.

In 2015, Guidance was issued by CCEA in relation to a contemporary approach to the delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education. In this document, the following factors were cited as reasons why RSE is important:

1. Respects the rights of children and young people
2. Promotes a better understanding of diversity and inclusion
3. Helps young people keep themselves safer in the digital world
4. Helps young people to recognise and challenge inappropriate behaviour and touch
5. Provides reliable, accurate and age-appropriate information
6. Increases young people's awareness of sexual health

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

<sup>1</sup> the capacity for sexual feelings

<sup>2</sup> a person's sexual [identity in relation to](#) the [gender](#) to which they are [attracted](#); the fact of being [heterosexual](#), [homosexual](#) or [bisexual](#)

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

Strathearn School recognises that young people live in a diverse range of cultures, religions and family types. The School aims to establish an inclusive community where all pupils and staff are treated with dignity and respect, regardless of individual differences including culture, race, religion, beliefs, sexual or gender orientation, appearance and personal capability. In such an environment, we believe each student will be free to reach their full potential.

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.

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 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 appropriate preparation for the emotional and physical changes at puberty and beyond. The programme will be tailored to meet the particular requirements of pupils with special educational 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, and every effort is made to ensure that this is provided as and when appropriate. It is essential that at all times confidentiality operates within the boundaries of the School's Safeguarding & 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 of their obligations in relation to confidentiality, they should in the first instance consult with the Designated Teacher, Mrs Myers (VP Pastoral)

## **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. Such opportunities 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

The content of the taught Learning for Life & Work (LLW) Personal Development strand (Forms 1 -5) and the Tutorial programme (Sixth Form), enables pupils to reach a sound understanding of more complex issues and concepts related to relationships and sexuality as the pupils increase in maturity and gain a wider range of life experiences.

Mrs L Myers, 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, teaching and non-teaching staff and parents and health professionals 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 LLW Programme (the Personal Development strand of the *Learning for Life and Work* Programme) at Key Stages 3 and 4 by the Form Tutors. At Sixth Form, Form Tutors deliver aspects of the course through the Tutorial lessons while outside agencies deliver additional RSE components tailored to the needs of post 16 pupils, in preparation for leaving school and moving into a more adult environment.

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. The latter also delivers a presentation to Sixth Form covering many of the issues developed at Key Stage 4 but to a level more suited to the maturity of post 16 pupils.

## **8 Resources**

The resources used are consistent with the aims and objectives of the RSE policy, and the School's traditional moral framework. As part of the curriculum, teachers provide general information about sexual health issues, but will also encourage pupils to develop strong communication channels with parents, the School health nurses and medical practitioners. The pupils will also receive information about where, and from whom, they can receive confidential advice, treatment and support. Personal advice (including medical) is not to be given to individual pupils.

## **9 RSE Across the Curriculum**

Many aspects of RSE are explored both within the taught curriculum and within the 'hidden curriculum' of the School. Much of the content is delivered or reinforced in a cross-curricular manner within the Science, Religious Studies, Physical Education, Home Economics, Art, Languages, Geography, ICT, History and English curricula. This cross-curricular approach is conducive to the development of those life skills amongst pupils that a good RSE programme will promote.

The components of the RSE programme currently addressed within each subject discipline in Strathearn School are summarised in Appendix I.

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>Physical Development</b>	<b>Emotional Education</b>	<b>Social Development</b>	<b>Relationships family/peers</b>	<b>Personal Safety</b>	<b>Issues of Abuse</b>	<b>Self Esteem</b>	<b>Conflict Resolution</b>	<b>Child Birth</b>	<b>Child Development</b>	<b>Contraception</b>	<b>Physiology of Sex</b>	<b>HIV/AIDS</b>	<b>Sexually Transmitted Diseases</b>	<b>Gender Issues</b>
<i>BIOLOGY</i>	☐								☐		☐	☐	☐	☐	
<i>HOME ECONOMICS</i>	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐			☐
<i>ENGLISH</i>		☐	☐	☐		☐	☐	☐							☐
<i>HISTORY</i>	☐		☐	☐			☐	☐							☐
<i>GEOGRAPHY</i>					☐						☐				☐
<i>RELIGIOUS STUDIES</i>				☐			☐	☐							☐
<i>PHYSICAL EDUCATION</i>	☐		☐		☐		☐								
<i>LANGUAGES</i>				☐									☐		☐
<i>ART</i>	☐	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐	☐		☐					☐
<i>INFORMATION &amp; COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY</i>					☐	☐									
<i>PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT</i>		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐			☐		☐	☐	☐

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