

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

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| **Accepted**  | **Review Date** |
| November 2015 | November 2017 |

**Rationale**

‘Learning to Live’ is Whitehouse Primary School’s vision statement. Central to this vision is a desire to empower our pupils to understand, engage with, maintain and enjoy relationships with others.

Via technology, increased leisure options, the widening of travel and work opportunities our generation is in contact with countless more people than those in the past.

Paradoxically, however, never have relationships been under more strain. Increasing there are reports of people feeling lonely and isolated. Mental health issues in the 21st century are seen as an urgent priority.

Employers are asking not just for academic qualifications but also increasingly search out candidates with more developed social skills. These, so called, ‘soft skills’ are now seen as essential by some of our high value businesses. More of our young people are likely to have to leave Northern Ireland and work internationally for at least some of their career. This means they need the ability to form new relationships, maintain existing friendships and be aware of their own wellbeing.

In addition, many more people of diverse cultures, beliefs and races are coming to our country. We need to educate our children to thrive in this rich environment. As a school we are committed to pursue Shared Education. This means our pupils need to be able to understand the similarities they have in common with the views of others and be able to celebrate diversity.

Recent social changes have really altered the range of family structures our pupils are growing up in. We need our pupils to know that there are diverse family structures. Pupils need to feel comfortable in their own family and be able to appreciate that other families are different.

Our children seem to be growing up faster than in past decades. Culture, media and the expectation of peers seem to be changing our experience as we mentor children and young people. It is important that pupils are aware of sexuality and how it can positively impact our life and relationships. As a school, working with parents, we have a responsibility to prepare pupils for their development in Relationships and Sexuality Education. In particular, this does mean preparing pupils for puberty and for their growth into adult life.

Approximately ten percent of girls start their periods while at Primary school. It is therefore important that, with the agreement of parents, pupils are provided with appropriate factual information and have opportunities to discuss their feelings and concerns. This preparation should help pupils to be better able to manage the emotional and physical changes at puberty.

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. Health, education and social services professionals have identified a particular need for boys as well as girls to receive an adequate preparation for the emotional and physical changes at puberty.

RSE can have a positive effect on self-esteem. Schools can help to develop their pupil’s 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.

Many pupils cannot or are unwilling to talk to their parents about growing up and about sexual matters. Schools can offer information and provide opportunities to consider feelings and concerns within a secure environment.

Although some pupils may have experienced sexual abuse, this is not a reason for avoiding education about relationships and sexuality. Indeed it makes it more essential, since good teaching may enable pupils to challenge inappropriate and unwanted attention from others.

Parents are frequently concerned about the unhelpful and confused media and peer messages and pressures experienced by their children. Schools can provide opportunities for pupils to consider these messages and ensure they receive accurate information.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is clearly a part of our vision of ‘Learning to Live’.

**Curricular Leadership**

Elements of RSE are embedded in many areas of the curriculum. Personal Development and Mutual Understanding, the World Around Us and Religious Education.

It therefore, requires a multi-team approach to map out a learning experience across the school.

RSE will, however, come under the leadership of the P.D.M.U. & R.E. Team. The team’s leader is Mrs. H. Clifford.

Mr. F. Bailie is a member of the P.D.M.U. & R.E. Team. Mrs. H. Clifford has delegated the role of leading RSE to Mr. F. Bailie. This involves the following key roles:

* Support the team in the visioning and action planning for the development of RSE.
* Overseeing the ongoing development and review of the RSE Policy & Scheme.
* The provision of support and training of all staff to deliver the RSE Scheme.
* Management of the central resources for the successful teaching of RSE.
* The timetabling of assemblies, pupils workshops and visits to teach RSE content.
* Monitor and evaluate pupils’ achievements in RSE and teachers’ practice.
* Assist Mrs. H. Clifford in preparing reports to school leaders, governors and outside stakeholders on the teaching of RSE.

When forming the policy and associated scheme of work the following working group may be called upon:

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| Staff Member | Area of Expertise |
| Mr. Bailie | R.E. Leader |
| Mrs. Richmond | Science Key Stage 2/Year 7 Teacher |
| Mrs. Clifford | P.D.M.U. Team Leader |
| Mrs. Watson | Pastoral Care Leader/Designated Teacher for Child Protection/Year 7 Teacher |

As a school we have agreed a long-term curriculum development cycle. Every cycle lasts for three years. During each cycle two key areas of learning are developed. Here is our present plan:

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| Cycle | Area of Learning 1 | Area of Learning 2 |
| 2013/14 - 2015/16 | Literacy | Numeracy |
| 2016/17 - 2018/19 | I.C.T. | P.D.M.U. & R.E. |
| 2019/20 – 2021/22 | World Around US | Creativity (Art, Music & P.E.) |

RSE is due for a whole school focus in the 2016 - 2019 school development cycle. This may involve staff training, the allocation of new resources, P.R.S.D. observations and other innovations. In the interim the team will make plans, consider new practice and continually improve the operational effectiveness of RSE.

**Our Values & Mission Statement**

This policy document and the associated scheme are not written in isolation. They were both developed in the context the school’s values and the resulting mission statement.

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| Values | Contribution of RSE Policy and Scheme |
| To be a Happy & Healthy Environment  | This is very closely linked with the aims of the RSE Policy & Scheme. To have healthy self-value, enjoying good relationships and be able to make complex decisions is key to both health and happiness.  |
| To develop Skilled Learners & Flexible Thinkers | We are aiming via RSE to empower pupils to make good decisions and critically think about some challenging area of everyday life.  |
| To value Partnerships both Locally & Globally | This policy is not aiming to replace the role of parents as mentors to their children. At the heart of this policy is the desire to work with parents and empower them to parent their children more effectively. |
| To inspire High Aspirations and Achievements | This policy and Scheme stresses the equality of both genders. Both male and female have their unique qualities but both are capable of great achievements. Bu focusing on the potential of every pupil we hope also to raise the expectations and achievement of all children in our care. |

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| Mission Statement  | Contribution of RSE Policy/Scheme |
| Care & Wellbeing Central  | High Level of Compliance -Clear focus on health and happiness. |
| **Health & Sport Promoted** | High Level of Compliance -Health education is central to RSE. |
| **Involving Parents & Community** | High Level of Compliance -Seeks a high level of parental partnership. |
| **Learning & Teaching Focused** | High Level of Compliance - Developing knowledge and thinking skills. |
| **Developing Technology & Creativity** | High Level of Compliance -Use of I.C.T. for research and critical thinking. |
| **Raising Expectations & Standards** | High Level of Compliance -Develops esteem and emotional resilience.  |
| **Excellence & Innovation Pursued** | High Level of Compliance - Character development via ‘All Stars’ |
| **Networking Locally & Globally** | High Level of Compliance –Seeking links with health & high schools. |

**Aims:**

We hope to provide high quality RSE learning for our pupils. This teaching is underpinned by some key agreed aims.

* To ensure that the school meets its responsibility to provide a high quality RSE curriculum for all its pupils.
* To help pupils feel at ease with themselves and empower them to form and maintain healthy relationship with others.
* To help pupils to understand their individual needs and to respect the needs/wants of others.
* To promote an appreciation of the value of human life and the wonder of birth.
* To help pupil come to value family life and to appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood.
* To support both boys and girls to embrace puberty and seek pastoral support if required.
* To enable pupils to challenge inappropriate and unwanted attention from others.
* To empower pupils to protect themselves against dangers associated wit the use of the internet and other multimedia.
* To assist/enable pupils’ families who find it challenging to discuss growing up and sexual development with their children.
* To increase pupils’ capacity to make informed choice guided by their values and beliefs.
* To empower pupils to identify prejudice and to respect the views, emotions and feelings of others.
* To help pupils understand and resist potential pressures from media or/and peers to conform to unhelpful/unrealistic images or/and behaviours.
* To develop in our pupils the self-esteem and skills to become confident adolescents.

**Methodology**

RSE is a lifelong process. It involves the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills. It also includes the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about personal and social relationships and gender issues.

The learning process begins informally with our parents long before any formal education takes place at school.

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 RSE curriculum and other related disciplines will contribute toward enabling pupils to develop the skills necessary to form and maintain relationships and to make informed choices and decisions regarding health and wellbeing. 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 judgments about what to do in actual situations and putting these judgments 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.

A Partnership across Home, School and Community

The effectiveness of this RSE Policy and Scheme is dependent on a collaborative process involving teachers, parents, governors and other educational and health professionals. Each of the partners has distinctive contributions to make. Teachers, governors and parents can raise any concerns they might have about RSE issues and the Senior Leadership will address these or refer to the Board of Governors if necessary.

The Role of the Senior Leadership Team

A planned, structured and coherent approach to RSE will be sought throughout the school. Consultation will need to be initiated with governors, staff, parents, health professionals and other relevant community representatives as necessary.

The Role of the Governors

The Governors will try to foster and support the development of our RSE Policy and similar related policies by collaborating with teachers and parents. They shall facilitate the consultative process whereby the school community can respond and contribute on relevant issues. The Governors of the school will seek to accommodate and be sensitive to the religious and cultural beliefs of both teachers and parents while fulfilling their responsibility to ensure the availability of adequate RSE for all children.

The Role of Teachers

The classroom teacher has a significant and diverse role to play in the planning and implementation of RSE in the school. At all times the role must be considered to be complementary to that of parents, taking cognisance of the individual needs, age, maturity, stage of development and family background of the child. The class teacher will strive to promote the aims of this policy and other related policies and deliver the requirements of RSE at the level appropriate to their particular class.

Involving Parents

Our aim is to develop a structure which enables both parents and teachers to work together. The home exerts a major influence on all aspects of a child’s life, and especially so in the domain of relationships and sexuality. Parents are often concerned about the information their children are receiving from their peers and from television, videos, newspapers and magazines. We will attempt to provide opportunities for pupils to consider this information and ensure they receive accurate information. Where puberty-related changes are being covered with Year 6 and 7 classes, parents are informed about when these talks will take place, the content to be covered and the activities that pupils will undertake.

Curriculum Organisation

The primary curriculum offers opportunities to develop an RSE Scheme in a holistic and cross-curricular way. Issues can be integrated within specific topics, discussed in subject-related contexts, addressed through health education, pastoral work and at assembly time as well as during visits from the school nurse, local doctor or other agency. It is important, therefore, for schools to consider the links that exist between RSE and the other curricular areas at each key stage. A review of existing provision will reveal where aspects of their proposed content are being covered already and where there are gaps in provision.

In many instances, RSE shares content with TWAU, Science, Religious Education, Physical Education and English, as well as PDMU. Circle Time may be used as an appropriate tool to engage children in RSE.

**Promoting cross-curricular skills**

RSE is a rich and varied area of study. It lends itself very naturally to the teaching of literacy and the promotion of communication. The use of drama to explore issues, a wide variety of relevant texts to read and natural opportunities for pupils to express their ideas through writing.

Using Mathematics has also many applications in our teaching of RSE. For example, data handling can be used in the teaching of many contemporary issues related to RSE. This could include looking at trends and opinions e.g. perceptions of gender in media. It could also be used for pupils creating graphs or charts related to key issues. All aspects of mathematics can be explored via RSE it requires teachers to be creative and systematic.

The use of I.C.T. is a very powerful motivational and learning tool. Word processing, the constructing of graphs, animation and the creation of multimedia are all very useful in the teaching of RSE.

Teachers are asked to see the potential of RSE to teach the cross-curricular skills. They are asked to audit their teaching strategies to make sure that are varied and creative.

**Promoting Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities**

At the core of our vision for RSE is that we are aiming to provoke pupils to think critically and apply this to real life situations. Our methodology also aims to promote collegial learning. The teaching of Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities is both very natural and advantageous to the goals of the RSE.

**Promoting cross-curricular Links**

Teachers are encouraged to seek opportunities to link their teaching of RSE into their class topics. Like all areas of the pupils’ learning it makes sense to give it greater context by grounding it in a wider context.

* **Continuity and Progression**

The RSE Scheme is developed to ensure that over a seven-year primary career every pupil will encounter a wide range of knowledge and develop many skills. We use a spiral model of progression that brings pupils back to previously encountered materials at a higher level of complexity. We are convinced that our Scheme allows for all pupils’ needs and interests. Aspects such as the physical changes related to puberty are introduced in Key Stage as it is appropriate.

**Equality of Opportunity**

All pupils whatever their gender, race, religion and social background must have equal access to quality RSE teaching.

As a school we have been very good at helping girls deal with the changes of puberty. Boys’ needs, however, have received less attention. This policy and Scheme will seek to redress this deficit. It is key that the changes encountered by boys are not ignored.

We will endeavour to take account of the wishes of any parent who wishes their child to be excused from particular, or all, sex education classes.  Any issues raised regarding the content of an element of RSE or other related Schemes will be addressed and resolved in a positive manner as part of the consultation process. Although full consultation may have been undertaken, a parent may still request that their child is excused from participating in some or all of the RSE lessons. In this circumstance, the school should discuss the nature of the parent’s concerns, attempt to deal with any misunderstandings, identify the specific issues and lessons which are problematic and explain the implications for the pupil in terms of the parts of the statutory Schemes of study which will be missed. The social and emotional effects of exclusion should be considered as well as the likelihood that pupils will discuss the content of RSE.

**RSE and Special Educational Needs.**

Teachers have a responsibility to cater for the needs of all their pupils. It is important that all barriers are acknowledged and the teacher makes reasonable efforts to meet the needs of all pupils. Group tasks, open-ended tasks and differentiated materials should allow all children to participate fully.

**Health and Safety**

There are no specific health and safety issues related to RSE. Teachers, however, should be mindful that good practice is in place in all lessons to ensure an orderly, well-structured and safe learning environment.

**Resource Management**

Resources are allocated and stored at year group level. Each year group is responsible for any resources they are provided with to teach R.E. effectively. In June the P.D.M.U. and R.E. Team may bid for new resources for RSE. If granted funding the RSE leader is responsible for recording and maintaining a register of equipment and resources allocated. These records must be available for audit purpose. If a staff member leaves an audit must be completed before and new staff member arrives.

**Assessment & Reporting**

Pupils’ attainment within RSE will be assessed via a range of methods. These include:

* Observing pupils’ responses.
* The quality of pupils’ engagement in class and group tasks.
* Pupils’ written tasks, artwork and other tangible outcomes.

As part of each pupil’s annual report they will receive a written comment relating to P.D.M.U.

**Professional development**

The school is committed to cater for teachers’ professional development needs within the area of RSE. This includes the following key elements:

* A clear and user-friendly RSE Policy and Scheme.
* An appropriate and varied range of resources.
* The support and encouragement of an RSE leader.
* Ongoing training and professional development as required.
* Feedback from the RSE leader of their practice.

**The Monitoring and Evaluation of the RSE Policy and Scheme.**

In the third term of every school year the RSE leader will view planners and evaluations to assess the impact of RSE.

An annual report will be created after this monitoring process to evaluate RSE across the school. It will document:

* Strengths of practice
* Areas of development
* Targets for the year ahead

The RSE leader will meet with individual teachers after this report has been distributed if their practice requires some support and improvement. This may result in some team teaching being offered or/and additional training.

**Review cycle of policy**

The RSE Policy and Scheme will be reviewed and if required updated every three years. This process will involve a staff and governor consultation.

Staff will be issued with a hard copy of the new policy and Scheme after its approval. An electronic version will be stored at Staff/Policies/Curricular/P.D.M.U./RSE Previous versions will be stores in an archive folder in the R.E. folder on the c2k system.

A summary version will be issued to parents after every review. A full version will be available from the school office for reference or/and a paper copy issued if required.

  APPENDIX 1: USEFUL LOCAL ADDRESSES

Childcare Northern Ireland, 11 University Street, Belfast, BT7 1FY. Tel: (028) 9065 2713. NSPCC, Jennymount Court, North Derby Street, Belfast, BT15 3HN. Tel: (028) 9035 1135. Family Planning Association, 113 University Street, Belfast, BT7 1HP. Tel: (028) 9032 5488. 2nd Floor, Northern Counties Building, Custom House Square, Londonderry, BT48 6AE.

Tel: (028) 7126 0016. Telephone helpline and advisory service providing advice and information on sexual issues. Also provides a non-directional unplanned pregnancy service. This voluntary agency also offers training for professionals. Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland (HPANI), 18 Ormeau Avenue, Belfast, BT2 8HS. Tel: (028) 9031 1611. The Agency is a non-departmental public body whose remit in Northern Ireland is health promotion. Itcarries out its work through providing public and professional information; training and professional development; research and evaluation; and policy development for health.

APPENDIX 2: USEFUL NATIONAL ADDRESSES

Childline UK, Freepost 1111, London, N1 OBR. Tel: (0800) 1111. A free national helpline for children with any problems. Kidscape, 2 Grosvenor Gardens, London, SW1W ODH. Tel: (020) 7730 3300.