

Relationships & Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

St. Patrick's & St. Brigid's College, Claudy



Christ at the Centre

“Jesus is the model for living an ethical life, and the moral teachings of the Church enable us to follow Him who is ‘the Way, the Truth and the Life.’” (John 14:6)

1.1: Background information

We at St. Patrick’s and St. Brigid’s College view the development and implementation of a policy in Relationships and Sexuality (RSE) as an important step towards achieving our aim to develop all aspects of a young person’s personality and growth. The morals and values of our Catholic ethos are the core principles that underpin the teaching of RSE. Sexuality includes all aspects of the human person that relate to being male or female and develops throughout life. It is a complex dimension of human life and relationships.

In line with our school’s ethos, RSE should provide opportunities that enable pupils to:

- Form values and establish behaviour within a moral, spiritual and social framework consistent with our Catholic ethos
- Learn how to develop and enjoy personal relationships and friendships which are based on responsibility and mutual respect
- Build the foundations for developing more positive personal relationships in later life
- Make, positive responsible choices about themselves and others and the way they live their lives

1.2: School Mission Statement/Ethos

Staff and pupils at St. Patrick’s and St. Brigid’s recognise the dignity of the human person and the fact that all life is sacred. RSE in our school is inherently value based and reflects a particular understanding of human sexuality and human relationships. As a community inspired by gospel values we understand the importance of chastity, self-restraint, dignity and respect for ourselves and others. We encourage loyalty and fidelity through an appreciation of the value of marriage, family and loving relationships.

1.3: Policy Formation and Consultation Process

Implementation of this policy will take place after consultation. This policy will be reviewed biannually by the Principal and Governing Body.

1.4: Dissemination

The agreed policy will be given to all members of the Governing Body, and all teaching and support members of staff. Copies of the document will be made available to all parents/guardians. Details of the content of the RSE curriculum will also be published on the school’s website.

1.5: Definition and Rationale for the Delivery of RSE

DEFINING RSE

RSE is about developing the pupil's knowledge and understanding of himself/herself as a sexual being, about what it means to be fully human, called to live in the right relationship with self and others and being able to make moral decisions in conscience. RSE should give young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, not simply intimate relationships. It should enable them to know what a healthy relationship looks like and what makes a good friend, a good colleague and a successful marriage or other type of committed relationship.

RATIONALE

The school is involved in relationships and sexuality education precisely because of our Christian beliefs about God and about the human person. The belief in the unique dignity of the human person made in the image and likeness of God underpins the approach to all education in a Catholic school. Our approach to RSE is therefore rooted in the Catholic Church's teaching of the human person and presented in a positive framework of Christian ideals.

At the heart of the Christian life is the Trinity; Father, Son and Spirit in communion, united in loving relationship and embracing all people and all creation. As a consequence of Christian belief that we are made in the image and likeness of God, gender and sexuality are seen as God's gift, reflect God's beauty, and share in the divine creativity. RSE, therefore, will be placed firmly within the context of relationships as it is there that sexuality grows and develops.

RSE will be firmly embedded in the PSE, LLW and RE Curriculum as it is concerned with nurturing human wholeness and integral to the physical, spiritual, emotional, moral, social and intellectual development of pupils. It is centred on Christ's vision of being human as good news and will be positive and prudent, showing the potential for development, while enabling the dangers and risks involved to be understood and appreciated.

All RSE will be delivered in accordance with the Church's moral teaching. It will emphasise the central importance of marriage and the family whilst acknowledging that all pupils have a fundamental right to have their life respected whatever household they come from.

1.6: The Centrality of Virtue

Our programme enshrines Catholic values relating to the importance of stable relationships, marriage and family life. It also promotes those virtues which are essential in responding to God's call to love others with a proper respect for their dignity and the dignity of the human body. The following virtues will be explicitly explored and promoted: faithfulness, fruitfulness, chastity, integrity, prudence, mercy and compassion.

1.7: Aims, Objectives and Skill - Aims of RSE

A school's RSE policy might include some or all of the following aims. In line with the school's ethos and CCEA guidelines the Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy of a Catholic school aims to:

- promote a Catholic vision of sexuality that reflects selfless love, respect and commitment within a moral, social, spiritual framework
- help young people appreciate their worth, dignity and uniqueness as children of God
- enable young people to appreciate sexuality as a gift from God
- promote an appreciation of the value and sanctity of human life and the wonder of life from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death
- value the gifts of marriage and the family, and to persevere in a love strengthened by the virtues of generosity, commitment, fidelity and patience
- understand marriage as the sacramental sign of God's love for his Church
- enable young people to grow in holiness by acting responsibly and generously towards others.
- value the concept and qualities of consent in relationships and understand the law in relation to consent
- recognise that compassion, forgiveness, mercy and tolerance are essential dispositions to develop within relationships
- Understand that being single and chaste is a virtuous, positive and fulfilling option, promote respect for all individuals regardless of sexual orientation, race, gender or creed
- encourage the young to witness to human dignity at all times online
- encourage the young to see social media as another tool to reach people with the message that sexuality is a gift from God, not to be squandered and abused
- recognise common mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, disordered eating, self-harm and compulsive behaviours in themselves

1.8 Objectives & Skills Promoted (including personal and social)

- In line with the school's ethos and CCEA guidelines, the Relationships and Sexuality Curriculum attempts to enable pupils to realise that relationships can cause strong feelings and emotions including sexual attraction,
- know the features of positive and stable relationships (including trust, mutual respect, honesty, equality) and those of unhealthy relationships (including imbalance of power, coercion, control, exploitation, abuse of any kind)
- help pupils cope with the breakdown of a relationship and the effect of change, including loss, separation, divorce and bereavement
- develop a positive sense of self-awareness, and the skills for building and maintaining self-esteem
- acquire and develop an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality and development
- cope with the social, physical and emotional challenges of growing up
- understand human physiology with particular reference to the reproductive cycle, human fertility and sexually transmitted infections and diseases value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood understand different family structures, and the diversity of family life recognise the need for self-control and the importance of the virtue of chastity
- explore the moral and ethical issues surrounding sexuality
- recognise peer pressure and have strategies to manage it
- recognise the need for online safety
- recognise the impact of drugs and alcohol on choices and sexual behaviour
- be aware that the media portrayal of relationships may not reflect real life and understand the possible impact of this on people's expectations of relationships
- help young people to become aware of the pervasive prevalence of pornography on the internet which can destroy and degrade human sexuality and relationships and reduce people to objects for gratification

1.8 Skills Promoted (including personal and social)

Pupils will develop the ability to:

- form and maintain healthy, positive relationships which reflect the dignity of the human person
- make sound judgements and good choices
- manage emotions within relationships and the breakdown of relationships with sensitivity and dignity manage conflict positively and enable pupils to recognise the value of difference
- critically evaluate a wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values
- develop the communication skills of active listening, negotiation, offering and receiving constructive feedback and assertiveness
- cultivate mercy and compassion, learning to forgive and be forgiven
- develop skills and strategies to respond appropriately to exploitation, bullying, harassment, and control in relationships (including the unique challenges posed by online abuse and the unacceptability of physical, emotional, sexual abuse)
- recognise when a relationship is unhealthy or abusive (including the unacceptability of both emotional and physical abuse or violence including 'honour' based violence, forced marriage and rape)
- be able to access support for self or others at risk
- develop the skills to challenge sexist, homophobic, racist and disablist language and behaviour
- evaluate the effect of alcohol and drug use on decision making and personal safety
- build resilience and the ability to resist unwanted pressures, recognising the influence and impact of the media, internet and peer groups and so develop the ability to assess pressures and respond appropriately

develop coping strategies to overcome mental health issues and to recognise when they need to employ strategies to re-establish positive mental health including managing stress and anxiety

1.9: RSE Curriculum

- RSE integrated across a number of KS3 classes subjects
- Provision is made for teaching RSE in KS3 & KS4
- Boys/girls be taught together for most aspects of RSE
- Cross-curricular input be managed by the Pastoral Co-ordinator

Resources should:

- (i) Reflect the ethos of the school
- (ii) Be age appropriate, inclusive and sensitive to the pupils' needs and experiences
- (iii) Be factually accurate, up to date, and make clear distinction between fact and opinion

Teaching Strategies

RSE aims to develop personal and social skills and clarify attitudes and values within a moral framework. RSE seeks to promote behaviour which will allow pupils to take increasing responsibility for themselves as they grow and develop. Teaching methods which involve pupils actively in the process of their own learning is most beneficial.

Specifically, in terms of organising the learning environment, the teacher will be careful to create an atmosphere which respects the privacy of each individual pupil and treats all pupils with due sensitivity and care. Some important considerations might be:

- the degree of trust, respect and positive regard for pupils;
- the relationship between the teacher and the pupils and among the pupils themselves;
- the need for clear expectations, goals and learning objectives.

2.0: Assessment of RSE

The nature of RSE is strongly orientated towards Personal Development which does not necessarily lend itself to summative assessment. RSE is not easily measurable as it is qualitative rather than quantitative. When required, RSE will be assessed and reported on in Years 8 – 12 by the teacher who delivers the module at that level.

2.1: Use of Outside agencies

Where appropriate, the skills and expertise of outside agencies and professionals will be accessed. We will ensure that all teaching is rooted in Catholic principles and practice.

It is essential that all outside visitors/speakers be approved by the Safeguarding Team.

A preliminary visit to the school to discuss ethical/practical considerations is advised. Appropriate follow up in relation to guest speakers is also advised.

The RSE co-ordinator and teachers involved in the delivery of RSE will ensure that resource materials obtained from other agencies and presentations by outside speakers are in harmony with the ethos of the school.

It is essential that **all external agencies** supporting RSE should sign a service agreement agreeing with the RSE policy of the school and the underpinning ethos of the school and that this record is kept in a safe place as part of the delivery of RSE and for authenticity.

It is vital that any outside agency/individual delivering a support session in a school;

- receives a copy of the school's Relationships & Sexuality Education Policy;
- is made aware of and adheres to the school's Child Protection Policy;
- receives a copy of the school's policy on the use of outside agencies/visitors;
- agrees to respect the ethos of the school;
- is made aware of the issues around confidentiality;
- is vetted as appropriate

Parents/guardians should be made aware in advance of the use of outside agencies. Schools should explain the type of activities which will take place to ensure that parents/guardians and guardians have the opportunity to raise any concerns they might have before the visit.

During the session the teacher/s should be present at all times. Afterwards the teacher/s should provide pupils with the opportunity to discuss their experience/s and honestly

evaluate the session/s.

2.2: Parents and Guardians

It is important that a school actively promotes the implementation of RSE and that parents/guardians are fully informed of the content, timing and the delivery of the programme in order to enable them to support the work of the school and to enable parents/guardians to discuss the topics and issues raised by the programme with their children.

This could be achieved by sending an outline of programme home either

- at the beginning of school year or
- just prior to the commencement of the programme

2.3: Face to Face Meetings

Meeting parents/guardians either at the beginning of the school year or prior to the commencement of the programme to inform them of their rights and responsibilities. This meeting will allow the parent/guardian to learn about and discuss the content, the teaching methods, and the timing of the programme, and to voice any concerns they might have regarding the programme and its delivery.

2.4: Induction Literature

An Induction Packet for incoming Year 8 pupils which will contain information on the content and timing of the RSE module. This will give parents/guardians an opportunity to participate in the programme alongside their children and in so doing build positive relationships.

2.5: School Website

Publishing the RSE policy in its entirety on the school website and making it available for parents/guardians to download.

2.6: Ensuring the Curriculum is Balanced

Providing a programme that offers a range of viewpoints, teaches clear scientific information and covers aspects of the law pertaining to RSE is not incompatible with the school's promotion of Catholic teaching. Pupils need access to the learning they need to stay safe, healthy and understand their rights as individuals.

While promoting Catholic values and virtues, we will ensure that pupils are offered a balanced programme by providing an RSE programme that offers a range of viewpoints on issues. Pupils will also receive clear scientific information as well as covering the aspects of the law pertaining to RSE relating to forced-marriage, female genital mutilation, abortion, the age of consent and legislation relating to equality.

2.7: Responsibility for Teaching the Programme

Those responsible for the delivery of RSE will be;

- Class teachers in the designated subject areas, mainly RE and LLW
- Form tutors during PSE
- RE, PE and Science specialists

It will be taught by teachers across the afore mentioned subject areas.

It will be supported by the Derry Diocesan Advisory Team and select, vetted outside agencies.

2.8: Other Roles and Responsibilities

The Trustees are responsible for the strategic direction, organisational nature and ethos of their respective schools. The Bishop is responsible for all Catholic schools in his Diocese.

2.9: Board of Governors

Every School a Good School - The Governors' Role: A Guide for Governors outlines the role and responsibilities of Governors. Section 13.40 states,

"Boards of Governors should ensure that their schools have a Relationships and Sexuality Education policy and curriculum linked to their pastoral care/child protection policy. This policy and the associated teaching should be the subject of consultation with staff and parent and endorsed by the Governors."

The Board of Governors will foster and support the development of an RSE policy and programme by collaborating with teachers and parents/guardians. It will also facilitate the consultative process whereby the school community can respond and contribute. The governors will examine and approve the completed policy and programme prior to their implementation in the school and review the policy at regular intervals.

At all times the governors of the school will seek to accommodate and be sensitive to the religious and cultural beliefs of both teachers and parents/guardians while fulfilling their responsibility to ensure the availability of adequate RSE for all young people.

2.10: Principal and Senior Management Team

As with all subject areas, it is the role of the management to make possible a coherent and co-ordinated approach to RSE in keeping with the ethos of the school. It is the role of the Vice Principal to support the work of the Principal and those charged with responsibility for RSE it is her/his responsibility to ensure that RSE is delivered in a way which is in keeping with the ethos of the school.

The Principal and Senior Management Team co-ordinate the school's approach to RSE and consults the Board of Governors, staff, parents/guardians and health professionals, as appropriate.

2.11: RSE Co-ordinator/Cross Curricular Working Party

The RSE co-ordinator is a member of staff appointed to be responsible for co-ordinating all issues related to the RSE policy, the Department of Education specifications and the programme designed for the pupils. It is essential that the co-ordinator is respectful and committed to the school's ethos and the aims and direction of RSE within the school.

The RSE Co-ordinator's role includes:

- upholding and ensuring that the programme is taught in accordance with the school's Catholic ethos;

- ensuring that the programme is taught effectively and is appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils;
- liaising with the Board of Governors, the Principal, the Vice Principal, all staff, parents/guardians and health and educational visitors on RSE matters;
- attending in-service training and disseminating appropriate information to other staff members;
- organising training for staff as and when appropriate; liaising with outside agencies where appropriate.

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