

Brackenagh West Primary School
RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION

SECTION 1: CONTEXT AND PURPOSE INTRODUCTION

At Brackenagh West Primary School we aim to provide a happy, friendly, caring environment, where children feel secure and valued. Children are encouraged to develop self-discipline and mutual respect for each other and for all adults in an atmosphere that promotes learning and excellence, enabling children to fulfil their true potential. Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a part of this general aim.

Purpose

All pupils have a right to an education which adequately prepares them for adult life, and 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. Many children are maturing earlier and 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. RSE can have a positive effect on self-esteem. RSE therefore is important at any stage of schooling but is particularly important at Key Stage 2 within the primary school context.

We can help develop the self-esteem of pupils by creating a climate of trust, in which each person is valued and respected. Pupils are encouraged to recognise their individual needs, to respect the needs of others, and to develop the skills and self-esteem to become confident adolescents. RSE plays a part in increasing 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 matters related to puberty & adolescence. We can offer information and provide opportunities to consider feelings and concerns within a secure environment. Through RSE and other related programmes we can also attempt to 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. At Brackenagh West Primary School, we can attempt to provide opportunities for pupils to consider these messages and ensure they receive accurate information.

CONTEXT

The Northern Ireland curriculum aims to empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives. Elements of RSE are embedded in many areas of the revised curriculum, such as Personal Development and Mutual Understanding, the World Around Us and Religious Education.

Cross Curricular Links

This document reflects the core principles of other related policies. Aspects of RSE are likely to be addressed already within school's Code of Conduct for Staff, Code of Conduct for Students and Intimate Care Policy, all of which are circulated to teaching and non teaching staff.

SECTION 2: AIMS, and SKILLS

INTRODUCTION

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

The learning process begins informally with our parents (or those holding parental responsibility), 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.

AIMS

The aims of RSE are to:

- * enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child;
- * foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, social and spiritual framework;
- * promote responsible behaviour and the ability to make informed decisions;
- * help the child come to value family life.
- * appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood;
- * promote an appreciation of the value of human life and the wonder of birth.
- * to form values and establish behaviour within a moral, spiritual and social framework
- * to learn how to develop and enjoy personal relationships and friendships which are based on responsibility and mutual respect;
- * to build the foundations for developing more personal relationships in later life;
- * to make positive, responsible choices about themselves and others and the way they live their lives.

SKILLS

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 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 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.

SECTION 3: SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN HOME, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

The effectiveness of this RSE policy and programme 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 Management will address these or refer to the Governors if necessary.

THE ROLE OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT

A planned, structured and coherent approach to RSE will be sought throughout the school. Implementing this, and other related policies will be managed by the member of staff with responsibility for Child Protection and overseen by Senior Management. Consultation will need to be initiated with governors, staff, parents, health professionals and other relevant community representatives as necessary.

THE ROLE OF 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. When puberty-related changes are to be covered with the P7 class, parents are informed about when these talks will take place, the content to be covered and the activities that pupils will undertake.

THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS

We will strive to facilitate the following rights of the parents;

Parents of pupils in grant-aided schools have a right to have their children educated in accordance with their (the parents.) wishes, in so far as this is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure.

Parents also have a duty to cause their child to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude and to any special needs he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

We will endeavour to take account of the wishes of any parent who wishes their child to be excused from particular, or all, RSE lessons.

Any issues raised regarding the content of an element of RSE or other related programmes 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 programmes 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 lessons outside the classroom.

CURRICULUM ORGANISATION

The primary curriculum offers opportunities to develop an RSE programme 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 WAU, Religious Education, Physical Education and English, as well as PDMU. Circle Time may be used as an appropriate tool to engage children in RSE.

AN OUTLINE OF PROGRAMME FOR KEY STAGES 1 AND 2 Key Stage 1

Myself

- * Myself, how I grow, feed, move and use my senses; caring for myself, for example, hygiene, sleep, exercise.
- * Naming parts of the body (basic), developing an agreed language for our bodies.
- * Being myself - I am unique, my self-esteem, self-confidence, independence, respect and caring for myself.
- * Similarities and differences between myself and others, for example, uniqueness, fingerprints, gender issues, different rates of growth.
- * An introduction to the stages of human development, changes as we grow, for example, baby, child, teenager, adult, mother/father, grandparents.
- * Recognising moods, feelings and concerns and developing a language and an appropriate manner of expressing them, for example, What do I do if I feel sad or angry?
- * Personal likes and dislikes.

My Relationships

- * My family, special people in my life - what they do for me and what I do for them.
- * Friendships - getting on with each other, for example, communicating, playing together, listening, co-operating and sharing.
- * Ageing - how we know that things are alive, dead, young and old.

- * Loss and mourning - death of a person or a pet. (Note: the situations of the pupils should be taken into account prior to introducing this topic.)
- * Respect and caring for family members and friends, for example, caring for a new baby.
- * Bullies and what to do about them
- * Personal safety - simple skills and practices to maintain personal safety.
- * Realise that adults and older children are not always friends and the potential danger of relationships with strangers or acquaintances.
- * Strategies which pupils might use to protect themselves from potentially dangerous situations.

My Community/Environment

- * Awareness of different types of families and the roles of individuals within families.
- * Keeping safe, for example, dangerous places, dangerous situations, the adults who will help, how
- * How to get help from others.
- * Rules at home, at school and in the community.
- * Respect and caring for people in the community, eg elderly people.

Key Stage 2

Myself

- * My body, how it works and how to keep it healthy.
- * The physical, social and emotional changes which occur during puberty (girls and boys).
- * Myself and my peers. Different rates of growth and physical development, maturity.
- * Valuing and respecting myself, identifying personal strengths and weaknesses.
- * Feelings, for example, things that make me happy, sad, excited, embarrassed, angry, scared;
- * Expressing our feelings, showing love and affection.
- * Gender roles.
- * Making choices. The influences on me and the consequences of actions for oneself and others.
- * Distinguishing between right and wrong.
- * Secrets - knowing the difference between good and bad secrets, what to do about bad secrets.

My Relationships

- * Identifying the positive traits of friendship and their corresponding values.
- * Differences and similarities in people; the need to respect other people's views, emotions and feelings.
- * Families and how they behave. What family members expect of each other.
- * The meaning of friendship and loyalty; making and maintaining friendships and social relationships, for example, identifying and understanding pressures and influences, account of other people's point of view.
- * Handling difficult situations, for example, teasing, bullying, death of a family member.
- * The meaning of relationships within families, between friends and in the community.
- * Behaviour - what constitutes appropriate and non-appropriate physical contact.
- * Identifying dangers and risks within relationships.
- * Being assertive in defending individual rights and beliefs.
- * People who can help pupils when they have anxieties, concerns or questions.

My Community/Environment

- * Appreciation of the family in relation to the school and the wider community.
- * Cultural differences in families and family relationships.
- * Helping agencies which can support families and individuals in different circumstances.

* Messages and images about health, gender roles and sexuality from the media, family and peers

CONFIDENTIALITY IN THE CLASSROOM

At Brackenagh West Primary School we respect the child's right to privacy. A key rule to agree in advance of any discussion is that no one will be expected to ask or answer any personal questions. It is equally important that the teacher shares this right and never feels obliged to impart information about his/her own personal life. However as teachers we should not promise confidentiality.

A child does not have the right to expect that incidents in the classroom or in the wider context of the school will not be reported, as appropriate, to his or her parents and/or the principal. Both pupils and parents should be informed that confidentiality cannot be maintained if:

* physical or sexual abuse is suspected.

* a child confides in a member of staff and requests that the information is kept secret, the child must be told, sensitively, that the matter must be reported the principal or designated teacher must be informed of any disclosures which might suggest that a pupil is at risk or to the appropriate agencies.

Decisions can then be taken in accordance with the procedures detailed in the Department's booklet Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection (Circular 1999/10).

Teachers can provide general educational advice to all pupils as part of the curriculum. This general advice can be given to pupils individually or within group situations. It is important that the type of advice and the manner in which it is given is supportive of the role of the parents. There will be occasions when teachers will have to exercise their discretion and judgment about how to deal with particular issues raised by an individual or by a group of pupils.

An initial judgment will need to be made about whether or not it is appropriate to deal with the issues with the whole class. The teacher may wish to discuss the issues with the parents to see how they would like the matter to be handled. Teacher colleagues or the school nurse may be approached for advice. It may be appropriate to respond to the issues with individual pupils or to arrange time for group discussion outside class time.

In all cases, teachers should encourage pupils to discuss any issues and concerns they might have with their parents if this is appropriate.

The first concern of parents is likely to be for the safety and well-being of their children. It is important that if pupils cannot talk or do not wish to talk to their parents, they have access to support from teachers at school.

ANSWERING PUPILS QUESTIONS

As a school we may need to consider our responses to specific issues. Topics such as conception, birth, fertility, family planning, sexual orientation and HIV/AIDS are often part of the storyline of television soaps. It is therefore possible that older pupils will raise questions about these issues.

Using a Worry Box, pupils can write down questions anonymously at any time and post them in the box. This strategy gives teachers time to consider an appropriate depth of response and, if necessary, to consult with parents.

SUPPORTING THE NEEDS OF BOYS & GIRLS

From an early age, boys and girls learn what is considered to be appropriate behaviour from the significant adults in their lives. It is important that within the RSE programme activities are included to allow boys & girls to talk separately about their interests, concerns and feelings. Formal and informal opportunities can be used for pupils to explore attitudes, emotions, relationships, stereotyping and worries.

It is important to acknowledge that male and female perspectives may exist on issues and to respect the reasons for such differences. Sessions will also be included to explain the physical and emotional changes at puberty to boys and girls.

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.

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. It carries 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 0BR. Tel: (0800) 1111. A free national helpline for children with any problems.

Kidscape, 2 Grosvenor Gardens, London, SW1W 0DH. Tel: (020) 7730 3300.