



RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE) POLICY



Strandtown
Primary School

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Introduction

It is a statutory requirement that all schools in Northern Ireland have a **'Relationships and Sexuality Education' (RSE) Policy**.

This policy has been written in line with Department of Education N.I. requirements and through consultation with parents/carers, staff, and governors and has been ratified by the Board of Governors.

The general aim of education is to contribute towards the development of all aspects of the individual, including the aesthetic, creative, critical, cultural, emotional, intellectual, moral, physical, political, social and spiritual development for personal and family life, for working life, for living in the community and for leisure. Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is clearly a part of this general aim.

Relationships and Sexuality Education is an integral part of the Northern Ireland Curriculum in both primary and post-primary schools and must be delivered in a sensitive manner, which is appropriate to the age and understanding of pupils and the ethos of the school.

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. It can have a positive effect on self-esteem. Schools can help to develop their pupils' 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.

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 and gender issues.'

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.

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.
- 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.
- Keep children safe, make appropriate decisions, developing resilience and self-worth to meet the challenges of today's world.

- Engage in healthy, positive sexual expression and relationships.
- Recognise respectful language

Learning Objectives

The RSE curriculum should enable pupils to:

- Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self.
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness and self-worth.
- Develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well-being of others.
- Understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and in wider contexts.
- Become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change and understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity.
- Develop strategies to help make decisions, solve problems and implement actions in various personal, social and health contexts.
- Develop personal skills, which will help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships.
- Develop coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse.
- Acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction.
- Acquire and use appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development.
- Develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making.
- Understand the concept of safe boundaries, understanding that their body belongs to them. They should be aware and confident of their right to say no and to report abuse.
- Be aware of safe boundaries and inappropriate touch.
- Be aware of their responsibilities to respect the privacy and boundaries of others.

Respect & Diversity and the Impact of Media

Strandtown PS values all its pupils equally. It recognizes the diversity of family life in its school community. We promote the respecting of differences between people and celebration of people's diversity and uniqueness. This includes differences in family (the institution of the family, referring to mums and dads where appropriate. Stable, caring and loving relationships will be presented as the ideal), culture, religion, age, gender and sexual orientation.

Strandtown's focus is for all pupils to learn effectively. We will endeavour to ensure they feel safe, supported and able to thrive.

The school's RSE program will demonstrate the complete equality of the genders and, at the same time, celebrate the diversity and richness gender brings to the school community. It will actively tackle gender stereotypes and develop an awareness of the impact of discrimination and prejudice. This emphasis will serve to help our pupils to develop a healthy self-esteem and confidence and, in turn, enable them to make critical and informed decisions later in life.

The school acknowledges that our media landscape has widened, children spend more of their waking hours engaging with some form of media. Both the quantity and the content of the media that children consume can have a negative impact on their health.

Given the pervasiveness of media in the lives of our children, it is inevitable that the boys and girls will be confronted with many mixed messages regarding gender. These mixed messages may lead to confusion in regard to their own self-understanding and the judgement they will make of their peers.

The internet plays an increasingly central role in children's lives, exposing them to new and varied risks. We will actively use strategies to help our pupils develop safe online habits.

(For a full outline of these aims and strategies see our Online Safety policy)

The Role of Relationships & Sexuality in Education

Strandtown PS acknowledges that sexuality is a gift. It involves the whole person, their values, and beliefs, personal and social domains. It is primarily influenced by parents, their attitudes and children's experiences at home. Morality is in essence behavioural

and it is important that children realise that their behaviour has implications for them, both personally and socially. For this reason, our school will endeavour to help children develop feelings of honesty and self-worth.

Equal Opportunities

'The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations Northern Ireland 2006' prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of goods, facilities, services, education, functions of public authorities & the disposal of property.

Our pupils will be given the opportunity to receive adequate preparation for the emotional and physical changes that occur at adolescence, regardless of their age, gender, culture, disability, religion, sexual orientation or social class. The program will be tailored to be appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils and will meet the needs of both genders.

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 BOG if necessary. Parents will be kept updated on RSE topics which are covered in school to give them the opportunity to reinforce the learning at home.

The Role of Senior Leadership

- Develop the school policy and review it on a yearly basis
- Ensure all members of the Board of Governors will be offered appropriate RSE training
- Ensure that all staff are given regular and ongoing training on issues relating to RSE as well as how to deliver lessons on such issues
- Ensure that staff are up to date with policy changes, and familiar with school policy and guidance relating to RSE, including new staff or substitute teachers
- Provide support to staff members who feel uncomfortable or ill-equipped to deal with the delivery of RSE to pupils
- Ensure that RSE is age appropriate and needs led across all year groups; this means ensuring that the curriculum develops as the pupils do and meets their needs
- Ensure that the knowledge and information regarding RSE to which all pupils are entitled is provided in a comprehensive way
- Support parent/carer involvement in the development of the RSE curriculum
- Ensure that their personal beliefs, values and attitudes will not prevent them from providing balanced RSE in school
- Communicate freely with staff, parents/carers and the BOG to ensure that everyone is in understanding of the school policy and curriculum for RSE, and that any concerns or opinions regarding the provision at the school are listened to, taken into account and acted on as appropriate
- Share the school's provision for RSE with parents/carers in order to ensure they can support this at home
- Communicate to parents/carers and additional support that is available from the school to support them with RSE at home

The Role of Governors

The governors, as a whole, play an active role in monitoring, developing and reviewing the policy and its implementation in school. The named link governor for RSE is Dr L Keown who works closely with, and in support of, the lead members of staff. When aspects of RSE appear in the School Development Plan, a governor will be assigned to reflect on, monitor and review the work as appropriate. As well as fulfilling their legal obligations, the governors will also make sure that:

- all pupils make progress in achieving the expected educational outcomes
- the subjects are well led, effectively managed and well planned;
- the quality of provision is subject to regular and effective self-evaluation;
- teaching is delivered in ways that are accessible to all pupils with SEND;

- clear information is provided for parents on the subject content and the right to request that their child is withdrawn from appropriate areas
- the subjects are resourced, staffed and timetabled in a way that ensures that the school can fulfil its legal obligations

The Role of Teachers

- Ensure that they are up to date with school policy and curriculum requirements regarding RSE
- Attend and engage in professional development training around RSE provision, including individual and whole staff training/inset, where appropriate
- Attend staff meetings to be introduced to any new areas of work and review the effectiveness of the approaches used
- Report back to the Vice Principal / Principal on any areas that they feel are not covered or inadequately provided for in the school's RSE provision, including resources
- Encourage pupils to communicate concerns regarding their social, personal and emotional development in confidence and listen to their needs and support them
- Follow the school's reporting systems if a pupil comes to a member of staff with an issue that they feel they are not able to deal with alone
- Ensure that their personal beliefs and attitudes will not prevent them from providing balanced RSE in school
- Tailor their lessons to suit all pupils in their class, across the whole range of abilities, faiths, beliefs, culture, gender identity and sexual orientations, including SEND
- Ask for support in this from the Vice Principal / Principal should they need it.

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, social media, 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 P7 classes, parents are informed about when these talks will take place, the content to be covered and the activities that pupils will undertake

The role of parents in the development of their children's understanding about relationships is vital. Parents are the first teachers of their children. They have the most significant influence in enabling their children to grow and mature and to form healthy relationships.

The school will:

- Work closely with parents/carers when planning and delivering RSE
- Ensure that parents/carers know what will be taught and when.
- Give parents/carers every opportunity to understand the purpose and content of Relationships Education and RSE
- Communicate and give opportunities for parents/carers to understand and ask questions about the school's approach help increase confidence in the curriculum
- Build a good relationship with parents/carers on these subjects by inviting parents to be part of the Parent Focus Group to discuss what will be taught, address any concerns and help support them in managing conversations with their children on these issues
- Encourage parents/carers to create an open home environment where pupils can engage, discuss and continue to learn about matters that have been raised through RSE
- Will reach out to all parents, including those who are hard to engage, recognising that a range of approaches may be needed for doing so

The Needs of Pupils

We recognise that an interactive approach to RSE will better develop the skills of our pupils and also that it is more likely to meet their needs. We involve pupils in the planning, development and evaluation of their RSE in ways appropriate to their age, stage and development.

We will involve pupils through:

- Focus groups
- Questionnaires/surveys
- School council meetings
- Full class consultation activities which ensure all pupils have a voice in the process

Organisation of the RSE Programme

RSE needs to start early so that children learn about different kinds of relationships like families and friendships and so they can recognise if other people make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Lots of children start puberty before they leave primary school so it is important that all pupils know what to expect before it happens. It is good to have some RSE in every year of primary school as it helps pupils to learn progressively as they mature and revisit the subject on a regular basis, to reinforce learning and provide opportunities to ask further questions.

RSE will be taught across the curriculum, but mainly through PDMU. Although specific topics will be addressed, other areas may arise incidentally and will be treated with sensitivity. Staff will use a variety of teaching strategies and approaches in keeping with the maturity of the pupils. This will also include the usage of the correct terminology, as appropriate. The class teacher will deliver most of the RSE program. However, occasions will arise where the expertise of outside agencies and other professionals may be used. Normal class arrangements will prevail during RSE related activities. Where it is necessary to alter this, the consent of parents will be sought.

Working with visitors & other External Agencies

Where appropriate, we may use visitors from external agencies or members of the community to support RSE. Working with external organisations enhances delivery of RSE, bringing in specialist knowledge, which gives different ways of engaging with our pupils.

When using visitors, a teacher will be present throughout these lessons. Visitors will be given a copy of this policy, and any other relevant policies, and expected to comply with the guidelines outlined within it. Our partnership with the local community is also a priority, and we recognise and value its contribution to the RSE programme.

We will ensure that the teaching delivered by the visitor fits with our planned programme and policy. We will discuss the detail of how the visitor will deliver their sessions and ensure that the content is age-appropriate and accessible for our pupils. We will ask to see the materials visitors will use as well as a lesson plan in advance, so that we can ensure it meets the full range of pupils' needs.

We will agree in advance of the session how confidentiality will work in any lesson and how safeguarding reports will be acted upon if submitted by an external visitor. It is also important that children understand how confidentiality will be handled in a lesson and what might happen if they choose to make a report.

Use of visitors will be to enhance teaching by an appropriate member of the teaching staff, rather than as a replacement for teaching by those staff.

Multi Agency support which could be availed of:

- Love for Life
- NICCY (Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children & Young People)
- NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children)
- Barnardos

Before involving visitors in any aspect of RSE, teachers will ensure that:

- The visitor understands the school's confidentiality policy, values and approach to the educational programme

- There is appropriate planning, preparatory and follow up work for the sessions
- The visitor understands the emotional, intellectual, cultural, religious, social and ability level of the pupils involved, including where there may be a specific issue relating to child protection
- The teacher needs to be part of the experience in order for the pupils to value the lessons and to build on the pupils' learning after the session/s as well as answer any questions the pupils may subsequently have

An Outline of Programme

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 and self-management strategies.
- Expressing our feelings, showing love and affection.
- 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.
- Children must be aware of the right to say NO and report abuse.
- Children must know what to do if they feel unsafe at any time.
- Learn about rights over their own bodies, respectful relationships, peer (and adult) pressure and responsibilities towards others.

My Relationships

Caring Friendships

- How important friendships are in making us feel happy and secure, and how people choose and make friends.
- The characteristics of friendships, including mutual respect, truthfulness, trustworthiness, loyalty, kindness, generosity, trust, sharing interests and experiences and support with problems and difficulties.
- That healthy friendships are positive and welcoming towards others, and do not make others feel lonely or excluded.
- That most friendships have ups and downs, and that these can often be worked through so that the friendship is repaired or even strengthened, and that resorting to violence is never right.
- Recognising when an argument needs to be resolved and have some strategies for dealing with conflict safely.
- How to recognise who to trust and who not to trust, how to judge when a friendship is making them feel unhappy or uncomfortable, managing conflict, how to manage these situations and how to seek help or advice from others, if needed.

Respectful Relationships

- The importance of respecting others, even when they are very different from them (for example, physically, in character, personality or backgrounds), or make different choices or have different preferences or beliefs.
- Practical steps they can take in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful relationships.
- The conventions of courtesy and manners.
- The importance of self-respect and how this links to their own happiness.
- That in school and in wider society they can expect to be treated with respect by others, and that in turn they should show due respect to others, including those in positions of authority.
- About different types of bullying (including cyberbullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders (primarily reporting bullying to an adult) and how to get help.
- What a stereotype is, and how stereotypes can be unfair, negative or destructive.
- The importance of permission-seeking and giving in relationships with friends, peers and adults.

Online Relationships

- That people sometimes behave differently online, including by pretending to be someone they are not.
- That the same principles apply to online relationships as to face-to-face relationships, including the importance of respect for others online including when we are anonymous.
- The rules and principles for keeping safe online, how to recognise risks, harmful content and contact, and how to report them.
- How to critically consider their online friendships and sources of information including awareness of the risks associated with people they have never met.
- How information and data is shared and used online.

Being Safe

- What sorts of boundaries are appropriate in friendships with peers and others (including in a digital context)
- Aware of safe boundaries and inappropriate touch, some parts are private and not for everyone to see, touch or take pictures of.
- About the concept of privacy and the implications of it for both children and adults; including that it is not always right to keep secrets if they relate to being safe.
- That each person's body belongs to them, and the differences between appropriate and inappropriate or unsafe physical, and other, contact. No one should ask them to touch someone else's private parts.
- How to respond safely and appropriately to adults they may encounter (in all contexts, including online) whom they do not know.
- How to recognise and report feelings of being unsafe or feeling bad about any adult.
- How to ask for advice or help for themselves or others, and to keep trying until they are heard.
- How to report concerns or abuse, and the vocabulary and confidence needed to do so.
- Where to get advice e.g. family, school and/or other sources.

My Community/Environment

- Appreciating other people's perspectives allows greater tolerance and respect.
- Appreciation of the family in relation to the school and the wider community.
- Cultural differences in families and family relationships.
- Develop personal and social responsibility for the way we work, play and interact as family, friends and community.
- 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
- Develop an understanding of common assumptions about and attitudes to gender.
- Better understanding of the differences between and expectations of both sexes.

Safeguarding and Child Protection

Through Relationships Education (and RSE), we will teach pupils the knowledge they need to recognise and to report abuse, including emotional, physical and sexual abuse. This will be delivered by focusing on boundaries and privacy, ensuring young people understand that they have rights over their own bodies. This will also include understanding boundaries in friendships with peers and also in families and with others, in all contexts, including online.

Pupils will be taught how to report concerns and seek advice when they suspect or know that something is wrong. At all stages it will be important to balance teaching children about making sensible decisions to stay safe (including online) whilst being clear it is never the fault of a child who is abused and why victim blaming is always wrong. Children have the right to:

- say no -respect their own body -speak out and know that someone can help

When teaching any sensitive issue young people may give cause for concern. All adults are aware of our safeguarding arrangements and procedures. If the school has any reason to believe a pupil is at risk, advice from the Safeguarding Team will be sought.

We recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers and that peer on peer abuse can manifest in many different ways, including on-line bullying, sharing inappropriate images, initiation/hazing (an activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses or endangers them, regardless of a person's willingness to participate) and inappropriate/harmful sexual behaviours.

Ground rules at the start of lessons help to establish and maintain a safe learning environment; this is important for good learning to take place, and also contributes to effective safeguarding.

Confidentiality

The nature of RSE means that pupils may disclose personal information that staff will respond to appropriately. The classroom is never a confidential place to talk, and that remains true in RSE. Pupils will be reminded that lessons are not a place to discuss their personal experiences and issues, or to ask others to do so, through the establishment of ground rules. Any visitor to the classroom will be bound by the school's policy on confidentiality, regardless of whether they have, or their organisation has, a different policy. We will make sure visitors are aware of this, and make sure there are enough opportunities for pupils to access confidential support after the lesson if they need it.

Any information disclosed to a staff member or other responsible adult, which causes concern about the child's safety, will be communicated to the designated person as soon as possible and always within 24 hours, in line with our safeguarding and child protection policy.

Staff cannot give any guarantee of confidentiality to pupils. If details are revealed which could lead staff to suspect sexual, physical or emotional abuse is involved, the teacher must follow the procedures outlined in the school's **Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy**.

Monitoring and Evaluating the RSE Programme

Monitoring activities:

- effective leadership with a system of lesson observations and peer support
- a system for regular review of the RSE policy and programme
- pupil/staff/parent surveys (Parent Focus Group)
- scrutinising staff planning (Yearly Overviews / MTPs / Short Term Planning)
- samples of pupils' work
- Incidents recorded in Behaviour Folder / E Safety Incidents / Bullying Allegation Forms Recorded.

Evaluation activities:

- Teacher evaluation of lessons and the overall RSE programme (MTP evaluations)
- Teacher and pupil evaluation of resources
- Evidence from lesson observations
- Evaluation of contributions of external partners
- Feedback and evaluation by pupils (Focus Groups)

This policy will be reviewed and updated regularly. All views will be acted upon and fed into the policy, progression and planning.

Policy to be read in conjunction with: ICT Policy , Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and PDMU Policy