



Erne Integrated College

Relationships and Sexuality Policy

The Education Reform (N.I) Order 1989 requires all grant-aided schools to offer a curriculum which:-

- a) Promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, intellectual and physical development of pupils at the school and thereby of society.
- b) Prepares said pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

Staff involved in the writing of this policy are J Brennan and L Martin in consultation with Home Economics, Science and P.E.

Rationale:-

1. 98% of parents said that schools should play a role in teaching Sex Education to young people, - (Sex Education in N. Ireland).
2. 72% of parents held that the view that parents and teachers should share equal responsibility for Sex Education, - (CCEA Guidance for Post-Primary Schools).

Many parents, despite these views, had not discussed any sexual issues with their children.

3. In 1998, the views and experiences of 6589 young people aged 11 - 16, were surveyed by the Health Promotion Agency for N. Ireland on behalf of the World Health Organisation. The study revealed the following:-
 - a) 3450 young people indicated that they at some stage had a boyfriend or girlfriend.
 - b) 665 reported that they had experienced sexual intercourse.
 - c) The average reported age of first sexual intercourse was 13 years for boys and 14 years for girls.
4. Northern Ireland has one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in Europe with approx. 1700 babies born each year to young women under 20 years. Since 1995 there has been an increase in the birth rate among teenagers. The incidence of Sexually Transmitted Infections continues to rise in N. Ireland. Teaching about safer sex remains one of the key strategies in combating the

spread of S.T.I.'s in general and of HIV in particular. (Relationships and Sexuality Education, CCEA).

5. In 1993 research undertaken by the World Health Organisation in the USA, Europe, Australia, Mexico and Thailand found that Sex Education programmes can encourage young people to postpone penetrative sexual intercourse, or, if they are already sexually active, to reduce their number of partners or have safer sex (Grunseit and Kippax 1994, Effects of Sex Education on Young People's Sexual Behaviour, Global Programme on Aids).

Background:-

Relationships and Sexuality Education (R.S.E) is not a new area of the curriculum. The framework for Sex Education was initially established by D.E. in Guidance Circular 1987/45 and since September 1992, post-primary schools have been legally required to ensure that the objectives of health education are promoted through their whole curriculum provision.

In Erne Integrated College RSE is delivered in the following subject areas: Home Economics, Science, Religious Education and PSE. In addition to this, students in Year 11 undertake a further programme designed specifically for them and delivered by nurses from Enniskillen Health Centre.

The Aims of RSE are to:

- enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the young person
- help a young person develop healthy and respectful friendships and relationships
- 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 a young person come to value family life and marriage
- appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood
- promote an appreciation of the value of human life.

Learning Objectives:-

The RSE curriculum should enable pupils to achieve and develop a knowledge and understanding of self.

- develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth
- develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well-being of others
- understanding the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and in wider contexts
- develop an awareness of differing family patterns
- develop strategies to make decisions, solve problems and implement actions in various personal, social and health 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 personal skills which will help establish and sustain healthy personal relationships
- develop some coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse
- acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction
- acquire and use of an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development
- develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making
- understanding human physiology with particular reference to the reproductive cycle, human fertility and sexually transmitted infections
- understand sexual development and identify and explore aspects of sexuality including sex roles, stereotyping, gender issues and cultural influences on sexuality
- develop skills for coping with peer pressure, conflict and threats to personal safety

Skills

The RSE curriculum should enable 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. Many skills evolve on the basis of experience, reflection, encouragement, observation and practice and assist in the development of emotional maturity and positive self-esteem. Young people need opportunities to develop:

- practical skills - for everyday living, for supporting others, for future parenting, for accessing health and advisory services
- 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- the steps in making personal choices and sensible decisions in the light of relevant information, making moral judgements about what to do in actual situations and putting these judgements into practice; developing independence in thought and action and forming and depending their own moral and values framework, taking into account the different viewpoints that will shape their values and attitudes to sex and sexual behaviour; acting responsibly and with initiative as an individual or as a member of a variety of groups; considering the consequences of actions.

Morals and Values

RSE should enable pupils to clarify what they believe, why they believe it and develop a respect for, and an interest in, the beliefs of others. Pupils need opportunities to explore values and attitudes and to consider how they and others are affected by them.

The importance of a moral framework is emphasised in the DFEE Circular No.5/1994 Education Act 1993: Sex Education in schools. Furthermore, the recommendation is made in "RS.E.- CCEA": The following key messages are offered as a potential basis for a morals and values framework:-

- The deferment of sexual activity until young people are physically and emotionally mature enough to understand the inherent responsibilities.
- An appreciation of the value of stable family life, marriage, permanent loving relationships and the responsibilities of parenthood.
- A recognition of the positive benefits of seeking sexual fulfilment within a permanent, committed relationship with one person.
- Abstinence as a positive option which is an achievable reality to which young people can aspire.

The DFEE Circular No. 5 1994 Education Act 1993: Sex Education in Schools states that "Teachers are exhorted to acknowledge that many children come from backgrounds that do not reflect such values and experiences. Sensitivity is therefore needed to avoid causing hurt and offence to them and their families and to allow such children a sense of worth".

Curriculum Organisation:-

Many aspects of the RSE Programme will be taught or reinforced by the general climate and everyday interaction in the classroom and the school. Since many of the objectives of RSE are similar to those in other curricular areas, much of its content can be treated in a cross-curricular manner. PSE shares content with the Programmes of Study for Science, Religious Education (R.E.), Personal and Social Education (P.S.E.), Physical Education (P.E.), Home Economics and English, as well as the cross-curricular theme of Health Education. With careful planning and coordination, transfer and reinforcement of learning should occur in a range of contexts.

The Science Programme of Study offers opportunities to address many aspects of RSE. Topics which must be covered include; the physical changes occurring at puberty, the basic biology or reproduction, the need to stay healthy during pregnancy, contraception, sexually transmitted infections and interpersonal relationships. Although the focus is on factual, biological issues, pupils are encouraged to develop a responsible attitude to sexual behaviour.

The English Programme of Study provides opportunities for pupils to explore and reflect on the various attitudes, values, beliefs and opinions which relate to themselves, their development, their relationships with others and family life. In addition, pupils can develop the use of appropriate vocabulary in different situations and practise communication skills.

The Home Economics Programme of Study provides opportunities for pupils to consider the contribution of positive family relationships to the personal and social development of family members. It sets out an approach to exploring home and family issues which analyses viewpoints, considers the factors influencing decisions and the consequences of actions.

The R.E. curriculum addresses many aspects of the RSE programme. It provides opportunities for pupils to consider moral issues, relate moral principles to their personal, social, and family life and identify and explore values and attitudes that influence behaviour. Pupils already undertake a range of activities which promote self-respect and respect for others. They have opportunities to consider Christian moral principles in relation to friendship, sexuality, preparation for marriage, single life and parenting.

In P.E., the emphasis on enjoyment of, and positive attitudes towards, physical activity is significant in fostering self-esteem and confidence as well as developing a sense of fair play, sharing and co-operation.

Art and Design, Music and Drama afford pupils the experience of individual expression and non-verbal communication. Personal and Social skills are developed through Drama by giving pupils opportunities for the role play of feelings and situations.

An Outline of a Programme for Key Stages 3 and 4:-

Growth and Development: KS3.

- The physical and emotional changes that occur in males and females during puberty; individual variation and rates of development.
- Hygienic practices associated with the physical changes of puberty.
- The male and female reproductive systems, what happens during intercourse, the biological aspects of human fertility and conception.
- The development of the child from conception to birth, including understanding the various stages of pregnancy.
- Factual information about types of contraception.
- The difference between HIV and AIDS, modes of transmission, practical hygiene and risky behaviour.

Growth and Development: KS4

- Safer sex practices in relation to STI's, HIV and AIDS.
- Factual information about abortion.
- The range of information, the services and support which are available from relevant agencies.
- My stage of development, e.g. physical, academic, spiritual, emotional, moral and sexual.
- My motivation, enthusiasms, interests, viewpoints, goals, degree of independence and responsibilities.
- Respecting myself, my self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Stereotyping and its influence on attitudes and behaviour.
- Media messages about male and female behaviour.

Sexuality: KS3

- An awareness of what is to be male and female.
- Equality and difference.
- Uniqueness and individuality.
- My abilities, talents, strengths, weaknesses and vulnerabilities.
- Influences on me competing priorities.
- Responsibility.
- Male and female perspectives on a range of issues.

Sexuality: KS4

- Sexual identity and orientation.
- Understanding the differences in sexuality and sexual relationships, including media messages.
- Encouraging sensitivity towards different ways of life, beliefs and opinions.
- The range of information, services and support which are available from relevant agencies

Relationships: KS3 and KS4

Adolescence:-

- recognising feelings, moods, emotions (sometimes conflicting) and knowing the language to express these appropriately
- maintaining positive relationships with e.g. friends, parents, other family members and teachers
- considering peer and other influences
- exploring morals and values in a variety of contexts and recognising the personal implications.

Relationships:-

- the differences between the various types of relationships e.g. parents, siblings, other family members, peers, teachers, friends and acquaintances
- the factors influencing different lifestyles of family, friends and acquaintances
- different types of friendship, caring, loving relationships, e.g. parents, siblings, friends, neighbours, married couples, partners, work colleagues, acquaintances
- establishing and maintaining relationships
- abstinence as a positive option and achievable reality
- appropriate and inappropriate relationships
- sexual abuse and the support available to young people
- sharing, commitment, respect, rights and responsibilities within relationships
- possible sources of conflict and strategies for dealing with differences
- media messages about relationships
- making informed and responsible decisions about personal and social relationships.

Family Issues e.g. parenting, childcare, lifelong responsibility and the extended family

- fostering and adoption
- teenage pregnancy
- single parents - positive and negative issues
- divorce
- gender roles - e.g. choices, prejudice, stereotyping.

Contraceptive Advice to Young People under 17 years

Teachers can provide general information to all pupils about types of contraception and risks to health. They can provide all pupils with information about where and from whom they can receive confidential advice, treatment and support. Personal medical advice **MUST NOT** be given to individual pupils. Teachers **MUST** advise pupils to seek advice from parents or medical practitioners. Pupils should be reminded that the legal age of consent for girls in N. Ireland is 17 years. There is no legal age limit for males. It is unlawful for a male to have sexual intercourse with a girl under 17 years.

HIV, AIDS and STIs

Pupils need to know that HIV/AIDS could affect them and not just drug users or gay men. They should be provided with information about the common STIs, the difference between HIV and AIDS, modes of transmission, practical hygiene and risky behaviours. Only those who are sexually active are potentially at risk from getting HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections and this should be emphasised.

Sexual Identity and Sexual Orientation

The issue of sexual orientation should be handled in a sensitive, non-confrontational and reassuring way.

In the transition from childhood to adulthood some adolescents experience strong emotional attachments and feelings towards people of their own sex. Many move on to form heterosexual relationships; some remain permanently homosexual or bi-sexual. Pupils should be reminded that a male under 18 years cannot legally consent to any homosexual act. Teachers, whatever their own views, should counteract prejudice and support the development of self-esteem and a sense of responsibility in every pupil.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Teachers have two responsibilities in relation to sexual abuse:

1. Teaching for protection, through the promotion of self-esteem, the skills of assertiveness, lack of guilt or embarrassment about sexual matters and the skills of self-expression, including appropriate language and understanding.

2. Recognising signs of abuse, physical, emotional and social.

The Class Teacher has a significant part in the early detection of abuse. It is essential that correct procedures are followed as outlined in D.E.'s Circular 1999/01 Pastoral Care in Schools, Child Protection.

Teaching RSE

The Classroom Environment

It is essential that teachers create a classroom environment which is supportive, where self-esteem is fostered and where the pupils feel valued and affirmed. The climate of a classroom needs to promote mutual respect and the dignity of each individual. It is important to create an atmosphere in the classroom which allows pupils to feel comfortable in expressing their opinions and beliefs in a secure and safe manner and to explore issues which may be sensitive and personal.

The child's right to privacy must be respected at all times by both the teacher and all other pupils in the class. 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. However:-

- teachers 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
- the designated teacher or Principal must be informed of any disclosures which might suggest that a pupil is at risk or that physical or sexual abuse is suspected. (As detailed by D.E. - Ref; Pastoral Care in Schools, Child Protection Circular).