



Erne Integrated College

Relationships and Sexuality Policy

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Contents

Item	Page No
Introduction	
• Rationale	1-3
• Definition of RSE	
• Morals and Values	
• Aims and Objectives	
Skills	3-4
Equal Opportunities	4
Curriculum Overview	4-5
Other Information	5-7
School Approach to Specific Issues	7-9
Monitoring and Evaluating	9-10
References and Appendix Details	

Introduction

Rationale

Erne Integrated College is an all-ability, child centred integrated school, which educates together students from the two main religious traditions, those of other faiths and those of none. As an integrated school we have a strong Christian ethos that promotes the ideals of religious tolerance, mutual understanding and respect for the rights and views of others. We promote a sense of community spirit and celebrate the diversity of cultural views and traditions within our integrated setting.

This policy supports the implementation of the Regional Strategy for 'Health and Social Well Being' which states that schools should promote a programme in relation to sexual and reproductive health, which emphasises the importance of personal relationships, self esteem and decision making skills.

While parents have the primary responsibility for the overall education of their children, it is accepted that school should play an important role in supporting and complementing them in this task. This of course includes all matters pertaining to education, which incorporates education on relationships and sexuality.

The components of this policy are in line with the DE circular 2013/16 and the guidance from CCEA. In addition, this policy is part of the wider pastoral policies including Drug Education, Promoting Positive Behaviour and Child Protection Policies.

Definition of relationships and Sexuality Education

Relationships and Sexuality Education is an important part of our pastoral programme and 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 aim of the school 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 are clearly part of that aim. Within the school setting we seek to promote overall development of the person, which includes the integration of sexuality into personal understanding, growth and development.

Morals and Values

Relationships and sexuality education at Erne Integrated College will be taught within a framework that encourages the following values:

- A respect for self
- A respect for others

- Non-exploitation in relationships
- Commitment, trust and bonding within relationships
- Mutuality in relationships
- Honesty with self and others
- A development of critical self awareness for themselves and others
- An exploration of the rights, duties and responsibilities involved in relationships
- Compassion, forgiveness, mercy and care when people do not conform to their way of life
- Self-discipline

The following key messages will be given to students and used as a moral framework in our teaching:

- 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.
- Recognition of the positive benefits of seeking 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.

Our teaching of Relationships and Sexuality should enable our students, by the time they are leavers, to clarify what they believe and why they believe it and develop a respect and interest in the beliefs of others.

The programme aims to present facts in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner, set within the framework of the stated values and an awareness of the law on sexual behaviour. Teachers will endeavour to acknowledge that many children come from backgrounds that do not reflect the stated values. Sensitivity is needed to avoid causing hurt and offence to them or their families, and allow such children a sense of worth.

Aims:

The aims of the relationships and Sexuality programme are to

- Enhance the personal development, self esteem and well-being of our students
- Help students develop healthy and respectful friendships and relationships
- Promote responsible behaviour and the ability to make informed decisions
- Foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, social and spiritual framework
- Help students come to value family life and marriage
- Promote an appreciation of the value of human life and the wonder of birth

- Appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood
- Critically analyse moral values and explore those held by different religious and cultural groups.

Objectives:

The objectives of the relationships and sexuality curriculum (11-18) are to enable students to:-

- Develop a positive view of ones self including self awareness, self esteem and self worth
- Develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well being of others
- Develop an awareness of differing family patterns and the growth and development of relationships in families and in friendships
- Develop strategies to make decisions, solve problems, and implement actions in various personal, social and health contexts
- To recognise and be able to discuss sensitive and controversial issues such as virginity, abortion, sexually transmitted diseases, contraception, and homosexuality within the legal, moral and spiritual framework.
- Develop personal skills useful for positive relationships
- Understand human physiology including puberty, the reproductive cycle, human fertility, sexually transmitted disease and understand the emotions linked to these
- Understand sexual development and identify and explore aspects of sexuality including sex roles, stereotyping, gender issues and cultural influences on sexuality
- Develop skill for coping with peer pressure, conflict and threats to personal safety.

Skills

The relationships and sexuality programme will enable students to develop the following skills

Practical skills - for everyday living, for supporting others, for future parenting, for accessing health and advisory services:

- **Communication skills** - listening, putting views clearly and appropriately, giving and receiving feedback, handling and resolving conflict peacefully, being assertive
- **Decision making and problem solving skills** - making informed decisions, making moral judgements and putting them in practice, developing independence in thought and action. Forming and defending their own morals and values taking into account the viewpoint of others. Considering consequences of their actions.
- **Interpersonal and leadership skills** - for managing relationships confidently and effectively.

Equal Opportunities/Meeting the needs of students/Special needs

The programme for relationships and sexuality education is appropriate to the age and maturity of the students and meets the needs of both genders.

The college acknowledges that students with special needs have the same rights as all other students and will have a programme tailored to their needs.

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

Relationships and Sexuality education at Erne Integrated College is taught in a cross curricular manner. Students encounter these issues at different stages during their school education. The content is shared by many different areas of study including:

- **PD Key Stage 3** and Learning for Life and Work
Personal development, self esteem, self confidence, decision making, physical, social and emotional changes related to puberty and adolescence. Friendships and family Life.
- **Personal Development and Learning for Life and Work at Key Stage 4**
Personal development, self esteem, self confidence, self respect, managing influences, media messages, body image, different types of relationships, rights and responsibilities in relationships, roles in relationships, stereotyping, sexuality and sexual orientation, sex and the law, sexual harassment and abuse, Human Rights Act 1998, STI's and HIV, Contraception, Abstinence, Sex before marriage (moral arguments) emergency contraception, teenage pregnancy, where to find help?
- **Science**
Through the Programme of Study which is compulsory for all at Key Stage 3 and part of our core at Key Stage 4. Topics include the physical changes occurring in puberty, basic biology of reproduction, healthy pregnancy, contraception, sexually transmitted infections and interpersonal relationships. Although the emphasis is on factual, biological issues, students are also encouraged to develop a responsible attitude to sexual behaviour.
- **Home Economics**
Positive family relationships. Home and family issues which analyse viewpoints, consider factors influencing decisions and consequences of actions.

- **Child Development**

The family, family lifestyles, variation between families, the home, parenthood, family planning and sexual health, conception, growth and development during pregnancy, birth, postnatal care and the responsibility both physically and emotionally of caring for a new baby.

- **Religious Education**

Provides students with an opportunity to consider moral issues relating moral principles to their personal, social and family life and identify and explore values and attitudes that influence behaviour. The students are given opportunities to consider Christian moral principles in relation to friendship, sexuality, preparation for marriage, single life, parenting and other concepts.

- **English and Drama:**

Provides opportunities for students to explore and reflect on various attitudes, values, beliefs and opinions which relate to themselves, their development, and their relationships with others. It also helps them understand vocabulary and communication skills.

- **Physical Education:**

Provides an emphasis on enjoyment and positive self image which helps to foster self esteem.

Involvement of Health Care Professionals and Guest Speakers

The school believes that most of the Relationships and Sexuality programme is best discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by our students. We also acknowledge that health care professionals can greatly enhance the quality of provision of the programme.

A variety of Year Groups will be given seminars on Relationships and Sexuality from the Love for Life team. Care is taken to provide the visitor, well in advance of the visit, with a copy of this policy. The visitor will be made aware of the school ethos and the manner of delivery required by the school. In addition the following areas and procedures will be clarified:

1. Composition of audience - age, maturity and special needs.
2. Degree of explicitness, content and presentation agreed prior to the visit.
3. Teacher supervision will be provided
4. Normal school visitor procedure (ie signing in etc) and Child Protection Issues.

Involving Parents

At Erne we acknowledge that the home exerts a major influence on all aspects of a young person's life and especially in the area of relationships and sexuality. We endeavour to work in partnership with parents and carers to complement and be supportive of their role. Many parents welcome the teaching of relationships and sexuality in school as they feel embarrassed or unable to talk to their children about these matters.

Consultation

The school will survey students from a variety of Year Groups for their opinions on the RSE Policy and school will take their views into account.

Parents will be able to view the school policy online and may receive a full copy of the policy on request.

School may provide information to parents when guest speakers are invited to school and parents are welcome to discuss any matters pertaining to the policy at a mutually agreed time with relevant school staff.

Rights and responsibilities of parents

There is no statutory parental right to withdraw a child from classes on relationships and sexuality. The school will however support a parent who (after full consultation) wishes to request that their child is excused from participating in some or all of the lessons.

In circumstances where the student will miss parts of the statutory programmes of study or GCSE syllabuses, parents will be made fully aware of the implications of withdrawal. Parents should consider the social and emotional effects of exclusion.

Withdrawal of consent should be made in writing to the Principal, stating the reasons where possible. This is useful for monitoring and evaluating the programme. **Parents should note that they do not have to provide a reason.**

Student Involvement

The school acknowledges that students are more likely to enjoy and benefit from a programme that has taken their comments on board and aims to meet their needs. Students will be provided with opportunities to evaluate the programme via the students' council and questionnaires after the programmes.

Confidentiality and Difficult issues

The child's right to privacy must be respected at all times. The key rule, which should be made in advance of any discussions, is that "no one will be expected to ask or answer any personal questions". This rule applies to all including the teacher. Teachers should not impart information about their personal lives.

Students who make the teacher or fellow students feel threatened or make inappropriate remarks in relation to any matters, will be dealt with in accordance with the positive behaviour policy-level approach.

Before the teacher and students embark on discussions of a sensitive nature or issues arise as part of classroom debate, the teacher must point out to students that:

1. Confidentiality can not and will not be promised.

2. The Principal or Designated Teacher for child protection must be informed of any disclosures which might suggest that a student is at risk or that physical or sexual abuse is suspected. Normal child protection procedures should be followed.

3. Teachers can provide general educational advice to students as part of the curriculum. Any advice must be supportive of the role of parents.

Teachers should remember that since they are not members of the medical profession they should not give personal medical advice to any student.

School approach to Specific Issues

The status of the family, marriage, cohabiting

Students at Erne will be encouraged to appreciate the value of family life and marriage. When referring to those who engage in sexual activity or those cohabiting, the terms husband and wife should be used. Teachers should however be aware that many children come from backgrounds that do not reflect this value or experience. Sensitivity and judgement is therefore needed to avoid causing hurt and offence to them and their families, and to allow such children to have their worth.

Sacredness of life/Abortion

Students at Erne will be taught an appreciation of the value of human life and the wonder of birth. Teachers may provide students with the moral and religious arguments in this debate by clearly outlining the moral and ethical arguments given by the pro-abortion and pro-life campaigns. A non-judgemental approach should be taken where the teacher provides facts and arguments from both groups.

Contraception

As part of the curriculum teachers can, where appropriate, provide general information to all students about the different types of contraception and risks to health. They can provide information to all students about where, and from whom, they can receive confidential advice, treatment and support. Personal medical advice must not be given to students. Teachers must advise students to seek advice from parents, the school health team or medical practitioners. Students should be reminded that the legal age of consent for girls in Northern Ireland is 17. There is no legal age limit for males but it is unlawful for a male to have sexual intercourse with a girl under 17 years old.

Termination and the morning after pill.

As part of the curriculum teachers can, where appropriate, provide general information to all students about termination and use of the morning after pill and the risks to health. Teachers must not give personal medical advice. Teachers are advised to encourage students to speak to their parents, the school health team or medical person. Teachers must not set up these meetings/appointments.

Sexual Identity and Sexual Orientation

This issue will be dealt with in a sensitive, non-confrontational and reassuring manner.

We recognise that 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 attachments remain permanently of a homosexual or bisexual nature. Students should be reminded that a male under 18 cannot legally consent to any homosexual act.

Teachers at Erne, whatever their own views, should counteract prejudice and support the development of self esteem and a sense of responsibility in every student

Sexuality transmitted Infections (STI's) and HIV/AIDS

Where appropriate in the course of curriculum delivery students will be provided with information about the most common STI's, the difference between HIV and AIDS, modes of transmission, practical hygiene and an awareness that risk taking behaviour may result in transmitted infections. Students will learn that HIV/AIDS could affect them and not just drug users or gay men.

Risk taking Behaviour

There are very clear links between the content of this policy and that of our Drug Awareness programme. Students will be taught that very often sexual activity and other risk taking behaviour are associated together. Teachers will provide students with the clear message that abstinence in all these areas is the best policy.

Sexual Abuse

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, students will be taught how to protect themselves in abusive relationships.

Teachers, learning assistants and school staff, in their training in the Child Protection policy, will be aware of the signs of abuse and follow the correct procedures to listen, record, report and not to promise confidentiality when dealing with disclosures of abuse.

Monitoring and Evaluating the Policy

Roles and Responsibilities

The Principal

The Principal has the key role to play in developing and implementing this policy. Coordination between him and the Vice Principal Pastoral Care will ensure that there is a planned, structured approach to the Relationships and Sexuality programme. Consultation will be initiated with governors, staff, parents and health care professionals.

Role of the Board of Governors

Governors should foster and support the development of a Relationships and Sexuality policy and programme by collaborating with teachers and parents. They should facilitate the consultative process whereby the school community can respond and contribute. Governors need to be aware of the content of the programme and policy.

At all times governors should seek to accommodate and be sensitive to the religious and cultural beliefs of both teachers and parents whilst fulfilling their responsibility to ensure the availability of adequate Relationships and Sexuality education for all our students.

The Teaching Staff

All staff have a significant role to play in the planning and implementation of the Relationship and Sexuality policy.

Teacher training needs will be identified. Directed time and training days will on occasion be highlighted to help with the dissemination of the policy and programme. Staff will be provided with opportunities to evaluate the training they receive, and they will be asked to share their views on the content and effectiveness of the programme. Opportunities will be provided for feedback at pastoral meetings.

The Students

Students will be consulted at age appropriate levels on the content of the programme. This will be achieved by the use of evaluation questionnaires. In addition, consultation based on the content of the policy and programme may take place with the students' council.

The Parents

As stated in a previous section parents will play an important role in the consultation process of the policy. (Parents will on occasion be informed by letter when and where in the curriculum sensitive issues are being addressed.) Parents are invited to meet with appropriate school staff if they wish to raise

any issues. Every effort will be made to clarify the school's position and to take on board the views of the parents.