

Ballyclare Secondary School
Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy



“Every child should have a rewarding educational experience.”

Ethos

Ballyclare Secondary School provides a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment that fosters respect for difference, challenges prejudicial attitudes, and promotes equality of opportunity for all pupils.

Context

Becoming a sexually healthy adult is a key developmental task for adolescents. Education, in its broadest sense, is essential for the development of skills that enable young people to cope with the challenge of adolescence and to move comfortably and confidently into the realm of sexual activity. It is widely accepted that young people have the right to sex education, partly because it is a means by which they are helped to protect themselves against abuse, exploitation, unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. Recent research in the UK indicates that pupils want more detailed information and discussion about sex and sexual relationships both in and out of school.

Relationships and Sexuality Education is about more than simply educating young people about biological sexual reproduction. Relationships and Sexuality Education is a lifelong process encompassing:

- the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills; and
- the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy.

For pupils, the learning process has begun informally, with their parents or carers, long before any formal education takes place at school. Sexuality includes all aspects of the human person, which changes and develops throughout life. Sexuality is an integral part of the human personality and has biological, cultural, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions.

Effective Relationships and Sexuality Education is essential if young people are to make responsible and well-informed decisions about their lives. Our Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy aims to ensure that we provide young people with:

- the opportunity to develop the skills to build healthy and respectful relationships, stay safe, and develop their own moral thinking and value system; and
- up-to-date, accurate and accessible information about reproduction, sex and sexual health matters.

Relationships and Sexuality Education is effective when it is taught in a sensitive and inclusive manner, and in a way that is appropriate to the pupil's emotional and physical age and stage of development. All young people have the right to quality teaching and learning across the curriculum; Relationships and Sexuality Education is no exception. An absence of such provision may leave pupils with a learning and skills deficit, making them more susceptible to inappropriate behaviours, sexual abuse and exploitation.

In Ballyclare Secondary School, Relationships and Sexuality Education will be delivered in a manner that fully supports the Christian ethos of the school and ensures that pupils receive information that is balanced, non-judgemental and respectful of the diversity of values that are reflected in society.

Introduction – Why is Relationships and Sexuality Education Important?

Our sexuality is a central and significant part of who we are and how we see ourselves in relation to others. It is part of our overall health and contributes to our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being. Relationships and Sexuality Education can help to promote a positive view of sexuality and sexual health by helping young people to feel good about themselves, to respect others and to be able to make safe, responsible and healthy relationships.

Relationships and Sexuality Education is important as it respects the rights of children and young people. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1989 means that all children and young people have the right to a good quality education in accordance with the Convention.

Relationships and Sexuality Education promotes a better understanding of diversity and inclusion. Schools are increasingly diverse spaces reflecting wider societal change. We encourage young people to be confident and respectful of themselves and others, and prepare them for life after school. Our Relationships and Sexuality Education is inclusive of all differences regardless of race, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, culture, gender and sexual orientation. We recognise the diversity of family life in today's society, the fact that some children may have gay, lesbian or bisexual parents or carers, some of whom may be in a civil partnership. All staff must be sensitive and respectful of difference, ensuring that no pupil ever feels excluded, or experiences bullying due to their family or home circumstances.

Relationships and Sexuality Education helps young people keep themselves safe in the digital world. Technology plays an integral role in the lives of many young people in Northern Ireland today: they use the internet to watch programmes, play games, listen and download music, carry out research for school, chat with their friends, and make new friends. Many young people choose to document their entire lives on social media. Ballyclare Secondary School recognises the fact that, while technological advancements provide many opportunities, risk can accompany opportunity.

Cyber bullying, the use of chat rooms, online grooming, access to inappropriate images, and 'sexting' are just some of the ways in which online and digital technology can affect the lives of young people. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) (Wanless, 2013) reports that over a third of young people would prefer to explore issues around sex and sexual identity online rather than ask a teacher or a parent or carer. Searching for information of a sexual nature on the net is making young people highly vulnerable and exposes them to risks including pornography, abuse and exploitation.

Pupils will be made aware that under *The Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008* it is a crime to take, make, permit to take, distribute, show, possess, possess with intent to distribute, or to advertise indecent photographs of any person, including themselves, below the age of 18. The issue of 'sexting' also provides pupils with the opportunity to further explore and discuss related issues such as peer pressure, pornography, negative body image, and low self-esteem.

Through Relationships and Sexuality Education, young people will be taught how to safely navigate the digital landscape which plays such an integral role in their lives.

They should be able to:

- identify potential threats or dangers, including all forms of emotional, physical and sexual abuse and exploitation;
- make informed choices and decisions;
- build their resilience; and
- be aware of strategies which they can use to protect themselves.

It is important that pupils affected by such issues know where to find appropriate sources of help.

Relationships and Sexuality Education will also help young people to recognise and challenge inappropriate behaviour and touch. Over half of victims of sexual violence in Northern Ireland are under 18 years of age (Bunting, 2011), with one in three teenage girls and 16 per cent of teenage boys having experienced sexual violence in intimate partner relationships (Barter, McCarry, Berridge and Evans, 2009). Some pupils will come from homes where there is domestic violence, and therefore may view this behaviour as acceptable and normal within a relationship. The Relationships and Sexuality classroom provides an ideal safe place for pupils to explore sexual and relationship violence. issues and help them to recognise and challenge inappropriate and unwanted attention from others. It is also important that pupils are encouraged to challenge the 'blame' that can be attached to victims of sexual abuse and domestic and/or sexual violence in a relationship.

In Ballyclare Secondary School Relationships and Sexuality Education will encourage pupils to develop a deeper knowledge and understanding of personal safety, and the importance of having equal, mutually respectful, consensual, non-exploitative and non-violent relationships. Pupils will also develop the resilience to work their way through difficult situations, and find out where to access help and support.

Young people regularly contact organisations such as ChildLine as they lack basic knowledge on issues such as sexual health, puberty, pregnancy and relationships. NSPCC evidence suggests that young people feel that they are not obtaining such information in school (Wanless, 2013). Young people should have access to reliable, accurate and relevant information which reflects their age and maturity. All young people, including those with minority needs, must also know where to access a range of services if they need help or support.

Relationships and Sexuality Education provides opportunities for young people to critically evaluate the information they are bombarded with today, particularly the often distorted and inaccurate information about sex and relationships they are exposed to from their peers and social media. Relationships and Sexuality Education can lead to young people making informed choices and decisions by providing opportunities for them to examine their own

values and attitudes in the light of those held by others. A deeper understanding of their own personal values and beliefs can help young people to clarify why they think and behave as they do, separate fact from fiction, recognise prejudice, and respect the views, emotions and feelings of others. (CCEA 2015)

Relationships and Sexuality Education is an important vehicle for increasing awareness of issues such as contraception and fertility, improving the sexual health and wellbeing of young people and reducing unplanned teenage pregnancy and rates of sexually transmitted infections.

However, despite the fact that research repeatedly shows that quality Relationships and Sexuality Education can delay sexual activity amongst young people, the reality is that many young people are engaging in sexual activity.

The importance of sexual relationships is such that relationships and sexuality education should not be left to chance. Ballyclare Secondary School has responsibility to ensure that all of its pupils receive a planned and structured programme which is sensitive to pupil needs and takes into consideration any religious, moral and cultural issues which may be raised.

Policy Development

“The DE Circular requires each school to have in place its own written policy on how it will address the delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education.”

The circular also states that Relationships and Sexuality Education “should be taught in harmony with the ethos of the school and reflect the moral and religious principles held by parents and school management authorities”.

(DE Circular 2013/16)

The formation of a Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy will:

- promote a shared vision of Relationships and Sexuality Education across the school,
- show how Relationships and Sexuality Education complements and supports other aspects of school life,
- establish consistent standards and practices in the delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education,
- create a framework for wider curriculum development and review,
- provide a foundation for the monitoring and evaluating of Relationships and Sexuality Education provision and
- promote school self-evaluation and improvement.

(CCEA 2015)

This Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy has been drawn up in collaboration with teachers, parents and carers, pupils, governors and other educational and health professionals.

It is the responsibility of the Board of Governors to ratify the Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy and this was completed at a meeting of the Board on 4th November 2019

Aims of the policy

- To ensure that Relationships and Sexuality Education enables our pupils to develop and maintain safe, healthy and satisfying personal relationships.
- To value and support, through appropriate training, school personnel involved in the delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education.
- To ensure that the planning and delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education reflects the ethos of Ballyclare Secondary School.

Objectives of the Relationships and Sexuality Education Curriculum

The Relationships and Sexuality Education curriculum is part of the statutory minimum entitlement for the personal development strand of Learning for Life and Work. Opportunities to deliver elements of Relationships and Sexuality Education present themselves throughout the school curriculum. Encouraging discussion in different subject areas helps place Relationships and Sexuality Education in the context of life and social skills learning. This encourages young people to see Relationships and Sexuality Education as an inherent part of human relationships and their own development. Relationships and Sexuality Education is delivered as part of Learning for Life and Work: Personal Development, Science, Home Economics, Child Development, Religious Studies, Drama, ICT, Physical Education and the taught Pastoral Curriculum. Through these subject areas pupils are given worthwhile experiences which will enable them to :

- Explore self-awareness with opportunities to consider the importance of self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Explore and express a sense of self and their own feelings and emotions.
- Investigate the influences of peer pressure, conflict management, media, social and cultural trends on young people.
- Explore the concept of health and recognise and manage factors which affect physical, mental and emotional health.
- Explore strategies to promote personal safety and health and resist various forms of abuse.
- Develop safe practice in relation to the internet and managing risk.
- Explore the qualities of relationships with friends and families, valuing them as a source of love and mutual support acknowledging the similarities and differences between people and family structures and patterns.
- Explore strategies to make decisions solve problems and implement actions.
- Explore the implications of sexual maturation, growth and change and understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity.
- Explore aspects of sexuality such as gender roles, stereotyping and cultural influences
- Explore the physical, social and emotional changes that occur during puberty and learn how babies are conceived, grow and are born.
- Use appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development.
- Explore the emotional, social and moral implications of early sexual activity.
- Investigate some of the changing needs of family members at different stages of the life cycle including physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs.
- Develop awareness of parenting skills.
- Explore the roles and responsibilities of individuals within a variety of home and family structures.
- Explore strategies to managing changing family circumstances.

- Develop personal and inter-personal skills including communication and social interaction, in order to help establish and sustain healthy relationships.

Approaches to Learning and Teaching

The Learning Environment

It is our aspiration to create a warm and caring school environment, in which our pupils' personal, social, emotional, intellectual, physical and moral development can be enhanced and in which effective learning can take place.

We regard the building of strong, supportive relationships as being vital to the creation of that caring ethos, in which learning can take place. The contributors to these relationships include the pupils, teaching and other staff, parents/carers, governors and all those who make a regular contribution to school life.

Ballyclare Secondary School seeks to be a stable, supportive and positive influence on the lives of its pupils in a society where there are many challenges and pressures. A Relationships and Sexuality Education programme is about more than imparting factual information. It aims to develop personal and social skills and explore attitudes and values. Relationships and Sexuality Education seeks to promote behaviour that 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 and can only take place in a warm, caring and inclusive classroom environment.

The teaching methods adopted have been based upon guidance from the Department of Education, Education Authority, CCEA, *“Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance”* and CCEA, *“Teaching Controversial and Sensitive Issues Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4”* and ETI.

Approaches to Learning

Teaching methods adopted for the delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education are child-centred in approach to ensure that lessons are meaningful and engaging for pupils. The teacher's role is to facilitate and support pupils' learning. An enquiry-based approach is effective when exploring sensitive issues. Methodologies in which pupils actively participate, such as scenarios, role plays and debates ensure that pupils gain deeper knowledge, understanding, develop thinking skills and personal capabilities, attitudes and dispositions will fully engage pupils in the learning process.

Teaching Resources

Teaching resources are approved by the Senior Leadership for the delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education. Particular care must be taken when using resources which are freely available on the internet or those prepared by visiting speakers. All resources must be approved before sharing with pupils. Teachers must ensure that the resources they use:

- reflect the ethos of the school;
- are age-appropriate, inclusive, and sensitive to the pupils' needs and experiences; and
- are factually accurate, up-to-date and make clear distinctions between fact and opinion.
- are shared with the Vice Principal, Education Provision and Vice Principal, Pastoral Care before delivery in the classroom.

NB Inappropriate/explicit images **are not** used under any circumstances.

Parents and carers are informed about the school Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme and informed regarding the materials that pupils will be exposed to particularly those of a sensitive nature.

We believe in Ballyclare Secondary School that all teachers should be a supportive role model for our pupils and that it is every teacher's responsibility therefore to build secure, nurturing classrooms that will develop protective factors essential for resilience in our pupils.

Special Educational Needs

Resources and teaching activities are adapted to ensure that there are no barriers to participation or learning for pupils with SEN. The SENCO will communicate with parents or carers of young people with SEN about the content of the Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme and the date when classes will cover certain teaching activities and themes.

It is widely recognised that pupils with SEN are more vulnerable to all forms of abuse and exploitation. Teachers must try to ensure that they develop the knowledge, understanding and skills of pupils to enable them to:

- identify inappropriate and exploitative behaviour;
- help develop their own prevention strategies to stay safe;
- recognise and build healthy relationships; and
- know who they can talk to.

Ballyclare Secondary School follows the DE and CCEA Guidance on Teaching Methodologies for delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education.

- All students/pupils have the right to learn in a safe environment, to be to be treated with respect and dignity and not to be treated any less favourably on grounds of their actual or perceived sexual orientation. (Equality Commission on Eliminating Sexual Orientation Discrimination in Northern Ireland).
- Age of Consent for sexual activity in NI is 16 years (Sexual Offences Order 2008)
- Teachers and pupils will not be expected to ask or answer any personal questions.
- Pupils and parents should be informed that confidentiality cannot be maintained.
- The Principal/Designated Teacher must be informed of any disclosures which might suggest that a pupil is at risk or that physical or sexual abuse is suspected.
- Teachers can provide general educational advice to all pupils as part of the curriculum which is supportive of the role of parents.
- There will be occasions when teachers will have to use their own discretion and judgement about how to deal with particular questions raised by a pupil or a group of pupils. Teachers should exercise their professional judgement as to whether it is appropriate to deal with the question in a whole-class forum. The teacher may also wish to discuss the questions posed with the parents or carers and/or a senior member of staff to ascertain how they would like the matter to be handled.

Confidentiality and Safeguarding and Child Protection

(Ballyclare Secondary School follows the Advice and Guidance of CCEA 2015).

The provision of effective Relationships and Sexuality Education can play a key role in meeting schools' child protection/safeguarding obligations. Ballyclare Secondary School has the responsibility to develop appropriate policies and practices which safeguard and keep young people from harm. Ballyclare Secondary School must ensure that we can identify pupils who are 'at risk' so that we can provide the appropriate support. A study revealed that 62 per cent of young people who were groomed for child sexual exploitation never told their parents or an adult in a position of authority (Beckett, 2011). This finding is a stark reminder of the significant role teachers play in the early detecting of 'at risk' pupils and why we must always be alert to pupils experiencing distress and/or changes in their behaviour, as the majority of young people do not tell when they are being abused or exploited.

The foundation for the effective delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education is the building of secure, trusting, respectful relationships between the teacher and their pupils. Pupils should feel reassured that their teacher cares about their wellbeing and be aware that there are adults whom they can talk to and confide in. Pupils must also know and understand that the promise of confidentiality is never an option in the classroom or school setting. They must know where the sources of confidential help are and how they can access them. It must also be clear to pupils that, whilst teachers will offer support, they are obligated to notify the child protection/safeguarding teacher/team if they are concerned that the pupil may be 'at risk'. Teachers must take decisions relating to personal disclosures in accordance with the procedures set out in DE's booklet Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection (Circular 1999/10).

The following is a summary of these procedures:

- The staff member should immediately inform the designated child protection teacher/member of the safeguarding team.
- The designated child protection teacher/member of the safeguarding team must inform/consult with Social Services and/or the PSNI.
- No staff member should take on the role of investigator – this is the responsibility of Social Services and the PSNI.
- Staff members should explain their responsibilities to refer cases of alleged abuse to the appropriate authorities, but they also must ensure that the matter will only be disclosed to the people who need to know about it.
- Staff members should give the pupil time to talk without interrupting or probing, recording exactly what the pupil says, whilst not promising confidentiality.
- It is very important that any pupil who feels that they cannot talk to or does not wish to talk to their parents or carers has access to other sources of support

Specific Issues

Issues of sexual identity, female genital mutilation and abortion can attract a wide range of beliefs and values. The teaching of all issues including those that may be perceived as

sensitive will be consistent with the ethos of the school. As these issues are perceived as sensitive, they will be delivered within the ethos of the school even though that may be a contradiction to the lifestyle or experiences of some pupils, parents/carers and staff.

Withdrawal from class

Relationships and Sexuality Education is a statutory component of the Revised Curriculum NI, we do not encourage withdrawal from class and are willing to discuss concerns that parents or carers may have. We acknowledge that parents and carers have the right to withdraw their child from Relationships and Sexuality Education. Children have the right to an education that adequately prepares them for adult life.

External Agencies and Individuals

Ballyclare Secondary School recognises that the expertise of education and health professionals from statutory or voluntary bodies or individuals from the community can provide a value added dimension to the Relationships and Sexuality Education programme. Before agreeing to use an external agency or individual teachers must;

- Ensure that the agency or individual receives a copy of the school's Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy
- Issues around confidentiality and the school ethos must be highlighted
- Ensure parental consent through agreement in writing for participation in any programme.
- An appropriate teacher should be present
- Ensure that the input complements the schools RSE programme and will incorporate preparation and follow up activities
- Inform pupils of the purpose of the visit
- Ensure that the pupils evaluate the work

Monitoring and Evaluating the Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme:

- The Vice Principal, Pastoral Care, in partnership with all teachers involved in delivering the Relationships and Sexuality Education programme, will be involved, on an ongoing basis, in monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness and relevance of the programme. This will be based on feedback from the pupils, teachers and parents and carers.
- The aims of the Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme, as listed in this policy, will be at the forefront of any monitoring and evaluation in order to ensure the aims are being achieved.
- Evaluations will be carried out at the end of the unit of study for each of the year groups.

The following policies, procedures and documents are also relevant to this Policy:

- Pastoral Care Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Promoting Emotional Health and Wellbeing Policy
- Learning and Teaching Policy
- Mobile Phone Policy
- Drugs Education Policy

- GDPR/Data Protection Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Safeguarding Staff: Code of Conduct

Still to add in :Training
Staff details
Audit

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