**TOBERMORE**

**PRIMARY SCHOOL**



# RSE POLICY

**Date Policy Reviewed:** April 2019

**Policy due for Review:** April 2021

**CONTEXT**

Tobermore Primary School is committed to contributing towards the development of all aspects of the individual child which has been set out on a legislative basis through The Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, requiring all grant aided schools to offer a curriculum which:

***'promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, intellectual and physical development of pupils at the school and thereby of society …and… prepares such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.'***

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 staff and governors, shared with parents and finally ratified by the Board of Governors.

DE Circular 2013/16 states:

***‘The Department 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.”***

The general principles which underpin our work are those set out in Departmental guidance and the following Circulars:

Circular 2001/15: Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Circular 2001/15-2: Guidance for Primary Schools - Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Circular 2010/01: Guidance on Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Circular 2013/16: Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy in Schools

We further recognise the importance of working in partnership with parents/carers in this area of personal development and acknowledge the contribution that can be made by outside agencies with skill and expertise in particular areas of the curriculum, eg NSPCC.

**INTRODUCTION**

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a lifelong process which encompasses the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills, and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about personal and social relationships and gender issues. The learning process begins informally with parents or guardians before formal education begins.

Sexuality includes many aspects of the human experience, relates to gender issues and is subject to change and development throughout life. Sexuality has biological, cultural, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions. It especially concerns the capacity to give and receive love; procreation and, in a more general way, the aptitude for forming relationships with others.

**AIMS**

The aims of RSE are to:

* enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child;
* help the child 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 the child come to value family life and marriage;
* appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood;
* promote an appreciation of the value of human life and the wonder of birth.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

The RSE curriculum should enable pupils to:

* acquire and develop 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;
* understand 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 to 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 an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development;

**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. They need opportunities to develop:

* practical skills for everyday living; for supporting others; for future parenting;
* communication skills - learning to listen, listening to others points of view; putting one’s own view forward clearly and appropriately; giving and receiving feedback; handling and resolving conflict peacefully; being assertive.
* decision-making and problem-solving skills for sensible choices made in the light of relevant information; making moral judgements about what to do in actual situations and putting these judgements into practice; acting responsibly and with initiative as an individual or as a member of a group.
* inter-personal skills for managing relationships confidently and effectively; for developing as an effective group member or leader.

**MORALS AND VALUES**

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

Children should be taught RSE within a framework which models and 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 SCHOOL ETHOS**

Our ethos is founded on principles from a *Rights Respecting School* where tolerance and respect for others is paramount. It is our intention that everyone feels valued and our pupils are encouraged to develop their full potential in a caring and supportive environment. This policy reflects the Christian ethos of our school.

**MEETING THE NEEDS OF PUPILS**

To ensure that the learning experiences are effective, positive and relevant to all pupils, the RSE programme should be developmental, accessible and be appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils. It should meet the needs of both genders and be a positive experience for all participants.

**HOME, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY - SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR RSE**

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 these partners has distinctive contributions to make.

**The Role of Senior Management**

A planned, structured and coherent approach to RSE will be implemented throughout the school. Implementing this, and other related policies, will be managed by the Principal and the member of staff with responsibility for Pastoral Care alongside the school’s Safeguarding Team. Consultation will be carried out with governors, staff, parents, and other relevant professionals.

**The Role of Governors**

The governors will foster and support the development of our RSE policy and similar related policies by collaborating with teachers and parents. They will facilitate the consultative process whereby the school community can respond and contribute on relevant issues. The governors of the school will seek to accommodate and be sensitive to the religious and cultural beliefs of both teachers and parents, while also ensuring that the RSE programme meets the needs of the pupils.

**The Role of Teaching staff**

The classroom teacher has a significant and diverse role to play in the planning and implementation of RSE in the school. At all times the role must be considered to be complementary to that of parents, taking account of the individual needs, age, maturity, stage of development and family background of the child. Class teachers will strive to promote the aims of this policy and will be responsible for the delivery of the RSE programme at the level appropriate to their particular class, using curriculum materials which have been approved for its implementation.

**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 the internet. We will attempt to provide opportunities for pupils to critically evaluate these sources and ensure they receive accurate information. Where puberty-related changes are being covered with P6 and P7 classes, parents will be informed of the timing and content to be covered and of the learning activities the pupils will undertake.

**Withdrawal from RSE**

Any issues raised regarding the content of an element of RSE or other related programmes will be addressed and resolved in a positive manner as part of the consultation process. Although full consultation may have been undertaken, a parent may still request that their child is excused from participating in some aspects of RSE lessons. In this circumstance, the school will discuss the nature of the parent’s concerns, attempt to deal with any misunderstandings, identify the specific issues and lessons which are problematic and explain the implications for the pupil in relation to those aspects of the statutory programmes of study which will be missed. The social and emotional effects of exclusion should be considered, as well as the likelihood that pupils may discuss the content of RSE lessons outside the classroom.

**CURRICULUM ORGANISATION & DELIVERY**

RSE will be taught across the curriculum, mainly through PDMU but also through RE and other subject areas. In Tobermore PS we follow the ***Living Learning Together Programme*** from P1-P7. 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.

Teachers will endeavour to ensure that pupils are enabled to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: -

* Self-awareness
* Feelings and emotions
* Learning to learn
* Health, growth and change
* Safety
* Relationships
* Rules, rights and responsibilities
* Managing conflict
* Similarities and differences
* Learning to live as members of the community

Additional information on these themes can be obtained from the CCEA website by following the link www.ccea.org.uk → Curriculum → Key Stage 1&2 → Relationships & Sexuality Education: Primary Guidance.

RSE is not intended to be value free; the following key messages will be promoted throughout the school:

* An appreciation of the value of family life, marriage, permanent loving relationships, and the responsibilities of parenthood.
* A recognition that both genders, male and female, are to be appreciated, respected, valued and seen as equal, different and complementary.
* An appreciation that friendships and relationships should be based on self and mutual respect, empathy, non-exploitation, honesty, trust and commitment.
* Compassion, forgiveness, mercy, tolerance and care are essential skills and dispositions to develop in relationships.
* Within relationships there should be recognition that rights, duties and responsibilities are involved.

RSE will be delivered in a holistic, cross curricular way, ensuring that teaching is at all times appropriate to existing pupil knowledge, maturity and the pupils’ capacity to understand these issues. Many of the aspects of RSE are also integrated within specific parts of the Health Education curriculum, PDMU, World Around Us and RE.

**SELECTION OF TEACHING RESOURCES**

The selection of teaching resources will be:

* consistent with the school’s RSE policy and the aims and objectives of the RSE programme;
* consistent with the school’s morals and values framework;
* appropriate to pupils’ age, level of understanding and maturity;
* factually correct;
* likely to appeal to pupils in terms of appropriate language level, images and knowledge required;
* complementary to the existing programmes which the school offers;
* encourage consideration of a range of issues, attitudes and beliefs pertinent to the topics covered;

***“Destination Adolescence: - A Puberty Toolkit for Teachers of Primary Education”,*** published by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust has been approved for use in TOBERMORE Primary School.

**SPECIFIC ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

**The status of the family**

The school supports the institutions of marriage and the family, while being sensitive to those with different family circumstances.

**Confidentiality and Child Protection**

At Tobermore PS we respect the child’s right to privacy. Key to this is that no-one should feel obliged to ask or answer any personal questions. However, staff cannot give a guarantee of confidentiality to pupils around issues relating to child protection. If details are revealed that would lead staff to suspect that sexual or other forms of abuse are involved, the teacher must follow the child protection procedures outlined in the Child Protection Policy.

**Terminology**

In teaching issues related to RSE, teachers will use the correct biological terms for parts of the body.

**Special Needs**

The staff of Tobermore PS will be particularly sensitive to the needs of those pupils with special needs, ensuring that the RSE programme is accessible to such pupils.

**Answering Pupils’ Questions**

If pupils raise issues that are offensive to some or beyond the maturity level of the majority of the pupils, staff will not answer in class. If the teacher feels the question was a genuine one, he/she may suggest that the pupil ask his/her parents or if this is an inappropriate option, the teacher may decide to answer the question in a sensitive manner, which may require the presence of another colleague. If the question asked raises child protection issues, this will be referred to the designated teacher for child protection.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed and updated every two yeras. Information gained will then be correlated by the Safeguarding Team and used to adapt the programme for the future.

**OTHER RELEVANT POLICIES**

1. Pastoral Care including Anti-Bullying
2. Safeguarding/Child Protection
3. Use of Reasonable Force/Safe Handling
4. Special Educational Needs
5. First Aid & Administration of Medication
6. Health & Safety
7. ICT Acceptable Use, Internet Safety
8. Intimate Care