



## RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE) POLICY

### **Definition**

“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”

“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 the aptitude for forming relationships with others”

*CCEA Guidance for Post-Primary Schools: ‘Relationships and Sexuality Education’*

“Our sexuality is a central and significant part of who we are and how we see ourselves in relation to other people. IT is part of our overall health and contributes to our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being”.

*CCEA Personal Development NI Curriculum*

### **Rationale**

Fivemiletown College offers a broad and balanced curriculum which promotes the intellectual, moral, and spiritual and emotional development of our pupils; and fosters their personal and social development. We also acknowledge that all pupils have a right to an educational provision that prepares them for the experiences, opportunities, and responsibilities of adult life.

Relationships and Sexuality Education is an integral part of that provision, one aspect of a lifelong process that encompasses the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills: and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about personal and social relationships and gender issues.

This policy is intended to provide a framework through which young people can develop the skills, attitudes, and values necessary to deal with the challenges which they will meet in this very sensitive area. We recognise the significant role which we play in helping and encouraging our young people to make informed, responsible decisions about their relationships and sexual health.

Fivemiletown College’s Relationships and sexuality Education policy is drawn up within the context of our Mission statement, strapline, and ethos.

The policy is set within the context of:

- DENI Circulars 2001/15, 2010/01 and 2013/16
- CCEA Guidance for Post-Primary Schools: Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance (2015)
- CCEA Personal Development NI Curriculum 2007
- Equality Commission’s Eliminating Sexual Orientation Discrimination in N Ireland March 2009
- Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 – revised February 2009.



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### Aims

The RSE programme seeks to:

- Enhance each pupil's personal development, self-esteem, and wellbeing
- Promote positive attitudes towards sexuality, personal health, and relationships within a moral, social and spiritual framework
- Encourage healthy friendships and relationships based on acceptance, tolerance, sensitivity, honesty, trust, and mutual respect.
- Develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of themselves and others as individuals.
- Develop positive attitudes of self-respect, self-confidence, and self-discipline
- Promote relationships based on responsible behaviour and informed decision making
- Develop positive and informed attitudes towards committed relationships, family life and the responsibilities of parenthood.
- Promote an appreciation of the value of human life.
- Prepare pupils for adult life
- Identify and understand risk taking behaviour

### Objectives

The RSE framework gives to pupils' valuable experiences that will enable them to:

- Understand human physiology in relation to puberty, fertility, sexual intercourse and reproduction
- Understand contraception, abortion, and sexually transmitted diseases
- Understand sexual development and identity including gender issues, stereotyping and cultural influences including the media
- Be aware of differing family structures and patterns
- Explore their own and others' feelings and emotions
- Acquire and develop appropriate vocabulary to discuss sexual feelings
- Develop strategies to make decisions, solve problems and implement actions in various personal, social and health contexts

### Values

This Policy promotes the values of Fivemiletown College. The RSE programme aims to present facts in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner, set within a clear moral framework with appreciation of current Northern Ireland legislation. It is a progressive programme that is tailored to the age, maturity and understanding of our pupils.

Pupils are encouraged to view their relationships in a responsible and healthy manner and explore their rights and responsibilities involved within those relationships.

The RSE content delivered through the framework encourages pupils to appreciate that friendships and relationships are based on self and mutual respect, empathy, honesty, loyalty, trust, and commitment; and promotes the development of acceptance, tolerance, care, forgiveness, and compassion within all relationships. Pupils are also encouraged to appreciate the value of family stability, marriage, permanent loving relationships, and the responsibilities of parenthood; and to develop the skills involved in creating and sustaining stable relationships and the personal and social benefits they bring. As they mature, pupils are enabled to understand the moral, psychological and health risks to themselves and other people of certain types of sexual behaviour and to develop appropriate decision-making skills in relation to relationships and acceptance of responsibility.



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The following guidelines are offered within the moral framework of our values and ethos:

- The deferment of sexual activity until young people are physically and emotionally mature enough to understand the inherent responsibilities and the consequences of their actions.
- An appreciation of the value of permanence and love in relationships, marriage, stability in family life and the responsibility 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

### **Responding to sensitive issues**

We recognise that, on occasion, certain sensitive issues may require consideration. When attempting to deal with these issues the following positions and procedures will be adopted:

#### **(1) Pregnancy**

We aim to support any young women who may become pregnant whilst enrolled at our school. Following consultation and agreement with the young mother to be, referral may be made to the EA's SAM (School Age Mothers) Project. Where possible, the school will liaise closely with the parents of the pupil.

In the event of a young woman informing the school that she is pregnant we will consider if child protection is an issue. Advice will initially be sought from the school's designated teacher for child protection (Mrs McConaghy) and if it is deemed necessary the school will follow its child protection guidelines.

#### **(2) Sexual Identity and Orientation**

All pupils have the right to learn in a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment, to be treated with respect and dignity and not to be treated any less favourably on grounds of their actual or perceived sexual orientation.

Bullying on the grounds of sexual orientation, is as unacceptable as it is in any other situation where someone is mistreated or bullied because of their differences from those who are perceived to be the majority. All issues relating to bullying on the grounds of sexual orientation, or any other form of homophobic abuse will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in line with the school's Anti-Bullying Policy.

Heterosexual relationships will be presented in teaching programmes as the main context for sexual intimacy. Respect for all people, regardless of sexual orientation, will be promoted in line with School's ethos. Pupils have the right to hold different views in a peaceful manner. Sexual orientation will be handled in a sensitive manner and all teachers have a responsibility to counteract prejudice and support the development of self-esteem and personal responsibility in all pupils. We promote equality of opportunity for all pupils.



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### (3) Sexting

'Sexting' is creating, sharing, and forwarding sexually suggestive, nude or nearly nude images through mobile phones and the internet (Lenhart, 2009). In PD/ICT young people are given the opportunity to explore the issue of 'sexting' Through RSE young people are taught how to safely navigate the digital landscape which plays such an integral role in their lives. This enables them to 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

Pupils affected by such issues are given appropriate support.

### (4) Child Sexual Exploitation

According to recent reports, child sexual exploitation is increasingly evident and is an issue of serious concern in NI (Beckett 2011; Webb and Montgomery-Devlin, 2013)

Child sexual exploitation is 'a Form of sexual abuse in which a person(s) exploits, coerces and/or manipulates a child or young person into engaging in some form of sexual activity in return for something the child needs or desires and/or for the gain of the person(s) perpetrating or facilitating the abuse'. (SBNI 2014) Through RSE we enhance pupils' awareness of these issues and help them to recognise and challenge inappropriate and unwanted attention from others.

### **Parental Partnership**

We recognise that parents have the prime responsibility for bringing up their children and we will therefore seek to ensure that our RSE programme complements and is supportive of the parents' role. We work in partnership with parents, particularly in relation to any sensitive issues outlined above.

### **Child Protection**

No member of staff can give a guarantee of confidentiality to pupils concerning child protection issues. If details are disclosed, during either internal or external delivery of RSE, that reveal that sexual abuse is involved, the teacher/facilitator must follow Child Protection procedures as outlined in our safeguarding and child protection policy.

### **Confidentiality in the Classroom**

A pupil's right to privacy will be always respected and no pupil will be expected to ask or answer any personal questions.

Personal medical advice will not be given by a teacher to any pupil. There will be an acknowledgement that only doctors, and health professionals should give medical advice to pupils.



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### **Relationships and Sexuality Education in the Curriculum**

The RSE programme is delivered primarily through the Personal Development Strand of the Revised Curriculum at key stages 3 and 4. At key stage 3 guidance materials for teaching are provided through the CCEA 'In-sync' programme and other resources from world wide web.

At key stage 4 RSE is a statutory component of the Personal Development Strand of Learning for Life and Work

Opportunities for RSE also arise across the curriculum: in subjects such as Science, Home Economics, Physical Education, Religious Education, Drama and English relationships and sexuality issues are explored from a variety of perspectives. Teaching methodologies are in accordance with the collaborative and active thrust of the Revised Curriculum.

The programme meets the needs of both genders and is generally taught in mixed groups to enable boys and girls to work alongside one another, thus promoting positive relationships with each gaining an understanding of the other's perspective. However, in certain circumstances, mixed gender arrangements may be altered when it is deemed more appropriate to teach gender specific issues to single sex groupings.

### **External Agencies**

Some aspects of the RSE programme are delivered by external agencies such as 'Love for Life', 'Women's Aid' and the PSNI. These programmes supplement and complement internal provision. Parents are informed in the event of external agency involvement and are presented with a brief synopsis of proposed content. At least one teacher is always present when an external agency is delivering an aspect of the RSE programme.

Care is taken to ensure that external agencies comply with the school Policy and that there is collaboration between internal and external staff regarding the content and follow-up and progression.

### **Responsibilities**

In Fivemiletown College the responsibility for Relationships and Sexuality Education is appropriately shared with contributions from teachers, male and female, parents, and external agencies. Each of the partners has a distinctive contribution to make and the effectiveness of the RSE programme depends on regular communication and collaboration.

- **The Principal**

It is the responsibility of the Principal to ensure the development and implementation of an RSE Policy and a planned, coherent and progressive programme that meets the needs of all pupils. The Principal consults with Governors, staff, parents, pupils and relevant professionals to ensure the implementation of the programme.

- **Pastoral Leader**

Mrs McConaghy is the SLT Leader for Pastoral; and as such she is responsible for co-coordinating all issue related to the RSE policy and programme development. She is also responsible for its monitoring and evaluation.



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- **Head of Learning for Life and Work**

Mrs C Allen is head of 'Learning for Life and Work' and her role in relation to Relationships and Sexuality Education involves.

- Planning and coordination of curricular provision
- Liaison with external agencies re curriculum provision
- Liaison with Principal, and Vice Principal pastoral on RSE matters
- Attendance at in-service training and dissemination of appropriate information to relevant staff
- Organisation of training for staff as appropriate
- Liaison with LLW teachers regarding RSE as part of Personal Development (Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4)

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The RSE programme is kept under review. The aim of the evaluation process is to ensure that:

- The RSE Policy continues to comply with legislation and guidelines
- Classroom practice continues to reflect the Policy and the needs of pupils
- Teaching resources are regularly reviewed and updated
- External agency input is evaluated regularly
- The views of the pupils are respected and sought

### **Related School Policies**

This policy is set within the broader school context of Pastoral Care and as such should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Safeguarding and child protection policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Behaviour policy
- E-safety policy
- Drugs education policy