

Relationship and Sexuality Policy



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1. 1.1 INTRODUCTION

RSE is a statutory element of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. DENI circulars 2001/15, 2010/01,2013/16,2015/22 and the Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance produced CCEA were used as a basis for this policy. It is intended that the policy and programme is a flexible, working document and one that involves all students, staff, Board of Governors and parents of the college. The policy is just one part of the overall Personal Development programme at Blackwater Integrated College.

Before implementation, it will be offered to the Board of Governors and Staff as a consultation paper and to other parent groups within Blackwater. We recognise the importance of input and support from staff and parents on the development of this policy and the RSE programme.

This RSE Policy links closely to the following Policies

Behaviour and Relationships

Child Protection

Anti Bullying

1.2 RATIONALE

ETHOS

We live in a rapidly changing society where values and lifestyles vary greatly. We recognise the difficulty that our students may have in making the transition from childhood into adulthood. We also recognise that poor or ineffective guidance and support during adolescence can have major negative repercussions for the individual. Therefore, we place great importance in establishing an effective RSE programme, which meets the practical, and the spiritual needs of our students.

It is the intent of the policy that it will reflect the morals and values held by most students, parents, staff and the local community.

The demands and pressures upon young people today have been recognised and therefore it is our goal to offer appropriate and accurate information to our young people on a wide range of sensitive areas. Above all the policy and programme seeks to develop students self-esteem, self-image and to nurture respect for others.

2. DEFINITION OF RELATIONSHIP AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE)

RSE involves the whole person. It includes a person's physical, emotional, spiritual and psychological development and needs.

- It is a lifelong process and one in which many people surrounding the young person can impact. This may include parents, family members, peers, teachers and youth workers;

- It encompasses beliefs, values, personal and social domains; Sexuality is an inherent part of being human. Blackwater Integrated College believes that the development of healthy sexuality is a right for all young people. We believe that all young people who attend our school have a right to education that will help them develop the knowledge and skills to enable them to make informed decisions about their sexual expression in a way that:

- Respects their individual beliefs
- Show respect for others
- Helps them develop and manage personal and sexual relationships
- Keeps them safe

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aims of RSE are to:

- Enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the young people in Blackwater Integrated College.
- To provide an environment in which young people can discuss relationships in a secure and controlled environment.
- Help our young people 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.
- To encourage an appreciation of the value of family life, long-term relationships and the responsibilities of parenthood.
- Promote and appreciate the value of human life and the wonder of birth.

- To help students cope with the physical and emotional challenges of growing up and to help them prepare for adult life and responsibilities.
- To facilitate communication of personal, social and sexual matters between students, parents, guardians and other carers, within the perimeters of the Children (NI) Order, 1995.
- To develop among students, skills of 'empowerment', decision making and assertiveness which may be needed to resist society's pressures. Including issues such as:

The inappropriate use of technology
 Child sexual exploitation
 Domestic violence and sexual abuse
 Homophobic bullying

- To develop student's emotional intelligence whereby anxiety, fear and emotions can be learnt to be managed. Part of this may be the encouragement of delaying first sexual experiences and instead using abstinence as a positive option.
- To develop skills in forming and maintaining healthy relationships.
- To give accurate information to correct misunderstandings students may have gained from their peers.
- To develop an understanding and acceptance of all forms sexual orientation.
- To ensure that the planning and delivery of RSE reflects the ethos and values framework in our school.

4. ESTABLISHING THE NEED FOR RSE

4.1 THE FACTS:

The World Health Organization (WHO) believes that education on health is a fundamental right of every child. Education can help to increase self-esteem and develop effective communication skills. It also encourages each person to respect his or her own body and understand their responsibilities to others.

Surveys among adults as well as young people regularly show considerable ignorance about issues related to sex and sexuality, resulting in confusion, unhappiness and the breakdown of relationships. The media bombards society with overt and often misleading information, which influences a young person's knowledge and attitude to their own sexuality,

as well as that of others. Families, parents and teachers often exclude young people from discussions about relationships and sexuality.

This mixture of secrecy, lack of knowledge and negative media messages confuses young people and encourages poor self-esteem, resulting in uninformed choices being made. These may lead to unplanned pregnancies, STIs including HIV/AIDS, or deeply unhappy and damaging relationships.

In Northern Ireland, the Department of Education circular recognises the need to provide young people with guidance and the opportunity to examine sexual issues in a supportive environment. The *Towards better sexual health* survey produced the first ever comprehensive Northern Ireland-wide data on the sexual lifestyles of young people in Northern Ireland. It is therefore not possible to comment on whether young people are having sex at an earlier age. The survey does, however, show that of those young people who had experienced sexual intercourse, 36.7% had sex before the age of 17 (the legal age of sexual consent) and 27.4% had sex before the age of 16. Young men reported earlier sex than young women, and Catholics were less likely than other respondents to have sex before the age of 16.

There were no significant differences between these results and the data produced by the Northern Ireland health and social wellbeing survey, also in 2002, which included sexually active young people aged 16 to 24 years. The data from the *Towards better sexual health* survey also compares well with the 1997/1998 Health behaviour of school children study, which revealed that in a sample of 3,450 young people from years 9-12 (approximate ages 13 to 16 years), 655 (14.9% of this age group) reported that they had experienced sexual intercourse. The average age for first sexual intercourse was 13 years for boys and 14 years for girls. The majority of those who had experienced sexual intercourse (79.2%) reported using some form of contraception. The *Towards better sexual health* survey also showed that approximately one quarter of respondents failed to use contraception when they first had intercourse and that over 40% of young men and 33% of young women were drunk when they first had sex.

The 2010 *Young Person's Behaviour and Attitudes Survey* surveyed a representative sample of post primary schools in Northern Ireland. A total of 7616 pupils aged 11 to 16 years took part in the survey. Eight per cent of pupils reported having sexual intercourse and 80% of those had sexual intercourse for the first time between the ages of 13 and 15.

4.2 LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT FOR RSE

In 2001 the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examination and Assessment (CCEA) distributed teacher guidance material on relationships and sexuality education for primary and post primary school. In August 2001 the Department of Education issued Curricular 2001/15 'Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE)' to support the guidance materials.

The circular states that:

"The department considers that every school should have a policy setting out how the school will address relationship and sexuality education within each student's curriculum....the policy should be the subject of consultation with parents and should be endorsed by the school's Board of Governors. All teachers, whether or not they are centrally involved in teaching the programme should be aware of its detail and their implications."

Department of Education Circular 2010/01 advises schools to take account of guidance issued by the Equality Commission in March 2009 on eliminating sexual orientation discrimination in schools.

Department of Education RSE Guidance Circular 2013/16 states that the Department requires schools to have an up to date RSE Policy.

Department of Education RSE Guidance Circular 2015/22 issued in August 2015 states that the Department requires schools to develop their own RSE Policy.

5. THE MORAL AND VALUES FRAMEWORK OF THE POLICY

We recognise that young people live in a diverse range of cultures, religions and family types. We recognise them as individuals with the right to be treated with respect and dignity regardless of their class, sexuality, culture, religion and gender. We are committed to an RSE programme which at all times will reflect the diversity and complexity of the lives and experiences of young people in our school. We also recognise that at times there may be conflict between the different value systems and, whilst respecting difference, we will uphold the ethos of the school and include it in all aspects of RSE teaching. We in Blackwater Integrated College will seek to uphold and endorse the following values:

An appreciation of the value of stable family life, and permanent loving relationships based on trust and commitment.

An acknowledgment of singleness and celibacy as equally valuable and fulfilling options.

The deferment of sexual activity until young people are physically and emotionally mature enough to understand the inherent responsibilities.

Recognition that sexual abstinence before marriage and fidelity within it is a positive and desirable option, which is an achievable reality to which young people can aspire.

An appreciation that friendships and relationships should be based on mutual respect, non-exploitation, honesty, trust and commitment.

An appreciation that with any relationship, rights, duties and responsibilities are involved.

An appreciation of the value and sacredness of human life.

Respect of all people regardless of sexual orientation will be promoted, along with the right of all members of the school community being allowed to have different views from others without aggression or antagonism.

All students have the right to learn in a safe 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.

An appreciation of the need to treat others with dignity and respect, recognising the need to behave responsibly in relationships.

6. 6.1 CURRICULUM PROVISION

The RSE programme will be delivered by individual class teachers during Learning for Life and Work class and supported by Form Tutors in Form Time.

The classes will be of mixed gender and will include SEN students

The themes within the RSE programme are:-

Themes

- | | |
|--------|--|
| Year 8 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Gender & Identity- Types Of Relationships- Qualities Of Friendship- Managing Difficulties And Conflict With Relationships- Influencing Friendships |
|--------|--|

- Challenging Relationships
 - Sexual Maturation
 - Personal Hygiene
- Year 9
- Developing Close Personal Friendships Including Romantic Friendships
 - Internal & External Influences On Romantic Friendships
 - Coping Strategies For Difficulties Within Romantic Relationships
 - Important qualities in a friendship
- Year 10
- Emotions & Feelings
 - Families
 - Dealing With Family Relationships
 - Attitudes to relationships
 - Teenage pregnancy and consequences
- Year 11
&
Year 12
- Personal Development
 - Managing Influence
 - Personal Messages
 - Building and maintaining healthy relationships
- GCSE**
- The 3 R's Of Relationships
- LLW**
- Sexual Identity And Orientation
- Module 2**
- Sexual Harassment
 - Sti And HIV
 - Contraception
 - Roles and responsibilities of parenting
 - Where To Find Help

The current LLW programme: 2 periods per fortnight Year 8 - 10
5 periods per fortnight Year 11-12 GCSE

RSE shares content with the Programmes of Study for Religious Education, Home Economics, English, Science, and Physical Education.

Outside agencies will be utilized to cover aspects of the course not covered with all students in years 11 and 12.

If a teacher is unwilling to teach certain areas of the RSE programme they should discuss the matter with the Pastoral Coordinator who will endeavour and make alternative arrangements.

6.2 SPECIFIC ISSUES

Issues such as sex outside marriage, contraception, sexual identity and abortion can attract a wide range of beliefs or values. The teaching of all issues including those that may be perceived as sensitive will be

consistent with the ethos of the College even though that may be a contradiction to the lifestyle or experiences of some students, their parents or teachers within the school. However the school will ensure that students receive information that is balanced, non-judgmental and respectful of the diversity of values that are reflected in society.

6.3 THE STATUS OF THE FAMILY

Marriage is positive and ideal and happy marriages will be presented as the ideal to which many aspire and achieve. However, within our school community, it is vital that we are fully aware that other lifestyles exist, such as single parent families, co-habiting couples and homosexuality within families. Therefore we must be free from judgement of those people.

7. 7.1 CONFIDENTIALITY AND CHILD PROTECTION ISSUES

It is not necessary or advisable to encourage students or staff to discuss personal relationships or experiences. Ground-rules should be negotiated beforehand. Role-plays, videos and stories allow exploration of the issues without personal disclosure. Staff cannot give any guarantees of confidentiality to students. If staff feel that a student is about to make a personal disclosure, which may compromise them, the student should be advised of the possible implications.

If certain disclosures are made then the following will be adhered to:

- Disclosure or suspicion of possible abuse - the school's Child Protection procedures must be followed.
- Advice on contraception. It is important that students who feel in difficulty, know that they can talk to an adult in the school and that they will be supported. If the student is under 16 the parents will be informed.
- Disclosure of pregnancy. The student will be encouraged to talk to their parents and they will be offered help in doing so. However, it will be made clear to the student that the school will make contact with parents to inform them of the situation. If the student is under 16 social services will also be informed. Once this takes place, subsequent responsibility lies with the parents and social services but the school will continue to offer additional and ongoing support.

7.2 WITHDRAWAL FROM CLASS

The school is willing to discuss with concerned parents, their expressed desire for their son/daughter to be excluded from aspects, or the entire

RSE programme. Whilst the College acknowledges and understands parental concerns, it is important to note that there is no 'legal right' for withdrawal from RSE. Therefore, the College will encourage all students to complete the 'RSE' programme.

7.3 TEACHING RSE

If students raise issues that are offensive to some, or beyond the maturity level of the majority of the students, the teacher should not answer the question in class but arrange to speak to the student afterwards. The teacher may choose at his/her discretion to answer the question or may suggest that the student discusses the matter with his/her parents. If students do not wish to discuss a particular question with their parents, the teacher may decide to answer the question in the presence of a colleague.

8. 8.1 THE CENTRALITY OF ABSTINENCE

To be consistent with the teaching of Religious Education, sexual abstinence before marriage and fidelity within it will be presented as a positive option and an achievable reality.

8.2 TERMINOLOGY

The use of biological terms for parts of the body and body functions should be encouraged and used at all times.

8.3 AGE OF CONSENT

As part of the curriculum, teachers can provide general information to students about the types of contraception and the risks to health. They can provide all students with information about where and from whom they can receive advice, treatment and support. Personal medical advice must not be given to individual students. Teachers must advise students to seek advice from their parents or medical practitioners.

Students should be reminded that the legal age of sexual consent for girls and boys in Northern Ireland is 16 years.

Ref: Sex and the law fact sheet. fpa.org.uk

8.4 HOMOSEXUALITY

Staff should handle the issue of sexual orientation in a sensitive, nonconfrontational and reassuring way. Confusion and anxiety about one's own sexuality is a natural part of an adolescent's development. Teachers should seek to confront prejudiced, aggressive stereotyping.

8.5 EXTERNAL AGENCIES AND INDIVIDUALS

Blackwater Integrated College recognises the expertise provided by professionals from statutory and voluntary organisations or individuals. Before agreeing to use an external agency, teachers will:

- Discuss with the agency the age appropriateness of the material to be delivered.
- Decide if parents should be consulted.
- Ensure the input complements the school's RSE programme and arrange follow up material if required
- Inform students of the purpose of the visit.
- Ensure that a member of staff is present when a representative from an outside agency is giving a presentation

A school counsellor is available for students to discuss issues that may concern them.

9. 9.1 CROSS CURRICULUM

RSE is a universal subject. Opportunities to explore the elements of RSE present themselves throughout the school curriculum. Capturing the teaching moment and encouraging discussion in the different subject areas, helps place RSE in the context of life and social skills learning. This encourages young people to see it as an inherent part of relationships and their own development. Teachers will be encouraged to review their schemes on an annual basis to ensure that cross curricular input is complimentary and reflects the ethos of the College.

9.2 STAFF TRAINING

Staff training is particularly important on those sensitive issues that will arise during the RSE programme. Training can be provided to staff from EA, Health Education Specialists and other specialist organisations. Outside agencies can be used, ensuring that they are in keeping with the ethos of the school. Teachers who have skills in specific areas of the

curriculum such as Religious Education, Home Economics, Physical Education and Science can also give support and advice on relevant areas of the programme.

Staff will be encouraged to review resources, and update themselves on information and approaches relevant to health education. The coordinator will have access to specific training to develop and support their role. Staff in-service training will be organised as appropriate.

9.3 MONITORING AND EVALUATING

The Pastoral Coordinator will review and update this policy periodically. Class teachers along with the LLW Coordinator and Pastoral Coordinator will review the RSE provision and plan future developments annually.

The nature of RSE is strongly orientated towards personal development which does not lend itself to summative assessment. RSE is not easily measurable as it is qualitative rather than quantitative. When required RSE will be assessed and reported on in years 8-12 by the teacher responsible for delivering that module.

This is a working document, which seeks to improve in effectiveness. The Pastoral Coordinator will work closely with parents, governors and other agencies to provide an accessible, consultative programme, which will meet the needs of all our students.

The full policy will be made available to all parents from the college on request.

Appendix 2

External Agencies used to deliver and support RSE in Blackwater Integrated College

Love for Life

6 Banbridge Rd,
Waringstown,
Craigavon,
County Armagh
BT66 7QA

Phone:028 3882 0555

Nexus NI

University St,
Belfast,
Co Antrim BT7 1HP

Phone:028 9032 6803

YMCA

28 Market Square,
Lisburn
BT28 1AG

Phone:028 9267 0918

PIPS Programmes CIC

North City Business Centre
2 Duncairn Gardens
Belfast

BT15 2GG

Phone: 02890 421058

Familyworks Counselling

3 Glenford Way,
Newtownards,
County Down
BT23 4BX

Phone:028 9182 0341

