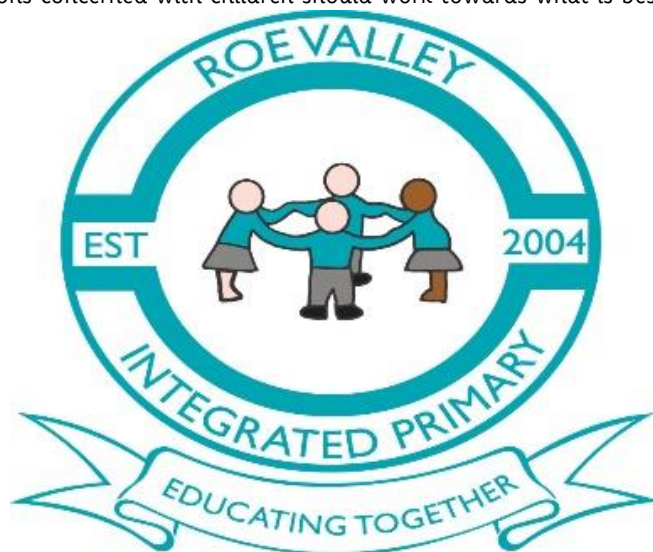


Roe Valley Integrated Primary School

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION POLICY

Article 3 -All organisations concerned with children should work towards what is best for each child.



Signature of Chair of Board of Governors: _____

Ratified: _____

Signature of Principal: _____

Reviewed and updated: October 2025

Review due: October 2028

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

ETHOS

The aim of education at Roe Valley Integrated Primary School is to contribute towards the development of the whole child to allow them to develop socially, spiritually, morally, intellectually and emotionally. The importance of personal and family life, for working, for living in our community and for leisure. Relationships and Sexuality education is clearly a part of this main focus.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Relationships and Sexuality Education in the N.I. context

RSE is not a new area of the curriculum. The framework for sex education was initially established by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DENI) in a *Guidance Circular 1987/45*. The main recommendation of this Circular was that each school should have a written policy on sex education which is endorsed by staff and governors and communicated to parents. It also stated “*sex education should be taught in a sensitive manner which is in harmony with the ethos of the school and in conformity with the moral and religious principles held by parents and school management authorities*”

The Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 further set out the legislative basis, 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

The general principles which underpin our work in Roe Valley Integrated Primary School 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

The Legal context also ensures inclusive provision for all pupils irrespective of sexual orientation.

- The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006.

We further recognise the importance of working in partnership with parents/carers in this area of personal development and offer additional information/consultation opportunities prior to delivery of the programme to included support for Parents/carers with learning difficulties and understand parents/carers' rights and responsibilities. We acknowledge the contribution that can be made by outside agencies with skill and expertise in particular areas of the curriculum (e.g.NSPCC, Women's Aid, Local G.P. and School Nursing Service).

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 our parents/guardians long before any formal education takes place at school.

RSE is included on a statutory basis within the NI curriculum through:

- PDMU;
- Health Education;
- The World around Us and
- Religious Education.

Health Education is taught mainly through the medium of PDMU in the Personal Understanding and Health strand as detailed later.

- In RSE all pupils will be taught in an atmosphere of mutual respect.
- The value of a stable family life, marriage and the responsibilities of parenthood will be presented.
- As they mature, pupils will be encouraged to appreciate the importance of self-discipline, dignity, respect for themselves and others.
- Through PDMU and the World Around Us children will learn about changes in their bodies as they grow older and, in Primary 6/7, will be given the opportunity for a

talk with the school nurse/GP in order to prepare them fully for post-primary schools and the emotional and physical changes they may expect to experience over the next few years.

- Teaching at all times will be appropriate to the maturity and level of understanding of the pupils concerned. Teachers will be aware of, and take into account, the variety of existing pupil knowledge, the different attitudes, cultural backgrounds and beliefs and the pupils' capacity to understand the 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, in a more general way, the aptitude for forming relationships with others. It is a complex dimension of human life and relationships.

Teaching RSE should provide opportunities which enable pupils:

- to form values and establish behaviour within a moral, spiritual and social framework;
- to examine and explore the various relationships in their personal lives;
- to learn how to develop and enjoy personal relationships and friendships which are based on responsibility and mutual respect;
- to build the foundations for developing more personal relationships in later life;
- to make positive, responsible choices about themselves and others and the way they live their lives.

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;
- develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making.

Inclusive Learning For all Pupils

As per RSE Guidance – An Update for Primary Schools 25/08/2015

Sexual orientation and gender identity

- *A young person's sexual orientation and/or gender identity is a central and significant part of who they are and how they see themselves in relation to others. There is some evidence to suggest that children as young as eight years old may begin to question their sexual orientation, and from early adolescence, begin to identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual (McDermott, 2010, page 9). Recent research reveals that transgender young people become self-aware that their assigned birth sex is different from their gender identity between the ages of 3–5 years old. However, it is between the ages of 6–16 years old that transgender young people begin to understand their feelings, and can start to talk about them (McBride, 2013).*
- *Children and young people must feel comfortable and confident in themselves without fear of being bullied or being viewed as different. Uncertainty or discomfort about their sexual orientation and gender identity can also have a negative effect on the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of a young person. Relationships and Sexuality Education in primary schools should focus on appreciating the uniqueness of each individual pupil. It should promote inclusivity,*

equality and respect for all pupils. Relationships and Sexuality Education can help to promote a positive view of sexual orientation and gender identity, which in turn can help raise the self-esteem of young people who may feel different.

- *Schools should handle the issue of sexual orientation and gender identity in a sensitive, non-confrontational and reassuring way. In the primary setting, schools can do this very effectively by teaching about difference in Relationships and Sexuality Education and in the wider Personal Development and Mutual Understanding curriculum. All pupils, regardless of their sexual orientation, have the right to learn in a safe and secure 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.*

Roe Valley Integrated Primary School understands the guidance as outlined above and strives to provide an inclusive programme for all pupils as well as support around all aspects of Relationships and Sexuality Education.

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 variety of groups;
- **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, and others, are affected by them.

The importance of a moral framework is emphasised in the DfEE Circular No 5/1994 *Education Act 1993: Sex Education in Schools: "Sex education . . . must not be value-free; it*

should also be tailored not only to the age but also to the understanding of pupils. School's programmes of sex education should therefore aim to present facts in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner, set within a clear framework of values and an awareness of the law on sexual behaviour. Pupils should accordingly be encouraged to appreciate the value of stable family life, marriage and the responsibilities of parenthood. They should be helped to consider the importance of self-restraint, dignity, respect for themselves and others, acceptance of responsibility, sensitivity towards the needs and views of others, loyalty and fidelity. And they should be enabled to recognise the physical, emotional and moral implications, and risks, of certain types of behaviour, and to accept that both sexes must behave responsibly in sexual matters". Teachers are reminded: "to acknowledge that many children come from backgrounds that do not reflect such values and experiences. Sensitivity is therefore needed to avoid causing hurt and offence to them and their families, and to allow such children a sense of worth".

(Paragraph 8)

OTHER RELEVANT POLICIES

This policy complements and supports a range of other school policies including:

- Positive Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Use of Reasonable Force/Safe Handling
- Special Educational Needs
- Administration of Medicines
- Health and Safety Policy
- Use of Mobile Phones
- ICT & E-Safety
- Intimate Care

DELIVERING THE RSE PROGRAMME

The management and co-ordination of Relationships and Sexuality Education in Roe Valley Integrated Primary School is coordinated by Mrs Joanne O'Donnell and a range of teaching methodologies and strategies are employed including single-gender classes, mixed-gender classes.

Particular attention is given to confidentiality and disclosures (individually and in the classroom setting) across RSE activities and uses a range of teaching methodologies and agreed procedures where outside agencies/individuals support the delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education

Additional Needs

Teaching staff have an awareness of the fact that physical development may outstrip emotional maturity in the case of pupils with Special Needs and accommodate this disparity in class lessons and experiences. It is widely recognised that pupils with SEN are more vulnerable to all forms of abuse and exploitation. Teachers try to ensure that they develop the knowledge, understanding and skills of pupils to enable them to identify inappropriate and exploitative behaviour, recognise and build healthy relationships; and know who they can talk to.

NI Curriculum Knowledge and Skills

The following includes extracts from the N.I. Primary Curriculum -

Personal Development and Mutual Understanding

Strand - Personal Understanding and Health

Foundation Stage

Self-Awareness - Exploring who they are, what they can do, identifying favourite things, what makes them special

Feelings and Emotions

- beginning to recognise how they feel
- knowing what to do if sad or lonely, afraid or angry
- telling others about feelings
- realising what makes people sad or unhappy, recognising how people feel

Health and Safety

- being aware of caring for his/her own body
- recognising good hygiene practices
- understanding growth and change
- exploring appropriate personal safety strategies, road safety,
- medicines and drugs -safety rules

Key Stage 1

Self-Awareness

- feeling positive about oneself
- awareness of own strengths, abilities, qualities, personal preferences
- recognising own feelings and emotions
- recognising and managing the effects of strong feelings – anger, sadness, loss
- acknowledging that everyone makes mistakes
- recognising how they can develop and improve learning

Health, Growth and Change

- recognising and valuing the options for a healthy lifestyle
- having respect for their bodies and those of others
- being aware of the stages of human growth and development
- recognising how responsibilities and relationships change as you grow older
- understanding medicines and drugs
- understanding that, if not used properly, all products can be dangerous
- being aware that some diseases are infectious and some can be controlled

Key Stage 2

Self-Awareness

- developing self-awareness, self-respect and self-esteem
- confidently express own views and opinions
- identify current strengths and weaknesses
- face problems and try to resolve them
- examine and explore own and others' feelings and emotions
- recognise, express and manage feelings in a positive and safe way
- develop insight into potential and capabilities
- reflect on progress and set goals
- identify and practise effective learning strategies
- be aware of different learning styles

Health, Growth and Change

- understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle
- recognise what shapes positive mental health
- know about the harmful effects of tobacco, alcohol and other illicit and illegal substances
- understand that bacteria and viruses affect health and know that basic routines can be followed to minimise risks
- know how the body grows and develops
- be aware of physical and emotional changes that take place during puberty (Y7 only)
- be aware of the skills and importance of good parenting
- recognise how responsibilities change as they become older and more independent

Keeping Safe

- develop strategies to resist peer pressure
- recognise the nature of bullying and the harm which can result
- become aware of the potential danger from strangers and how their attention can make you uncomfortable
- recognise appropriate road use
- develop a pro-active and responsible approach to safety – at home, near water, on the internet, TV etc
- know where, when and how to seek help

Cross Curricular Links and links to the wider life of the school

- teaching in Relationships and Sexuality Education links across the curriculum to other Areas of Learning in Key Stages 1 and 2 including The World Around Us and RE
- Our pastoral programme supports and complements Relationships and Sexuality Education, for example Key Stage and Whole School assemblies
- Unicef UK Rights Respecting Schools activities

Resources

Guidance documents

- Living.Learning.Together
- Relationships and Sexuality Education Progression Framework
- Personal Development and Mutual Understanding Guidance Booklet •
- Personal Development and Mutual Understanding Progression Grids

- Active Learning and Teaching Methods for Key Stages 1 & 2 • Assessment for Learning: A Practical Guide
- Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities at Key Stages 1 & 2

All documents are available at www.ccea.org.uk

As per CCEA guidance all additional resources will be reviewed and quality-assured before the teachers/pupils use them. Resources (including outside agencies) will be assessed under suitability, age appropriate content and relevance to context.

Useful documentation, resources and websites-See Appendix 1

Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the RSE Policy:

Roe Valley Integrated Primary School staff are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this policy. Specifically important to the RSE Programme are:

- pupil feedback
- staff review and feedback
- parental feedback
- further Departmental guidance and legislative changes
- Reviewed annually and updated in consultation with staff
- Presented to and shared with the BOG regularly
- Shared with parents

Appendix 1

Recognising and challenging inappropriate behaviour and touch www.nspcc.org.uk

www.safertoknow.info The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland's (SBNI) website contains useful information and resources to raise awareness on child sexual exploitation.

Sexual orientation, gender identity and homophobic bullying www.stonewall.org.uk This website provides access to many resources on celebrating difference and encouraging respect for one another in the primary classroom setting.

www.the-classroom.org.uk This website provides detailed advice on many aspects of teaching and learning to make LGBT people visible in education. It includes presentations, detailed lesson plans and a range of inclusive teaching resources celebrating diversity.

www.exceedingexpectation.org.uk The 'exceeding expectation initiative' is designed to tackle homophobia and address sexuality with young people. This website is divided into three main sections and provides useful background information on what homophobia is, responding to homophobic bullying, and the homophobic bullying experiences of young people.

www.endbullying.org.uk The Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum includes resources on cyberbullying and homophobic bullying.