

BLOOMFIELD COLLEGIATE SCHOOL

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy



Approved by the Board of Governors 20 June 2019

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Please note, throughout this policy, the term 'parent' is used to refer to the parent or guardian of the pupil.

SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

1 INTRODUCTION

This policy is one of a number of inter-related policies which are concerned with pupil welfare including, for example, the Positive Relationships and Anti-Bullying Policy and the Child Protection Policy. The School believes that individual pupils should be supported in achieving positive academic outcomes through the provision of pro-active, engaged, responsive and enabling pastoral care; this applies, in particular, to the development of individual pupils through their adolescent years.

Bloomfield Collegiate School prides itself on its tradition of caring for individual pupils, educating the whole person and emphasising the importance of positive human relationships. The Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy reflects the School aims of fostering individual pupil growth by promoting self-discipline, responsibility and self-respect, as well as encouraging sensitivity, respect and tolerance of the moral and religious views of others.

While the imposition of a prescribed morality is incompatible with the School aim of helping each pupil to acquire her own reasoned set of attitudes and beliefs, the teaching and guidance which girls receive will aim to help them to appreciate the value of high standards in the area of sexual morality. Thus, the School will strive to deliver RSE sensitively within a caring, moral and spiritual framework, through a balanced and comprehensive programme appropriate to the maturity of the pupils.

The School will abide by the guidelines laid down by the Department of Education and the specifications provided by CCEA. Particular note is taken of the guidance provided in DE Circulars 2001/15, 2001/15b, 2010/01, 2013/16 and EA Guidance 2015, as well as that published by the Equality Commission on Eliminating Sexual Orientation Discrimination in Northern Ireland.

The RSE programme follows the statutory curriculum and is delivered in three settings:

- the weekly tutorial programme;
- the Personal Development Strand of Learning for Life and Work; and
- infused through aspects of a number of academic subjects.

Given the embedded nature of RSE within the academic curriculum, subject teachers may have opportunities to contribute to its delivery. Form Teachers and Heads of Year will also make contributions through the tutorial programme. Teachers of the Personal Development strand of Learning for Life and Work will make contributions within timetabled classes. Consequently, a number of teachers will deliver specific aspects of the RSE programme; on other occasions, discussion about issues relating to RSE may be contextualised within a broader academic debate. Whichever is the case, teachers will aim to engender within pupils sound judgement and the positive attitudes necessary to make informed and responsible decisions about their personal lives, and to foster the maturity which equips pupils to accept the consequences of their actions. Teachers will endeavour to be alert to

the personal and emotional circumstances of individual pupils. There will also be occasions when outside speakers are invited to contribute to the delivery of the RSE programme.

While parents remain the key figures in the area of their daughters' personal development, the role of the School in the provision of RSE must not be underestimated. Many parents believe in the effectiveness of schools in enhancing responsible behaviour and some prefer schools to take the sole responsibility for teaching their children about such topics as sexually transmitted diseases, abortion, and homosexuality. Moreover, many teenagers find it difficult to talk to their parents about such matters and consider school to be an important source of information and guidance.

2 MORALS AND VALUES FRAMEWORK

Bloomfield Collegiate School strives to be an inclusive community which promotes learning and the pursuit of excellence in a friendly, challenging and supportive environment. Our overarching School values are:

- honesty;
- compassion;
- tolerance;
- courtesy;
- determination; and
- respect for the physical environment.

3 RATIONALE AND LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT FOR RSE

Bloomfield Collegiate School recognises that it has statutory responsibilities in relation to the delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education. In 2001 the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) disseminated teacher guidance material on relationships and sexuality education for primary and post primary schools. In August 2001 the Department of Education issued Circular 2001/15 Relationships 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 relationships and sexuality education within each pupil’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 details and their implications.”

There is no statutory parental right to withdraw a pupil from RSE classes. The School, however, is willing to take account of any parental concerns expressed to it and will try, as far as possible, to make alternative provision for any pupil whose parent wishes her to be excused from particular, or all, RSE classes.

4 RELEVANT PERSONNEL

The Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

The Principal, , is responsible for overseeing the general welfare of pupils within the School.

The Senior Vice-Principal, , has responsibility for co-ordinating Relationships and Sexuality Education. The Vice-Principal and other members of the Senior Leadership Team support this work.

The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator. Members of the Learning Support Team assist pupils with Additional Educational Needs.

The Heads of Year.

The names of the relevant personnel are listed in the Pastoral Care Policy.

5 DISSEMINATION OF THE POLICY

This policy is made available to the School community through the the School website. Copies are available from the School Office.

6 AIMS

Our School aim is 'Excellence in a Caring Community'. This policy aims to promote the positive ethos of the School as an integral part of the delivery of the RSE programme.

The aims of the RSE programme are to:

- enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the young person;
- help individual pupils to develop healthy and respectful friendships and relationships;
- foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human relationships and sexuality in a moral, social and spiritual framework;
- promote responsible behaviour and the ability to make informed decisions;
- help a young person 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; and
- encourage parental support for the RSE programme.

7 OBJECTIVES

The RSE programme 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;
- understand human physiology with particular reference to the reproductive cycle, human fertility and sexually transmitted infections;
- understand sexual development and identity and explore aspects of sexuality including sex roles, stereotyping, gender issues and cultural influences on sexuality; and
- develop skills for coping with peer pressure, conflict and threats to personal safety.

8 CONFIDENTIALITY

Within the classroom, each pupil's right to privacy must be respected by other pupils and by members of the teaching staff. However, no guarantee of confidentiality can be given by staff to pupils. It is the responsibility of any staff member to inform the Designated Teacher for Child Protection without delay of any disclosures which may suggest that a pupil is at risk, or that abuse is suspected. Such disclosures should be dealt with in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Child Protection Policy.

Through Child Protection training, teachers will be made aware of the signs of potential abuse and of the associated routes of referral to be followed.

9 MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW OF THE POLICY AND CONSULTATION UPON THE POLICY

The application of this policy will be monitored by senior staff and those engaged in its outworking.

The policy will be evaluated in the following ways:

- evidentially – staff, pupil and, if appropriate/possible, parental feedback, will provide evidence for evaluation;
- pragmatically – during its application, consideration will be given to its fitness-for-purpose and preparation made for changes to be implemented. In this way, the policy is regarded by the School as an evolutionary, working document; and
- the policy will be evaluated against contemporary guidelines and/or advice issued by the Department of Education and other relevant bodies.

The policy will be reviewed regularly, at least every two years. As part of this review, consultation with staff, parents and pupils may occur. However, at any time, the School welcomes comments upon the policy from those involved in the life of the School. These should be forwarded to the Principal, Vice-Principal or the Chair of the Board of Governors.

10 EQUALITY

The School recognises that all pupils 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. The RSE programme will be tailored to meet the needs of all pupils (including those with Additional Educational Needs) in terms of content, methodology and resources utilised.

To make schools aware of guidance produced by the Equality Commission on Eliminating Sexual Orientation Discrimination in Northern Ireland. All students/pupils have the right to learn in a safe environment, to be treated with respect and dignity and not be treated any less favourably on grounds of their actual or perceived sexual orientation. This guidance, which relates to the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 can be accessed at [http://www.equalityni.org/archive/pdf/SOEducationguide1\(1\).pdf](http://www.equalityni.org/archive/pdf/SOEducationguide1(1).pdf). In developing or reviewing their RSE policy, schools should take account of the Equality Commission's guidance.

SECTION 2: RSE PROGRAMME

1. DELIVERY OF RSE PROGRAMME

The main responsibility for the education of a child in respect of relationships and sexual matters lies with the parents. However, some parents find open discussion of such matters difficult and the School seeks to play a complementary and supportive role.

The RSE programme is a statutory component of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. The School aims to deliver it in a sensitive manner which is in harmony with the ethos of the School within a caring, moral context, stressing the importance of stable personal relationships, parental responsibilities and family life. At all times, the School must promote a positive and non-exploitative view of relationships and of female and male sexuality. If possible, controversial issues should be set in a broad context.

The Vice-Principal will work in conjunction with Heads of Year to monitor, review and evaluate the programme content. As the programme is an evolving and responsive one, there is need for coordination between teachers of RSE; thus, unnecessary duplication should be avoided and a balanced, comprehensive programme offered.

Teachers involved in the delivery of RSE must not force their own opinions on pupils. Classroom delivery of RSE may require difficult professional judgements to be made in respect of delicate or controversial issues, or in the offering of advice. Thus, full advantage must be taken of the expertise, knowledge and experience of the teaching staff when implementing the programme, and all teachers, whether or not directly involved in teaching RSE, should be aware of the details of this policy and their implications.

2. CONTENT OF RSE PROGRAMME

Guidance for the content of the RSE programme for post-primary schools is presented by CCEA.

Many aspects of the RSE programme are embedded within the taught curriculum; much of the content is delivered in a cross-curricular manner. Others are addressed through the tutorial programme or the Personal Development Strand of Learning for Life and Work at Key Stages Three and Four.

3. RESOURCE MATERIAL

The School will seek to use resources consistent with the aims and objectives of the RSE policy, and the moral and values framework of the School. On occasion, the RSE programme will be supported by the work of external agencies such as

'Love for Life' and the School Health Team. Throughout their time at school, pupils will receive information about sources of advice, treatment and support (such as parents, medical practitioners and the school counsellor).

Directive medical advice is not given to pupils; rather, the needs of pupils presenting with an issue will normally be addressed through the pastoral referral structure.

4. INVOLVEMENT OF OUTSIDE AGENCIES

Although many aspects of RSE can be taught in classes or groups, there may be occasions when outside agencies are invited to augment the programme. Staff arranging such events must:

- ensure that the information provided by the external organisation reflects the School's ethos and values;
- discuss the suitability of the proposed visit with the Vice-Principal in advance. This discussion should include subject content, vetting and arrangements for the visit;
- ensure that the visitor is provided with a copy of the Code of Conduct for Visitors (available from Reception) and follows the procedures outlined therein; and
- ensure that staff member/s are present for the duration of the presentation.

When an event is deemed by SMT to be potentially sensitive, information should be made available to parents/guardians in advance by letter. If it proves expedient to withdraw a pupil, suitable arrangements must be made for that pupil.

Dates of Policy Review

Nature of Review	Date Review Completed	Date of Consultation	Date Ratified by Board of Governors
	January 2010		
Review of content and procedures	November 2010	HoYs Nov 2010	3 March 2011
Minor amendments	June 2013	N/A	N/A
Minor amendments	September 2014	N/A	N/A
Minor amendments	September 2016	N/A	29 September 2016
Minor amendments	May 2019	N/A	20 June 2019