



St.Michael's College, Enniskillen

RSE Policy

INTRODUCTION

Name of School: St.Michael's College

Member/s of staff responsible: Head of Pastoral Care, (Mrs.J.O'Neill)

Last review date: May 2017

Review Date: June 2019

1. Description of Policy Formation and Consultation Process

When compiling this policy the opinion and views of the following stakeholders were considered:

Board of Governors / Principal / Senior Management Team / Staff / Students / Parents /Pupils

The Board of Governors will examine and approve the policy. Further reviews will make consultation with all stakeholders named.

The stages / process undertaken

- Draft policy compiled and distributed to all teaching staff / SMT/ random sample of parents.
- An earlier audit of the existing RSE programmes and policies within each department was completed in order to find out if our current provision conforms to the Department of Education's Circular 2001/15 and the Guidance for Post- Primary Schools issued by the CCEA. We also wanted to assess the relevance of existing programmes in terms of meeting the needs of our pupils and the wider community.
- Review in line with DENi Circular 2015/22 RSE guidance

Issues Considered

- Where RSE fits in with the school ethos.
- Content.
- Methods of delivery.
- Confidentiality relationship to other subject areas.
- Phased approach.
- Parental involvement.

2. Introduction

At St. Michael's College we recognise and fully respect that parents have the right to be the first and principal educators of their children. We see ourselves as supporting and helping parents to fulfil this responsibility. The attitude, beliefs and behaviour of pupils in all their relationships are primarily formed and greatly influenced by their experiences within the family and the relationship they have with parents/guardians. In relation to RSE, we will endeavour to assess how the school can help and support parents in this important part of education. Information resources will help to explain the RSE programme will give parents the opportunity they need to discuss all aspects of the programme with staff. RSE in school is intended to supplement and complement what goes on at home. We are fully aware that an RSE programme in school, no matter how well written, resourced and taught, is greatly diminished in its effectiveness, if it does not have parental input and support at all stages.

3. Rationale

St. Michael's College is a Catholic boys Grammar school committed to the education of the whole person. We, as a Christian Community, care for the faith and personal development of each student. We, like all Catholic schools, try to develop students who are responsible and capable of making informed decisions, inspired by Christian values. Education at St. Michael's prepares young people to open themselves up to life as it is and to create in themselves a positive attitude to life, as it should be.

In 2001, schools were provided with specific guidance on the implementation of Relationships and Sexuality Education in Post Primary schools, accompanied by the DENI Circular 2001/15. Relationships and

Sexuality Education at that stage was included on a statutory basis within the Northern Ireland Curriculum through the science programme of study and the health education cross curricular theme. In the Northern Ireland Curriculum Relationships and Sexuality Education is now a statutory component of both Personal Development and Home Economics. Personal Development is now a statutory element of the curriculum. As part of Learning for Life and Work at Key Stage 3 & 4, it is now at the core of the Northern Ireland Curriculum and reflected in the Curriculum's aims and objectives.

Additional guidance was issued via letter in June'15 to BOG's and Principal's in relation to Preventing Child Sexual Exploitation.

DENI Circular 2015/22 - Aug'15 advised schools authorities about revised Relationship and Sexuality guidance produced by CCEA on behalf of the DENI

In St. Michael's, the Delivery of RSE involves the consideration of a specific number of issues namely:

- Promoting Equal Opportunities

RSE is an equal opportunity issue and all pupils have the right to an education which adequately prepares them for adult life.

- Age Appropriate Information

Many young people are maturing earlier. It is important therefore that young people are provided with the appropriate factual information and have opportunities to discuss their feelings and concerns.

- Coping with Life's Challenges

In today's society there is greater freedom, increased responsibility, and exposure to a bewildering variety of messages about sexuality and gender issues. The age at which young people first become sexually active is decreasing - this issue also needs to be addressed within an agreed moral and values framework. RSE can help young people deal with these challenges.

- Sexuality and Sexual Health

Our sexuality is a central and significant part of who we are and how we see ourselves in relation to others. It is part of our overall health and contributes to our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being. Relationships and Sexuality Education can help to promote a positive view of sexuality and sexual health by helping young people to feel good about themselves, to respect others and to be able to make safe, responsible and satisfying relationships.

- Supporting Communication

Many pupils cannot or are unwilling to talk to their parents about growing up and about sexual matters. The school can offer information and provide opportunities to consider feelings and concerns within a secure environment.

- Challenging Inappropriate and Unwanted Attention

Effective teaching enables pupils to challenge inappropriate and unwanted attention from others.

- Teen Pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Infections

Northern Ireland has one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in Europe, with approximately 650 babies born each year to young women under 20 years old. The incidence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) continues to rise.

- Boys and Young Men

It is vital that a Relationships and Sexuality section of a Personal Development programme is provided for and made relevant to the identified needs of boys and young men.

4. Definitions

A. Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

RSE is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and developing ones beliefs, attitudes and values, about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. RSE seeks to provide young people with formal opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality and how to develop the skills and values they need to initiate and sustain healthy, mature, Christian, relationships.

B. Sexuality

People are sexual beings. Every human being is either male or female. Sexuality is about much more than its biological aspects, it concerns the innermost being of the human person. We believe sexuality is a gift from God. It is the drive within every person to give and receive love and affection. Our sexuality shapes and permeates all our relationships.

RSE in St.Michael's is taught within the moral, social and spiritual framework that reflects the beliefs and ethos of a Catholic school.

C. Morality

Morality is essentially linked with behaviour and what we actually do. It is also directly connected with experience and faith.

D. Ethics

Ethics refers to the systematic structure such as the "Christian Tradition" which provides a particular lifestyle with corresponding and inherent values.

E. Values

Values are the attitudes, beliefs, virtues and principles, which spring from within the person and inform his/her behaviour e.g. respect for self, honesty with self and others.

F. Personal Decisions

Morality is about each of us taking responsibility for the choices we make. We endeavour to ensure our pupils make moral decisions with an "informed conscience".

5. Aims and Objectives of Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

The Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme in St.Michael's aims to:

- Help young people to appreciate their uniqueness and dignity as sons of God.
- Help young people understand that sexuality is a gift from God that encompasses the whole person, body, mind, emotions and soul.
- Promote a positive attitude to one's sexuality and in one's relationship to others.
- Promote knowledge and understanding of, and respect for, human reproduction, values of human life and wonder of birth.
- Help young people understand that marriage is a sacrament and that sexual intercourse is an expression of married love.
- Enhance the personal development, self esteem and well being of the young person.
- Appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood.

Objectives

The RSE programme will enable our 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, including CSE.
- Acquire and improve skills of communication and self 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 identify and explore aspects of sexuality including sex roles, stereotyping, gender issues and cultural influences on sexuality.
- Develop skills for coping with peer pressure, conflict and threats to personal safety.

The RSE programme will give pupils the opportunity to develop:

A) Practical skills - for everyday living; for supporting others; for future parenting; for accessing health and advisory services.

B) 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.

C) Decision-making and problem solving skills - the steps in making personal decisions and sensible choices in the light of relevant information, making moral judgements about what to do in actual situations and putting these judgements into practice; developing independence in though moral and values framework. Acting responsibly

and with initiative as an individual or as a member of a variety of groups; considering the consequences of actions.

D) Inter-personal and leadership skills - for managing relationships confidently and effectively, for developing as an effective group member or leader; for taking initiative and managing others responsibly.

6. Moral and Values Framework

In St.Michael's we believe that pupils should be taught RSE within a framework which models and encourages the following values and ethos of the school:

A. The status of the family

We believe men and women should pledge their love for each other in a lifelong mutual commitment, and it is within marriage that couples should seek to bring children into the world. We promote this idea of the Christian family while remaining sensitive to, and being aware of, the different types of family backgrounds from which our pupils come.

B. Sacredness of Life

We believe that from the moment of conception the embryo must be recognised as having the rights of a person. The most fundamental human right for every human being is the right to life. This belief is one of the foundation stones on which the RSE programme is built.

C. Confidentiality and Child Protection Issues

The pupil's right to privacy must be respected at all times by both the teacher and all other pupils in the class. A key rule agreed in advance of any discussion in class is that no one will be expected to ask or answer any personal questions. Contract building at commencement of the programme will be the foundation for confidentiality. It should be emphasised that Teachers cannot promise absolute confidentiality. Pupils should be aware that a teacher has a moral and legal responsibility to inform the Principal or Designated Teacher, if a pupil discloses information that suggests he is at risk of, or is actually suffering from any kind of abuse, e.g. physical, sexual, emotional or neglect. The procedure outlined in the schools Child Protection Policy will be implemented in this case.

D. Sexual Identity & Orientation

Sex is a God-given gift that enables married people to express and deepen their love for each other, a love that should unite the couple as well as be open to the gift of new life. Teachers however should deal with the issue of sexual orientation in a sensitive and respectful manner; the ideals of respect and dignity for every person regardless of their race, creed, or sexual orientation are to be recognised.

E. Withdrawal from class and supervision

St. Michael's College in compliance with the advice offered by DENI Circular 2001/15 will make alternative arrangements for any pupil whose parent wishes him to be excused from particular, or all of the Relationship and Sexuality classes.

F. Terminology

We encourage the use of the proper biological terms during RSE lessons. We point out to pupils that the use of slang words, or offensive words, often indicates embarrassment, lack of knowledge, and/or a lack of respect for self and others. The level of maturity and the needs of pupils will be the main deciding factors in determining the detail and the content of each module. The Head of Pastoral Care will also consult with teachers regarding the detail and content of the programme.

Issues to be considered in relation to detail include:

- Puberty-Emotional and physical changes during adolescence are inter-linked and are caused by hormonal activity. Through the RSE programme we hope to help our pupils to identify, understand and accept the emotional and physical changes they are experiencing.
- Time Issue for Programme - the Pastoral Care co-ordinator in consultation with the staff delivering the programme will

prioritise the issues to be dealt with for each Year Group, through the Personal Development Programme.

- Special Educational Needs (SEN) - materials will be adapted to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Awkward Questions / Teacher Responses - We are confident in the professional judgement and skills of our teachers to deal with an awkward question that may arise during the course of class discussions. Establishing boundaries and dealing with difficult or sensitive questions, is an area we will address through in-service training on contract building. We advocate the use of a question box to allow teachers time to prepare their responses or, where appropriate, to consult with parents about a specific question.

G. Use of Visitors and Other Resources

St. Michael's College encourages the involvement of outside agencies to complement the delivery of the RSE programme. The Head of Pastoral Care / Head of Key Stage / Year Head will ensure that resource materials obtained from other agencies, and presentations by outside speakers are in harmony with the ethos of the school and that adequate preparation and appropriate follow-up will occur in relation to guest speakers/presentations.

7. Organisation of Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme

A. Who will teach it?

In years 8-12 RSE will be delivered as an integral part of the Personal Development Programme by individual Form Teachers. In Year 13 and 14, RSE will be delivered through the Spiritual and Social Awareness module by the RE Department and through the Personal Development Programme.

We believe that only teachers who are trained confident, competent and enthusiastic about all aspects of the programme will be effective in its delivery and therefore in service training will be provided for staff organised by the Head of Pastoral Care, in communication with the ACCORD Education Officer for Northern Ireland.

B. Delivery

Where will RSE be taught in the Curriculum?

In Years 8-12, RSE will be located within an overall framework of Personal Development and on a cross curricular subject basis. In Years 13 and 14 RSE will be delivered in Social and Spiritual Awareness module and the Personal Development programme.

C. Methodology - Active and participating strategies are recommended in relation to active learning and the development of life skills including group and collaborative strategies, pupil control, decision making and problem solving. (Ref: Active Learning and Teaching methods, www.nicurriculum.co.uk).

The main resource for the programme will be, "*Love Matters*" produced by the CCEA and ACCORD Northern Ireland, supported by the Northern Ireland Bishops. These materials will be supplemented by resources supplied by external agencies and individual subject areas.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- i. The Head and Assistant of Pastoral Care in partnership with all teachers involved in delivering the RSE programme will be involved, on an on-going basis, in monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness and relevance of the programme. This group will take into account feedback received from pupils, teachers and parents.
- ii. The aim of the RSE programme, as listed in this policy, will be at the forefront of any monitoring and evaluation in order to ensure the aims are being achieved.
- iii. Evidence of pupils learning might include:
 - Verbal feedback from teachers, pupils and parents.
 - Reviewing a selection of pupils' work.
 - Comments from external agencies.

- iv. Parents/Guardians - parents and guardians will be fully informed about the RSE policy and the content and delivery of the RSE programme before it is implemented by the relevant Year Head. On going dialogue between parents/guardians and staff will examine and help build strong consistent links between what is taught in the classroom and what is taught at home.

- v. **Staff** - all staff are consulted and informed about the policy and the programme. The Head of Key Stage, Year Head and Head & Assistant of Pastoral Care will plan and implement the delivery of the programme. Appropriate time, training and resources will be made available to facilitate the delivery of the programme. The programme will be designed to meet the specific needs of the pupils of the school.

Informing the Wider School Community, (Parents and Board of Governors).

Prior to class work on the RSE module, documentation explaining the aims and content of the course will be sent to each parent/guardian. Parents / guardians will be invited to view classroom materials and to discuss the content with the class teacher should they require further clarification. The full RSE policy is available for perusal by Parents/Guardians should it be required.

The Board of Governors will examine and approve the policy.