



## **Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy**

### **Section 1 – Context and Background Information**

**Definition:** *Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is about more than simply educating young people about biological sexual reproduction. It is a lifelong process which encompasses the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills, and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy.*

#### **Rationale**

When RSE is taught effectively in a sensitive and inclusive manner, it encourages children and young people to value themselves as individuals, make responsible and well-informed decisions about their lives, and challenge their own perceptions.

The RBAI RSE will build on the learning experiences from the primary curriculum, and provide pupils with:

- the opportunity to develop the skills to build healthy and respectful relationships, stay safe, and develop their own moral thinking and value system
- the capacity to make well-informed decisions, aimed at reducing risks; and
- age appropriate, accurate and accessible information about reproduction, sex and sexual health matters

*(Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance 2019 guidance - CCEA)*

Relationships education is a statutory element of the NI curriculum through LLW.

The School will abide by the guidelines laid down by the Department of Education and the specifications provided by CCEA. This policy has been written in accordance of the guidance provided in DE circulars 2010/01, 2013/16, 2015/22 and the Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance – An Update for Post-Primary Schools (CCEA, 2015 and 2019), taking into account The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006.

### **Section 2 – Formation and Consultation**

#### **Legislative framework**

It is a statutory requirement that all schools in Northern Ireland have a Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy. The policy must be delivered in a sensitive manner which is appropriate to the age and understanding of pupils and the ethos of the school. The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 requires all grant-aided schools to offer a curriculum which:

- Promotes the spiritual, emotional, 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 life by equipping them with the appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills.

RSE is delivered at RBAI in keeping with the ethos of the School, and as part of a programme of well-being.

While there is no statutory right to withdraw a pupil from RSE classes, the School will respond to any parental concerns. Details pertaining to withdrawal from specific elements of the RSE course (DE circular 2024/1) can be found in Section 6.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

As is the practice with other school policies, this policy will be reviewed at least every 3 years, or when a change in legislation requires updates. The ongoing process of monitoring and evaluation will be linked to assessment for learning within the revised curriculum and developed as an integral part of the programme. The review process includes consultation with representative groups of staff, pupils and parents, as well as the Board of Governors.

The approved policy is available on the School website.

### **Role of RSE Co-ordinator**

The Head of Personal Development is the member of staff responsible for co-ordinating all issues related to RSE policy and programme development.

Their role includes:

- Ensuring that the programme is taught effectively and is appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils.
- Liaising with the Principal, Head of Biology, Head of Divinity, Head of Physical Education, Head of Learning for Life and Work, Vice Principal (Pastoral & Pupil Achievement), the Designated Teacher for Child Protection, SENCo, Board of Governors, all staff, parents, and any relevant visiting speakers on RSE matters.
- Attending in-service training and disseminating appropriate information to other members of staff.
- Organising training for staff as and when appropriate.
- Liaising with outside agencies for curriculum purposes.

## **Section 3 – Aims and Objectives**

### **Aims of RSE**

1. To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the young person.
2. To develop self-respect and self-confidence.
3. To help the young person learn how to develop and enjoy healthy and respectful friendships and relationships which are based on responsibility and mutual respect.
4. To develop coping strategies to deal with challenging relationship scenarios;
5. To develop strategies to avoid and resolve conflict;
6. To educate young people on how to keep themselves safe in the digital world.
7. To foster an understanding of and a healthy attitude to human sexuality and relationships in a moral, social and spiritual framework.
8. To promote responsible behaviour and the ability to make informed decisions.
9. To encourage an appreciation of the value of family life, long-term loving relationships and the responsibilities of parenthood;
10. To promote an appreciation of the value and uniqueness of human life.
11. The development of a better understanding of diversity and inclusion, encouraging values of respect for difference, while encouraging pupils to challenge prejudicial attitudes;
12. The development of an understanding of human physiology and sexual development at a level appropriate to the age and maturity of groups of pupils;
13. To explore the emotional, social and moral implications of early sexual activity;
14. The deferment of sexual activity until young people are physically and emotionally mature;
15. To alert pupils to the physical and emotional risks of casual and promiscuous sexual behaviour;

16. To provide age-appropriate, comprehensive and scientifically accurate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights (see also Section 6);
17. A recognition that sexual responsibility belongs to each person;
18. A recognition that sexual abstinence is an achievable reality;
19. To develop an understanding that consent is a moral and legal imperative in all sexual activity;

### **Inclusion**

All pupils have a right to an education which adequately prepares them for adult life, regardless of their age, gender identity, sexual orientation, culture, disability status, religion or social background (The Equality Act 2006). Through RSE we aim to deliver an inclusive relationships and sexuality education, which is relevant, accessible and age appropriate to all our pupils. It will:

- be set in a moral framework which is inclusive with respect to culture, religion, sexual orientation and social background;
- seek to clarify values and attitudes towards sex, sexuality and relationships, and to encourage respect for and empathy with the values and attitudes of others;
- embrace the diversity of cultural identity and encourage pupils to be aware of the traditions and beliefs of others, promoting respect, mutual understanding and acceptance, and
- include activities to provide opportunities to discuss interests, attitudes, emotions, concerns and feelings.

The environment in which RSE will be taught:

*“All 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.”* (Circular Amendment No 2010/01)

## **Section 4 – How it is delivered**

### **Age-appropriate, objective, balanced and sensitive manner**

RSE is taught in a sensitive manner across a range of curriculum subjects, as well as through the Personal Development programme of study, and should enable pupils to find empowerment in being accepting and respectful of those who may not share their beliefs. There should be an appreciation that friendships and relationships should be based on mutual and self-respect, non-exploitation, honesty, trust and commitment.

RSE should be tailored to the age, maturity and understanding of pupils, in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner, set within a clear framework of respect for self and others and an awareness of the law on sexual behaviour. Pupils should be encouraged to appreciate the value of family, long-term loving relationships (including marriage and civil partnerships) 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. They should be enabled to recognise the physical, emotional and moral implications and risks of certain types of behaviour and to accept that everyone must behave responsibly in sexual matters. Teachers should however 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 encourage the development of their sense of worth.

(adapted from DfEE Circular No 5/1994 Education Act 1993: Sex Education in Schools (Paragraph 8).

We are committed to ensuring that all pupils, including those with additional needs, have appropriate, accessible and relevant Relationships and Sexuality Education. The Head of Personal Development will liaise with the SENCO in the careful planning and adaptation of resources where

necessary to ensure there are no barriers to participation or learning for pupils with SEN compared to their peers.

### **Sharing Responsibility for Relationships and Sexuality Education**

RBAI believes that the responsibility for relationships and sexuality education should be appropriately shared between teachers, parents and the School community as a whole. Its effectiveness depends on a collaborative process involving teachers, parents, governors and other educational and health professionals. Each of the partners has distinctive contributions to make and the School will endeavour to define and fulfil its responsibility, providing an opportunity for teachers, governors and parents to raise any issues and concerns they might have about the RSE policy and programme.

### **Teaching RSE**

All teachers are responsible for teaching aspects of RSE, appropriate to the age, maturity, stage of development, and family background of their pupils. It will be delivered primarily through the PD curriculum, during tutor period, but also through, and not exclusively, a range of subjects each covering aspects of the RSE programme e.g. Physical Education, Biology, LLW and Divinity. It is important teachers feel supported in their roles and are suitably equipped to deliver the RSE programme.

### **Sensitive issues**

Sensitive issues will be presented in a way that is free from sensationalism and bias and sensitively pitched to the needs of the pupils and situations. Pupils will be provided with a balanced and non-judgmental view that respects a range of religious beliefs and the possible experiences of the pupils.

## **Section 5 – Confidentiality and External Agencies**

### **Confidentiality and child protection**

Staff cannot give a guarantee of confidentiality to pupils around issues relating to child protection. If details are revealed that would lead staff to suspect that sexual (or any other form of) abuse is involved, the teacher must follow the child protection procedures outlined in the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy.

### **External Agencies**

When education and/or health professionals from statutory or voluntary organisations are invited into the school, the activities which the agency or individual undertake will complement the ongoing programmes within the school. **The tutor or Head of PD of the group in attendance will always be present when an individual or a representative from an agency is taking a class.** Such a visit is not to be seen as the RSE programme, but as an integral part of it. (See Section 9, Appendix 1)

## **Section 6 – Involving parents/guardians and carers**

### **Engaging With Parents**

Parents, guardians or carers, will be contacted prior to any outside agencies coming in to School to deliver an RSE-related course to their son, with information pertaining to the nature of the course.

Relevant RSE information will also be given to parents, guardians or carers, during specific Key Stage Information Evenings.

## **Parental Contact**

If a parent, guardian or carer, requests a pupil is withdrawn from a specific RSE activity, then every effort will be made to accommodate this request.

If a parent, guardian or carer wishes for their son to be excused from the teaching of topics relating to either '*prevention of early pregnancy*', '*access to abortion*' or *both*, then a request must be made in writing, directly to the Principal.

For pupils in years 8 to 11, this request will be acknowledged and the pupil excused.

For pupils in year 12, the request will be acknowledged, but then confirmed with said pupil, that they do not object to being excused.

Where a request is made, and granted, it will remain in place for the rest of that academic year, or until that specified section of the course has been taught. Any future requests must be made during that academic year.

## **Section 7 – Curriculum links**

### **Wider School Life**

The RSE strategy will be supported by a number of Pastoral elements in School:

- The tutor system – allows relationships to be developed, enabling a safe and open environment, which will be key when dealing with sensitive topics;
- The Well-Being programme – offers a wide range of initiatives to support pupils;
- Assemblies – allows messages to be delivered to the whole School, or specific year groups, as well as outside speakers to attend and talk about current issues supporting the RSE programme.

## **Section 8 – Other School policy links**

A2. School Ethos, Aims & Objectives

4a. Anti-Bullying Policy

4b. Positive Behaviour & Discipline Policy

4c. Pupil Acceptable Use Policy

4e. e-safety Policy

5b. Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

5e. Pastoral Care Policy

5g. Special Educational Needs & Inclusion Policy

## **Section 9 – Appendices**

### **Appendix 1 – External Agencies**

Currently RBAI uses:

- Love for Life - an independent Christian charity which delivers programmes in almost 70% of post-primary schools in NI. Their aim is to help pupils to develop a healthy respect for themselves, relationships and sex.
- CARA-Friend – a Northern Ireland based organisation aimed at supporting and empowering the LGBTQ+ community. They provide awareness training for staff.

## **Appendix 2 – Relevant Documents**

DE Circular 2010/01  
DE Circular 2013/16  
DE Circular 2015/22  
DE Circular 2024/1

Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/relationships-and-sexuality-education-eti-guidance>

Every School a Good School, Together Towards Improvement

Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education Policy

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

**Reviewed: May 2025**

**Next review: May 2028**