

Killinchy Primary School



RSE Policy (Relationships and Sexuality Education)

January 2020

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

January 2020



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1.0 Introduction and Rationale

Relationships and Sexuality Education is a lifelong process where there is a need to acquire information and develop attitudes, beliefs and values about personal and social relationships and gender issues. The learning process begins informally with parents/carers and continues throughout school and adult life.

The age at which sexual intercourse takes place has been decreasing over the past few decades. *'The Young Persons' Behaviour and Attitudes Survey'* (2003) of 7223 pupils aged 11-16, found that in terms of sexual experience and knowledge, 11% have had sexual intercourse, with the average age of first sexual intercourse being 14 years, and 79% of these sexually active pupils have used some form of contraception. Northern Ireland has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy rates in Europe and the incidents of sexually transmitted diseases continue to rise. There is also an increasing concern over the continuing rise of HIV infection in Northern Ireland.

The Department of Education commissioned CCEA to produce guidance for **Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) (2002)**. This guidance was superseded by the **2015 NI Curriculum document, *'Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance: An Update for Primary Schools'*** in conjunction with the [DE Circular 2015/22 \(see Appendix 1\)](#) which makes clear the requirement for **every school to have a policy setting out how they will address RSE within the curriculum.**

2.0 Statement of School Ethos in Relation to RSE

Killinchy PS exists to provide a caring learning community based on Christian principles where every child is treated as an individual. There is a commitment to maintaining close links with parents and organisations within the community in an ethos of mutual respect and support. Whilst there is a strong emphasis on academic success, the value of a holistic education is equally recognised. Our objective is to produce pupils who understand the value of lifelong learning, respect for others and the importance of making a positive contribution to society. This document reflects the aims and objectives of Killinchy Primary School, in addition to taking account of the RSE curriculum and associated Department of Education guidelines.

3.0 Morals and Values Framework

Killinchy Primary School values all of its pupils equally and recognises the diversity of family life. We will promote the institution of the family, referring to mums, dads and extended family as appropriate. The focus will be not on the family composition but on pupils' access and right to stable, caring and loving relationships, whatever form they take within the individual family.

Relationships and Sexuality Education should enable our pupils to clarify what they believe and why they believe it. In line with our school ethos, pupils will be facilitated to respectfully express their view or opinion about any issue, whilst understanding that other children within the class may not agree with it and that different views and opinions can be held. It is not the role of the teacher within the school to promote their values or morals on issues regarding relationships and sexuality, but to present the facts in a non-sensational manner.

There should be an appreciation that friendships and relationships should be based on self and mutual respect, non-exploitation, honesty, trust and communication.

Within relationships there should be recognition that rights, duties and responsibilities are involved. The school acknowledges that, in this technological age, children may be the recipients of sexual information presented in a variety of forms both acceptable and unacceptable. Given this situation, one major focus of the school's RSE programme will be to encourage our pupils to develop their self-esteem, confidence and understanding to enable them to make critical and informed decisions in later life.

4.0 Equal Opportunities

The school will seek to ensure that the RSE programme is relevant and accessible to pupils, regardless of age (with consideration given to age-appropriateness of the teaching programme in line with NI Curriculum recommendations), culture, disability, gender, religion or social class. However, the school is sensitive to the views of parents and will make suitable arrangements, should a parent wish to withdraw a child from a particular aspect of RSE.

With an understanding that maturity is not always determined by chronological age, it is accepted that some information will not be understood by all children, some of whom may have Special Educational Needs. Whilst in other areas of learning, individual tasks may be set to allow all children to reach their full potential, there may be occasions when this not possible in terms of Relationships and Sexuality Education and the differentiation is through outcome. A generic position on this is not possible therefore teachers will make professional judgements based on their knowledge of individual pupils.

5.0 Guidance Informing RSE Policy Development

5.1 Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) 2006

The Department of Education and CCEA have developed clear guidance for the development of RSE Policy and practice which is fully compliant with the above regulations.

5.2 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Article 29 (Goals of Education): *Children's education should develop each child's personality, talents and abilities to the fullest. It should encourage children to respect others, human rights and their own and other cultures. (Rights Respecting Schools – UNICEF; The Convention on the Rights of the Child).*

The Department of Education and CCEA have developed clear guidance for the development of RSE Policy and practice which is fully compliant with the UNCRC.

5.3 NI Curriculum guidance documentation

All actions taken in the formulation of this policy and the associated curriculum content were informed by the following guidance documents:

- The Northern Ireland Curriculum (Primary);
- *'Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance- An Update for Primary Schools'* (2015);
- *'Living, Learning, Together'* (CCEA-produced Northern Ireland Curriculum teaching support resource)

5.4 Department of Education NI (DE), Education Authority (EA) and Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) input;

In addition to formal documentation, specific guidance was provided on the development of this Policy by the Education Authority (EA), Department of Education (DE), Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) and the Health and Social Care Board (HSC) via the 'Informing Choices' organisation.

5.5 Links to the School Development Plan (SDP)

This Policy and its associated curriculum content are the result of a carefully planned and considered area of School Development as per the 3-Year SDP 2017 – 2020. RSE was first a focus for development in the 2018/19 school year but due to the level of input required the RSE Action Plan was evaluated and carried forwards into 2019/20.

6.0 Links to Safeguarding and the Preventative Curriculum

There is a considerable body of evidence to support the belief that a full and rounded RSE education leads to lower instances of sexual abuse of children and empowers children in terms of respect for their own bodies and those of others.

'Relationships and Sexuality Education- an update for primary schools' devotes several sections to the importance of a good RSE programme within the Preventative Curriculum. It is not necessary to quote large sections of it here however the following excerpts are useful in summarising the message:

'... approximately one fifth of all sexual abuse assaults against children in Northern Ireland are committed by a member of the child's immediate family; this

is particularly the case for sexual abuse against very young children, with very similar patterns of victimisation for both boys and girls aged 0 – 11 years old.’

(Bunting, 2011)

‘Given the nature of contact time between pupils and their teachers in the primary schools, teachers are in a good position to observe possible behavioural changes and may be able to identify ‘at risk’ children at an early stage.’

A 2011 DE commissioned research study found that, for the majority of children in Northern Ireland, a deficit exists in their understanding of ‘keeping safe’ and this was particularly relevant to bullying and inappropriate sexual touching. The NI guidance document states that there is an urgent need to address this gap in understanding. It also states that:

‘When children learn about ‘keeping safe’ through boundaries and positive content, it helps them recognise what constitutes:

- *Appropriate and inappropriate behaviour;*
- *Appropriate and inappropriate touch; and*
- *Unwanted attention, or attention that makes them feel uncomfortable in any way.’*

RSE lessons are intrinsically linked to PDMU and other ‘softer’ subjects/teachings and serve as an excellent way to enhance our delivery of the Preventative Curriculum.

For further information about the connection between the Preventative Curriculum and Safeguarding, please see the relevant section of our **Child Protection Policy**.

7.0 Consultation

7.1 How the policy was drawn-up

This Policy was drawn-up as a joint document between Principal, Mr C. Currie and PDMU/RSE Coordinator, Mrs C. Ryan.

Guidance was provided at developmental stages by the Department of Education’s **Curriculum Development** team (S. Kinghan and A. O’Kane) and also by **ETI District Inspector**- Mrs F. McArthur.

Particular attention was paid to *‘Relationships and Sexuality Education- An Update for Primary Schools’ SECTION 5 ‘Developing a Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy’*

All best practice content was incorporated into this Policy then a draft version was provided for the DE Curriculum team and our District Inspector. All suggestions were taken on board and incorporated into the final policy document circulated for consultation.

7.2 Consultation with parents and staff

The DE guidance document for RSE advises schools to, ‘...*consult closely with parents or carers to allay fears...*’ relating to RSE during the developmental stages of their RSE policy. It goes on to state that schools should consider:

- *Providing up-to-date parent or carer-friendly information leaflets...*
- *Holding awareness-raising workshops*
- *Sharing resources to educate parents on eg. safe use of social media etc*

The following sections provide dates and details of consultation exercises carried out during the developmental stages of this policy:

September 2017

A ‘**School Improvement Evening**’ was held and attended by approximately 60 – 70 parents. The purpose of this evening was to unveil the draft version of the new 3-Year SDP. Considerable time was spent presenting the new plan to parents, a brief section of which focused on the RSE development programme due to start in Year 2 (2018/19).

September 2018

Another ‘**School Improvement Evening**’ was held at which a more detailed discussion took place around the RSE development programme which was about to commence.

January 2019

Development work for RSE began in earnest. After some initial training for staff, **parents were provided with detailed information** on the place of RSE in the curriculum, a proposed direction for the subject and the purpose of consultation within it.

At the end of the above document parents were directed to an **online questionnaire** where they were encouraged to express their thoughts and concerns.

February 2019

A **School Development Day (SDD)** was held for staff during which feedback from the questionnaire was discussed and training completed. Some initial directions for travel were presented and agreed.

May 2019

After several weeks of advance notice and publicity we held an evening of ‘**Curriculum Workshops**’. Two opportunities were provided on this evening for parents to hear from Principal and subject coordinator about the proposed direction for RSE. There was also opportunity for parents to engage in discussion on the topic and provide face-to-face feedback. Based on these evenings, further changes were

made to the programme and additional information gleaned on how best to move forwards.

In advance of the above workshops, we again circulated the **January Information Sheet** for parents.

August 2019

Baker Day spent in further staff training and negotiations re- amending curriculum content based on feedback from the June Curriculum Workshops.

October

Staff training for P5/6/7 specifically in view of lessons 2 and 3 (puberty and personal hygiene).

December 2019

Amended **template letter** distributed to parents providing advance notice of RSE lessons due to commence after the Christmas break. **Letter included specific new vocabulary to be introduced from P2 – P7.**

Wednesday 8th January 2020

Final staff meeting in advance of lesson roll-out.

Friday 10th January 2020

Final advanced notice to parents of upcoming RSE lessons. Memo contained **final versions of the worksheets to be used and the Powerpoint presentation** which would help all teachers structure the lesson in the same way.

Saturday 11th January 2020

Roll-out of RSE lessons paused due to a small number of concerns brought to the Principal on Friday 20th January after the circulation of the final reminder.

Saturday 11th January 2020 – 21st January 2020

‘Free’ feedback emailed to the Principal by parents, the large majority of which indicated support for the proposed RSE lessons.

Monday 13th January 2020

Proposed roll-out of RSE lessons discussed at length at a meeting of the Board of Governors.

7.3 How the policy will be disseminated/stored

Once the draft Policy is ready for parent, governor and staff consultation, a digital copy will be provided via email. A consultation period will then commence for a stipulated length of time.

Once approved, the final version of the governor-approved policy will be distributed to parents and made available on the school website.

7.4 Contact person for comment/feedback

Comments and/or feedback on the Policy should be directed towards the **Principal, Mr C. Currie** or the **RSE Coordinator, Mrs C. Ryan**.

8.0 Aims of the Policy

- To place the pupil at the centre of a programme which helps them to understand the values and morals inherent within the context of personal development;
- To equip children with the skills and knowledge necessary to make informed choices and decisions about their own behaviour;
- To develop self-respect and self-confidence in pupils so that they can cope with detrimental peer pressure;
- To make children aware that actions have consequences and that their behaviour should reflect this;
- To enhance the personal development, self-respect, self-esteem and well-being of the child;
- To help the child learn how to develop and enjoy healthy and respectful friendships and relationships which are based on responsibility and mutual respect.
- To foster an understanding of and a healthy attitude to human sexuality and relationships in a moral, social and spiritual framework.
- To foster in the child the values family life, marriage and the responsibilities of parenthood.

9.0 Objectives of the Policy

In delivering the RSE curriculum, as part of the statutory minimum entitlement for personal development, teachers should ensure that pupils are given worthwhile experiences which enable them to explore:

- Relationships with friends and families, valuing them as a source of love and mutual support;
- Similarities and differences between people;
- Dignity, uniqueness, well-being and sense of responsibility for themselves and others;
- Differing family structures and patterns;
- Strategies to promote personal safety and health and resist various forms of abuse;
- Growth and change and understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity;
- The use of correct vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development;

- Sexual development and identity including aspects of sexuality such as gender roles, stereotyping and gender roles.
- The physical, social and emotional changes which occur during puberty.
- How babies are conceived, grow and are born.

10.0 Key Roles Within the Policy

10.1 Governors

Governors play an important role in the ratification of the Policy document.

The Board of Governors should be satisfied that the Policy reflects the ethos of the school and that it is aligned with the statutory curriculum.

The Governors will review the policy as required in line with statutory requirements.

10.2 Parents

“ETI states that ‘there is a need for parents to be more involved more in developing the Personal Development curriculum in school and for them to be supported so that they can keep their children safe outside of school hours’”

(DE, 2011)

Killinchy Primary School has consulted closely with parents during policy development to ensure they are engaged in the RSE aspect of their child’s education. On an annual basis, and as appropriate to the introduction of new (and potentially sensitive) topics, there will be active engagement and information provided.

As curriculum content evolves, staff may feel it is appropriate to provide parents with copies of resources to be used in school to enable them, if they wish, to discuss with their child any issues that may arise during classroom discussion. Parents should be reassured that the school’s teaching of RSE is complementary and supportive of their role as lead educators in this area.

10.3 Principal

The Principal has the ultimate responsibility for the content of the draft RSE Policy, sometimes created on his/her behalf by a delegated member of the teaching staff. He/she should have regular input, provide support to the staff member during the various stages of development and generally oversee the process.

10.4 Coordinator

The role of the co-ordinator is that of co-ordinating all issues relating to the development of the RSE policy in consultation with the Principal. Specific responsibilities include:

- Creation and development of this RSE Policy;
- Ensuring that the RSE programme is effective and age-appropriate for the pupils;
- Liaising with the Principal, Board of Governors, staff, parents and any relevant external agencies;
- Coordinating and delivering appropriate training for staff;
- Monitoring and evaluation of all of the above;

10.5 Teachers

The pupil/teacher relationship is particularly important when teaching RSE. The teacher will provide a safe, secure, respectful, and inclusive space where pupils can express their feelings and opinions and participate confidently and freely without embarrassment, judgement or ridicule.

“Teachers will be sensitive to the cultural background and personal circumstances of their pupils. They will acknowledge how pupils’ views and values are influenced by their informal learning experiences and by the views of family, peers, community and the media.”
(DE, 2011).

When dealing with sensitive topics, teachers will use resources that have been agreed upon as part of a consultative and collegial development process. Teachers should be satisfied that material chosen reflects the ethos of the school, is age appropriate, inclusive and sensitive to the pupils’ needs and experiences. The resources will be factually up to date and, if appropriate, clearly differentiate between fact and opinion.

10.6 Non-Teaching Staff

Classroom Assistants

CAs will play an integral role in the delivery of RSE, in particular when they support a child with SEN. SEN CAs will work alongside the class teacher to ensure that resources and activities are adapted and that barriers to participation or learning are minimised. It is particularly important that teachers communicate with non-teaching staff about the content and timing of lessons to ensure that they can adequately prepare any relevant pupils.

Foundation Stage and General Assistants also play a vital pastoral role when supervising free play. All will be familiar with the content of potentially sensitive RSE lessons and be ready to deal with any sensitive matters which arise outside of the formal classroom environment.

Office staff

Office staff will be aware of the dates and content of any potentially sensitive RSE lessons and be confident in directing any concerns/queries towards the appropriate member of staff.

Bus drivers

Although not formal members of school staff, bus drivers have direct pupil contact at the top and tail of each school day. We believe it to be good practice to extend dates and an overview of content relating to any potentially sensitive lesson content so they can respond and interact appropriately with pupils if required.

10.7 External organisations

External organisations can bring specialist knowledge, expertise and experience into the classroom. They exist to support pupils and teaching staff where the content complements the classroom RSE curriculum but such agencies will not be used as substitutes. It is our belief that the relationship between pupil and teacher cannot be replicated by any outside agency, particularly when discussing sensitive matters and that this content is best delivered by familiar adults whom pupils know and trust.

11.0 The Statutory RSE Curriculum;

11.1 Statutory curriculum content

RSE is a subject area which bridges many of the core curriculum subjects and skills however its primary home lies within PDMU.

NI Curriculum support documents, such as *'Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance: An Update for Primary Schools'* provide more in-depth guidance on best-practice within the subject.

Specific teaching materials/resources have also been developed to provide further clarity on content and delivery. The majority of content emerging from this policy will be guided by the NI Curriculum support resource, ['Living, Learning, Together'](#) (**click to view**) which was developed specifically to assist teachers in the delivery of the PDMU curriculum.

11.2 Staff development and training

As part of the development of this policy and associated new content, 2 members of staff attended training provided by HSC and disseminated the content to teachers internally.

Since January 2019 (**ref. Section 7.2**), significant upskilling has been carried out with teaching staff ensuring all are now fully familiar with where RSE sits within the PDMU curriculum and how it supports learning in a range of curricular areas, not least of which is the Preventative/Safeguarding curriculum.

The subject coordinator has engaged with local area clusters where good practice is shared. She has also proactively supported this with her own professional development in the subject.

11.3 Classroom teaching arrangements

Best-practice guidance recommends that all RSE lessons are carried out in mixed-gender groups to *'gain an understanding and appreciation of each other's perspectives.'* This is the case for the majority of RSE lessons which are not normally deemed 'sensitive'.

It was acknowledged in discussion, however, that as some of the more sensitive subject content and delivery was so new to both pupils and staff, the more sensitive **'Puberty and Personal Hygiene'** lessons in P6 and P7 would be delivered in single-gender groups by corresponding male/female teachers.

Provision is made for this within best-practice guidelines however it is hoped that, as the subject becomes a part of the normal routine over time, it may be possible to eventually deliver the lessons in mixed-gender groups. This will be kept under regular review.

11.4 Sharing with parents

It is acknowledged that some of the recently introduced RSE content has the potential to be sensitive therefore, in keeping with feedback from parental consultation, every effort will be made to make explicit to parents how sensitive content will be delivered. This will normally be achieved by sharing lesson resources and content with parents in advance.

11.5 Provision for pupils with SEN

There may be occasions when teachers need to adjust planning and resources/activities to ensure that barriers to learning for pupils with SEN are minimised. It would not be possible within this policy to specify every adjustment/amendment as these are almost exclusively specific to each child's individual needs.

Where a child with a Statement of SEN is supported by a Classroom Assistant on part-time hours, every effort will be made to ensure that the lesson is carried out when the CA is present.

It is acknowledged, however, that it may be difficult to suitably differentiate some of the material within RSE eg. biological terminology for body parts and in these cases, differentiation will be by outcome. It is the responsibility of the class teacher to liaise with the RSE Coordinator and/or SENCo if they foresee any issue for a child with SEN within an RSE lesson.

It is widely recognised that pupils with SEN are more vulnerable to all forms of abuse and exploitation. Teachers must try to ensure that they develop the knowledge, understanding and skills of pupils to enable them to:

- Identify inappropriate and exploitative behaviour;
- Help develop their own prevention strategies to stay safe
- Recognise and build healthy relationships;
- Know who they can talk to;

11.6 Selection of resources

The main resource that has been produced for the teaching of RSE (embedded within the PDMU curriculum) is the CCEA resource, *'Living, Learning, Together'*. We are extremely cautious about the resources we use; we will always be wholly satisfied that any resources used for the teaching of RSE reflect the ethos of our school, are age appropriate and inclusive. The resources will be factually accurate, up to date and make clear distinctions between fact and opinion. We will ensure that we inform parents of resources that our pupils will be exposed to, particularly when these are of a more sensitive nature.

11.7 Keeping up-to-date to inform planning and ensure relevance

The RSE coordinator will ensure he/she stays fully up-to date with pedagogical developments in the area and that these are effectively disseminated to staff in a timely manner. Where necessary, targets will be set within the School Development Plan and teachers' PRSD.

Any changes to DE Policy / guidance will always be enacted as soon as possible.

11.8 Sensitive/Specific Issues and Responding to Pupil Questions

15.8.1 Sensitive and specific issues

Many aspects of this subject area, in particular those lessons focusing on biological names for body parts and lessons on puberty may be of a 'sensitive' nature. These areas of learning are indeed sensitive but also topical; children are aware of these and want to talk about and understand them. It is important that pupils in our school should not be denied the opportunity to discuss such areas in an age appropriate way because their teacher may feel uncomfortable discussing them. To yield to this would leave children unprepared to engage and deal with the diverse and complex range of issues facing them in society today.

There will be occasions when teachers are required to use their own discretion and judgement on how to deal with particular questions. In Killinchy PS, care and attention has been paid to ensure staff are well prepared and have been given time to process the needs of the curriculum both on a personal and professional basis. This period of time has been referenced to under heading 7.2. It is paramount that our school staff remain supported throughout this experience but particularly in the early days.

Status of the Family

Killinchy PS promotes the institution of marriage but also acknowledges that family units can come in many forms and often extend beyond the home. Staff will be sensitive to (and respectful of) the different types of family units in the school and terminology used will reflect this.

15.8.2 Pupil questions

A pupil (or pupils) may raise a question or make a comment that we, as teachers, feel is outside the remit of our responsibility for teaching and learning. This may be a result of a child's personal, inquisitive nature or due to the diversity of their own personal experiences or family values.

The teacher will not be dismissive of this question or comment but simply reassure the pupil that the question will be re-visited at another time or may suggest that the pupil(s) and teacher speak after the lesson. Depending on the question it may be appropriate to refer it to the parents/guardians or inform them that it has been asked.

11.9 Use of appropriate language

'Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance: An Update for Primary Schools' states:

'Learning and using the correct terminology in Relationships and Sexuality Education is vitally important for children, as it helps them talk about feelings, sexuality, relationships, growth and development with confidence. In the interests of child safeguarding, it is very important that schools use the proper biological terms for parts of the body with the children from an early age, particularly private body parts and functions. To ensure consistency, all school staff should agree the key terms which they will use at different key stages with pupils. They should also share this information with parents or carers, so that they can use the same terms at home.'

'Living, Learning, Together' (NI Curriculum resource for PDMU/RSE) recommends the introduction of correct biological terminology from Primary 2. Learning Activity 6 (My Body) cites the following core concept:

'It is important that children learn the appropriate vocabulary for discussing aspects of sexuality, growing up and their body's physical changes. This will allow them to communicate confidently about themselves. When children begin school, it is quite normal for them to have other names for their genitals. However, you should encourage the children to use the proper terms for parts of the body and bodily functions from the earliest age so that these terms are given status and acceptability.'

The introduction of correct biological terminology for body parts is a divisive issue for many, therefore, in line with best-practice guidelines, Killinchy PS staff have invested a significant amount of time considering an appropriate, graded introduction of vocabulary by Key Stage. This can be found in Table 1 below:

School Year	Vocabulary being introduced
Primary 1	Umbilical cord, breast, womb.
Primary 2 & 3	Genitals, vulva, vagina, penis, testicles (<i>in addition to the above</i>)
Primary 4 & 5	Uterus, rectum, urethra (<i>in addition to the above</i>)
Primary 6 & 7	Puberty, menstruation (<i>in addition to the above</i>)

Table 1

Best practice guidelines will always be followed in advance of (and during) the delivery of lessons involving sensitive material; any parent uncomfortable with their child taking part in such lessons is free to avail of their right to withdraw, as per **Section 16.0**.

11.10 Confidentiality and disclosures

The foundation for the effective delivery of RSE is the building of secure, trusting, respectful relationships between the teacher and their pupils. The uniqueness of the pupil/teacher relationship is such that pupils will feel reassured that their teacher cares about their wellbeing and be aware that there are adults whom they can talk to and confide in.

Pupils will also know and understand that the promise of confidentiality is never an option in the classroom or school setting.

Teachers will take decisions relating to disclosures in accordance with the procedures set out in the school's Child Protection Policy.

11.11 Involvement of External Agencies

On a biennial basis, Killinchy PS will avail of the services of the **NSPCC** to reinforce and complement the existing Preventative Curriculum. This normally takes the form of a 'blitz day' involving age-appropriate assemblies and focused workshops.

In advance of delivery, senior staff will always preview any external teaching programme to ensure that it complements the ethos of the school and, in particular, the RSE and preventative curricula.

11.12 Links to other KPS teaching programmes and policies;

This RSE Policy is written in conjunction with (and is complimentary of) the following existing policies and teaching programmes at Killinchy Primary School:

- Literacy (Reading, Writing, Talking & Listening)
- ICT & E-Safety
- The World Around Us
- PDMU
- Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities
- Pastoral Care
- Anti-Bullying
- Child Protection

12.0 The Right to Withdraw and How;

'Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance: An Update for Primary Schools (2015)' refers to the lack of legislative provision permitting parental withdrawal from RSE, however, in Northern Ireland, parents or carers have the right to have their child(ren) educated in accordance with their wishes and, as such, schools are given freedom to grant these requests on an individual basis.

This Policy fully acknowledges that some areas of the statutory RSE curriculum have potential to conflict with personally held, family and/or religious beliefs therefore **Killinchy PS will accommodate any parental request to withdraw their child** from any aspect of RSE. The same also applies to RE.

Due to the difficulties presented by supervision and availability of staff to provide suitable alternative lessons, any potentially sensitive lessons will take place in the afternoons and parents provided with dates in advance. Parents withdrawing their children will be invited to collect their children before the lessons commence.

In order to make the process as discreet as possible for all involved, parents should do their best to inform the child's teacher(s) in advance of the intention to withdraw. Contact can be made via any of the usual channels- telephone call, email, SeeSaw message, direct message via the school app, note in the schoolbag etc.

There is no requirement for any parent to provide a reason or explanation for their decision to withdraw.

13.0 Arrangements for Monitoring and Review of Policy and Content;

As this Policy is in its first year and involves the incremental construction of a new teaching programme, it will be necessary to evaluate and monitor it on a regular basis, at least annually for the next 4-5 years.

14.0 Appendices

Appendix 1: DE Circular 2015/22



Subject:
**RELATIONSHIP AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE)
GUIDANCE**

Circular Number:
2015/22

Date of Issue:
26 August 2015

Target Audience:

- Principals and Boards of Governors of all grant-aided schools;
- Education Authority;
- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools;
- Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment;
- Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta; and
- Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education.

Summary of Contents:

This Circular advises school authorities about revised Relationship and Sexuality Education guidance produced by CCEA on behalf of the Department of Education.

Enquiries:

Any enquiries about the contents of this Circular should be addressed to:

Curriculum Support Team
Department of Education
Rathgael House
Rathgill
Balloo Road
BANGOR
BT19 7PR

Governor Awareness:
Essential

Status of Contents:
Advice

Related Documents:
DE Letter of 14 January 2014
DE Circular 2013/16
DE Circular 2010/01
CCEA Guidance Material

Superseded Documents:
DE Circular 2001/15

Expiry Date:
Not applicable

DE Website:
<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/>

Tel: 02891 279533
Fax: 02891 279100

E-mail:
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Introduction

1. An Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) report into the provision of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in post-primary schools which was published in 2011 highlighted the need for revised RSE guidance and in particular the need for further guidance for teachers with regard to teaching sensitive subjects such as sexual orientation and domestic abuse. The report also identified best practice characteristics for RSE provision and these, along with recommendations for schools to take forward, were outlined in the Department's letter of 14 January 2014 – see Annex A.
2. In follow-up to ETI's report, the Department commissioned the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) to take forward this work and the purpose of this circular is to advise schools about the revised guidance which is now available on the CCEA website, www.ccea.org.uk and the Department of Education website, www.education-ni.gov.uk. The guidance documents are also available via C2k.
3. Two separate guidance documents have been developed – one for primary level and one for post-primary level.

Revised RSE Guidance

4. The guidance prepared by CCEA does not stray into the actual content of teaching and learning as this is a matter for each school across all Areas of Learning within the statutory curriculum. It does however provide a resource directory signposting schools to useful resources which teachers/schools may find helpful.
5. The Department requires all grant-aided schools to develop their own RSE policy based on the ethos of their school which is subject to consultation with parents and pupils. This revised guidance therefore focuses on providing advice and a template for the development of a school's RSE policy which is relevant to the lives of pupils today; providing an overall framework for a school's RSE policy; and, for instance, looking at how schools interact with pupils, focussing on the need to make pupils feel safe and confident that they should not be bullied, for example, due to their sexual orientation.
6. The guidance documents also outline the importance of RSE, the partnership approach needed for effective delivery of RSE (including the need for engagement with parents), the inclusive approach that is required (covering sexual orientation/gender identity) and the importance of the classroom environment.
7. With regard to dealing with sensitive issues, which ETI specifically highlighted in their 2011 report, CCEA has already produced separate specific guidance to support schools to plan and develop approaches to teaching controversial/sensitive issues at whole-school and classroom levels and this has been referenced in the revised RSE guidance. This additional guidance entitled "Teaching Controversial Issues at Key Stage 3" is available on the CCEA website.

8. The RSE guidance also references the recent inquiries into child sexual exploitation and the fact that RSE provides the opportunity for schools to play a preventative role by improving awareness amongst staff of the vulnerability factors and current indicators of child sexual exploitation. It also identifies how effective RSE provision can help pupils recognise potentially exploitative and dangerous situations and how to take preventative action.

Future Steps

9. The new guidance will assist schools with the development and review of their RSE policy, all schools should have a RSE policy in place. It is intended that ETI will carry out an evaluation of the delivery of RSE in primary schools during the 2015/16 school year. Any recommendations specific to the primary sector will be considered by Department officials on receipt of ETI's report and schools will be notified if there is further action they need to take forward.

SHARON LAWLOR
Head of Curriculum Support Team

Annex A

Chuig: Príomhoidí agus Boird Ghobharnóirí
Scoileanna Deontaschúnta

To: Principals and Board of Governors
of Grant-aided Schools

14 Eanáir 2014

14 January 2014

Ba chóir go mbeadh iar-bhunscoileanna ar an eolas faoin obair a rinne an Chigireacht Oideachais agus Oiliúna (ETI) le linn 2009 agus 2010 le soláthar Oideachais Chaidrimh agus Ghnéasachta (OCG/RSE) a mheas. Bhí dhá chéim i gceist leis an obair sin. Eisíodh suirbhé leictreonach chuig gach iar-bhunscoil le linn na chéad chéime sa bhliain 2009. Baineadh úsáid as torthaí an tsuirbhé leictreonaigh le cuairteanna leantacha ETI chuig 25 Iar-Bhunscoil a threorú. Foilsíodh tuarascáil deiridh na Cigireachta, "*Tuarascáil ar Mheasúnú ar Oideachas Caidrimh agus Gnéasachta in Iar-bhunscoileanna*" in Eanáir 2011 agus tá sí ar fáil ar láithreán Gréasáin ETI.

Ós rud é gur foilsíodh an tuarascáil ar OCG tamall ó shin, shocraigh an Roinn gur tráthúil anois na tréithe dea-chleachtais a chur i gcuimhne do scoileanna .i. na tréithe a shainaithin ETI maidir le soláthar OCG – tá siad mionsonraithe in Aguisín A den litir seo.

Mhol tuarascáil ETI roinnt beart do scoileanna fosta le cuidiú le soláthar éifeachtach a chinntiú:

- i. athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar a gcuid beartas, ar a gcuid modhanna agus cleachtas le measúnú ETI a chur san áireamh. Ba chóir don athbhreithniú sin aghaidh a thabhairt ar: bearnaí i gcleachtas ar nós beartas OCG a fhorbairt agus iniúchadh a dhéanamh ar an áit a bhfuil OCG sa churaclam; treoir maidir le saincheisteanna fogaire a láimhseáil; agus athbhreithniú a

Post-primary schools will be aware of the Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) work during 2009 and 2010 to evaluate the provision of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). This work was completed in two stages, the first of which was the issue of an electronic survey to all post-primary schools in 2009. The results of the electronic survey were then used to inform follow-up visits by the ETI to 25 Post-Primary schools. The Inspectorate's final report, "*Report of an Evaluation of Relationships and Sexuality Education in Post-Primary Schools*", was published in January 2011 and is accessible on the [ETI website](#).

As it is some time since the RSE report was published, the Department has decided that now would be a good time to remind schools about the best practice characteristics identified by ETI in relation to the provision of RSE – these are detailed at Appendix A to this letter.

The ETI report also recommended a number of actions for schools to help ensure effective provision:

- iv. review their policies, procedures and practices to take account of ETI's evaluation. This review should address: gaps in practice such as development of RSE policy and auditing where RSE sits within the curriculum; guidance for handling sensitive issues; and reviewing the school's model of delivery;
- v. implement procedures to support robust self-evaluation of RSE; and

dhéanamh ar shamhail seachadta na scoile;

- ii. modhanna a chur i bhfeidhm le tacú le féinmheasúnú cuimsitheach ar OCG; agus
- iii. príomhthosaíocht a dhéanamh d'fhorbairt foirne sa scoil uile i dtaca le OCG de ina bPlean Forbartha Scoile.

Iarrtar ar scoileanna athbhreithniú a dhéanamh agus na bearta cuí a dhéanamh le haghaidh a thabhairt ar na moltaí thuasluaite agus, lena chois sin, iarrtar orthu breithniú a dhéanamh ar na tréithe dea-chleachtais atá mionsonraithe in Aguisín A le cuidiú leis an soláthar OCG is éifeachtaí a chinntiú i do scoil. Áirítear i dtuarascáil ETI roinnt cás-staidéar dea-chleachtais fosta a d'fhéadfaidh bheith ina gcuidiú do scoileanna agus iad ag tabhairt na hoibre seo ar aghaidh.

Bunscoileanna

Bhí sé ar intinn ag an Roinn go ndéanfaí suirbhé comhchosúil i mbunscoileanna ach chuir tosaíochtaí oibre eile moill ar an obair sin. Dar leis an Roinn gur chóir go mbeadh na bearta a sainiú d'iar-bhunscoileanna agus na tréithe dea-chleachtais i bhfeidhm sa dá earnáil agus iarraidimid mar sin ar gach bunscoil beart a dhéanamh de réir mar atá mionsonraithe thuas.

Mar fhocal scoir, áirítear i dtuarascáil ETI roinnt moltaí don Roinn, ina measc athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar threoir reatha agus forbairt acmhainní breise teagaisc, go háirithe do EC4. Choimisiúnaigh an Roinn an Chomhairle Curaclaim, Scrúdúcháin agus Measúnaithe (CCEA) le hathbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar threoir reatha agus acmhainní breise a fhorbairt do EC4 agus tá sé beartaithe go gcríochnófar an obair sin le linn na bliana airgeadais 2014/15. Cuirfear scoileanna ar an eolas faoin treoir agus faoi na

- vi. make whole-school staff development in RSE a key priority in their School Development Plan.

Schools are asked to review and take the necessary action to address the above recommendations and to also consider the best practice characteristics detailed at Appendix A to help ensure the most effective provision of RSE in your school. The ETI report also includes a number of best practice case studies which schools might find helpful in taking this work forward.

Primary Schools

The Department had intended that a similar survey would be taken forward in primary schools however other work priorities have delayed this work. The Department considers that the actions identified for post-primary schools and the best practice characteristics would apply across both sectors and we would therefore ask all primary schools to consider taking action as detailed above.

Finally, the ETI report also includes a number of recommendations for the Department to progress which includes reviewing existing guidance and the development of further teaching resources, particularly for KS4. The Department has commissioned the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) to take forward a review of current guidance and develop further resources for KS4 and it is intended that this work will be completed during the 2014/15 financial year. Schools will be informed about new guidance and resources as soon as they become available.

Yours sincerely

SHARON LAWLOR
Head of Curriculum Support Team