

LARNE GRAMMAR SCHOOL  
**Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) policy is designed to reflect the ethos and values of the School and be compatible with the rights of the child as detailed in the Children (Northern Ireland) Order, 1995. It aims to encourage pupils to develop mutual respect, self-esteem and well-being within the context of healthy and respectful friendships and relationships and in doing so develop responsible behaviour and the ability to make informed decisions. It seeks to foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude towards, human sexuality and relationships within a moral, social and spiritual framework and to help the child come to value family life and marriage and to appreciate the responsibility of parenthood.
- 1.2 RSE is a life-long process which encompasses the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills, and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about personal and social relationships and gender issues.
- 1.3 The School will abide by the guidelines laid down by the Department of Education and the specifications provided by CCEA. In particular this policy has been written in accordance with the guidance provided in DE Circulars 2010/01, 2013/16 and 2015/22 and “Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance – An Update for Post-Primary Schools” (CCEA, August 2015) . It is also written in accordance with guidance published by the Equality Commission on Eliminating Sexual Orientation Discrimination in Northern Ireland.
- 1.4 The Personal Development Co-ordinator is responsible for ensuring the effective delivery of RSE. This will involve monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning, providing resources for teachers, drawing up appropriate programmes of study/schemes of work in line with the most up-to-date DE and CCEA requirements and ensuring staff involved in teaching the programme receive appropriate training.

**2 OBJECTIVES OF RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION**

- 2.1 **Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)** is a lifelong process which encompasses the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills, and the development of attitudes, beliefs, morals and values about personal and social relationships and gender issues.

**Sexuality** is an integral part of the human personality and has spiritual, social, cultural, biological and psychological dimensions.

The underlying objectives of the RSE programme are:

- To respect the rights of children and young people.
- To develop within pupils a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth.
- To enable pupils to develop skills in forming and maintaining healthy relationships.
- To provide opportunities for pupils to explore the moral and ethical issues surrounding sexuality.
- To develop within pupils a respect for their own and other people’s bodies.
- To develop pupils’ skills in recognising and protecting themselves from abuse.
- To help pupils keep themselves safer in the digital world.
- To give accurate information to correct misunderstandings that pupils may have gained from their peers or from other unhealthy influences e.g. popular culture.
- To enable pupils to communicate about feelings, sexuality and development using appropriate language.
- To enable pupils to understand the influence of messages from peers and media on their own values.
- To develop the skills of pupils to resist detrimental peer pressure and exert positive pressure on others.
- To prepare pupils to cope with the social, physical and emotional challenges of growing up and so prepare them for adult life.
- To increase the pupils’ awareness of sexual health.
- To promote amongst pupils a better understanding of diversity and inclusion.

**3 MORAL AND VALUES FRAMEWORK**

- 3.1 Relationships and Sexuality Education must not be value free. Teachers need to acknowledge that many children come from backgrounds that do not reflect such values or experiences. Sensitivity is therefore needed to avoid causing hurt and offence to them and their families; and to allow such children to feel a sense of worth.

The morals and values reflected within the teaching of RSE are in line with the School’s ethos:

- An appreciation of the value of stable family life, marriage, permanent loving relationships

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based on trust and commitment and responsibilities of parenthood.

- An acknowledgement of singleness and celibacy as equally valuable and fulfilling options and a recognition that sexual abstinence is a positive option which is an achievable reality to which young people can aspire.
- The deferment of sexual activity until young people are physically and emotionally mature enough to understand the inherent responsibilities.
- Recognition of the positive benefits of seeking sexual fulfilment within a permanent committed relationship with one person.
- An appreciation that rights, duties and responsibilities are involved within any relationship.
- An appreciation of the value and sacredness of human life.
- The promotion of respect for all people regardless of sexual orientation and an appreciation of the need to treat others with dignity and respect the right of others to hold different views from oneself without aggression or antagonism.
- An appreciation that self-discipline, self-restraint and non-exploitation are important values in developing responsible behaviour in sexual matters.

**4. CURRICULAR DELIVERY OF RSE**

4.1 RSE will be delivered primarily through LLW (Personal Development) although issues relating to relationships and sexuality will also be dealt with in Home Economics, Child Development, Biology, English and Religious Education.

4.2 Generally, RSE will be taught in mixed groups, so that boys and girls are encouraged to work with each other and gain an understanding of each other's perspectives. On occasions pupils may work in single gender groups so that they can explore and consider gender specific issues.

4.3 The School recognises that the home exerts a major influence on all aspects of a young person's life, and especially so in the domain of relationships and sexuality. Where sensitive issues are being addressed, parents may be informed about the content to be covered and the activities which pupils will undertake.

4.4 The school is keen to engage with parents/carers and recognises the crucial role they play in supporting their child's education. Whilst RSE is a statutory component of the Northern Ireland curriculum, parents or carers have a right to have their child educated in accordance with their wishes. While there is no legislative provision permitting parents/carers to withdraw their child from classes in RSE, the School will try to take account of any parental concerns and will, as far as possible, make alternative arrangements for any pupil whose parent wishes him/her to be excused from particular, or all, sex education classes.

4.5 Article 12 of the UNCRC "provides all children with the right to express their views in matters affecting them and for those views to be given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child." As part of the school's commitment to facilitating the pupil voice, pupils will be involved in reviewing the RSE policy and in the school's ongoing evaluation and review of RSE provision to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils.

**5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

5.1 The School recognises that all pupils have the right to an education which adequately prepares them for adult life. Therefore all pupils in Larne Grammar School will receive adequate preparation for the emotional and physical changes at puberty and beyond. The RSE programme will be tailored to meet the needs of all pupils (including those with Special Education Needs) in terms of content, methodology and the resources used.

5.2 Recent studies in Northern Ireland have indicated that the needs and concerns of boys and young men, particularly in relation to issues around relationships, sexual identity and sexual health are not being adequately addressed. Consequently, boys are frequently turning to other sources of information which can negatively influence their attitudes of what it means to be a man, and their views towards the opposite sex. The school will be mindful of these findings and will proactively seek opportunities to engage male pupils in RSE activities and lessons which are relevant to issues related to male sexuality.

5.3 Teachers of RSE will be particularly sensitive to the personal circumstances and cultural background of the pupils that they teach. RSE also provides a forum in which to explore issues such as how young girls may be victims of cultural practices, including child/forced marriages and female genital mutilation. The school will handle such issues sensitively to ensure that some cultures are not viewed negatively due to their practices.

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**6 SPECIFIC ISSUES**

**6.1 STATUS OF THE FAMILY**

The School acknowledges (and will support) the value of the institutions of marriage and the family, whilst being sensitive to children who are from “non-nuclear” families.

**6.2 CONFIDENTIALITY AND CHILD PROTECTION**

The child’s right to privacy will be respected at all times by both the teacher and all other pupils in the class. However, staff cannot give any guarantee of confidentiality to pupils. It is the responsibility of the class teacher to inform the Designated Teacher or Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection of any disclosures which may suggest that a pupil is at risk or that physical, sexual or other abuse is suspected. Such disclosures should be dealt with in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Safeguarding Policy. Those teachers involved in the delivery of RSE will be made aware of the signs of sexual abuse.

**6.3 TEACHING RSE**

The School also recognises that some pupils may have first-hand experience of many of the issues discussed in RSE. It is a subject that will therefore be presented with great sensitivity and will be presented in a way that is free from sensationalism, bias and judgement.

If pupils raise issues that are offensive to some, or beyond the maturity level of the class, the teacher should not answer the question in class but arrange to speak to the pupil after class and suggest that they discuss the matter with their parents. The teacher may also wish to discuss the question posed with the parents/carers and/or a senior member of staff to ascertain how they would like the matter to be handled. Due to the sensitive nature of some of the issues in RSE, teachers have the right to state that for personal reasons, they do not wish to give a personal opinion on a particular issue which has arisen.

On occasions, a teacher may decide to answer questions of a sensitive nature with a colleague present.

**6.4 TERMINOLOGY**

All staff teaching RSE should always use proper biological terms for body parts and sexual acts. Common slang and vernacular words/phrases should be avoided.

**6.5 USE OF VISITORS & OTHER RESOURCES**

All resources, whether human or material must be vetted to ensure that they are consistent with this policy and the School’s ethos.

In using visiting speakers or representatives from voluntary or statutory agencies, care should be taken to ascertain that they agree to respect the ethos of the school and have read and are willing to comply with the school’s RSE policy. Furthermore, they should be willing to adhere to the school’s Safeguarding Policy and should be aware of issues around confidentiality. Their participation in teaching will complement the ongoing RSE curriculum and they should know what has been taught in preparation for their visit and how the school proposes to develop their input further.

**6.6 THE SACREDNESS OF LIFE**

In line with the ethos of the School, the value and sacredness of human life will be actively promoted. This will influence teaching on abortion.

Abortion is mainly considered in Religious Education. Pupils are given information and research for themselves the methods, the cases for and against and the consequences of abortion. It is hoped that the pupils will acquire the knowledge to make sound value judgements on this issue in a non-judgemental and non-confrontational atmosphere. The input of all pupils is valued.

- In R.E. at Key Stage 4 the main issues around abortion and the biblical principles of the sanctity of life may be considered.
- In keeping with the contents of the curriculum in Biology pupils will be taught about how the foetus develops in the womb during pregnancy.

**6.7 CONTRACEPTION**

As part of the curriculum, teachers, who as part of their curriculum teach contraception, can provide general information to all pupils about the types of contraception and the risks to health. These teachers can provide all pupils with the general information about where, and from whom, they can receive confidential advice.

Personal medical advice will not be given to pupils.

Teachers will advise pupils to seek advice from parents, the school nurse and medical practitioners.

Pupils will be reminded that the legal age of consent for sexual activity in Northern Ireland is 16

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years old. This covers heterosexual and homosexual acts.

6.8 **SEXUAL IDENTITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

All members of the school community, regardless of sexual orientation or identity, gender, colour, religion etc., will be respected and valued and have the right to learn in a safe environment. Pupils should allow others the right to hold different views/lifestyles from them in a peaceful manner.

The issue of sexual orientation and sexual identity will be handled in a sensitive, non-confrontational and non-judgemental way. Pupils will be reminded that no one under 16 years old can legally consent to any homosexual act. Within the Religious Education curriculum, homosexuality is dealt with in the topic of personal and family issues.

Pupils will be spoken to (reprimanded) if they call each other names such as “gay” or “lesbian” in a derogatory manner.

Homophobic bullying, in any form including any demonstration of negative attitudes towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students or those who are perceived to be such, will not be tolerated by the school.

7 **MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

7.1 This policy was formulated in consultation with key stakeholders including staff, parents, pupils and Governors.

7.2 The Board of Governors retain ultimate responsibility for the implementation of the RSE Policy but delegate responsibility for the delivery of the RSE programme to the Principal and staff of the school.

7.3 The Policy will be reviewed and updated periodically in the light of feedback from stakeholders, changes in legislation, advice from statutory bodies such as the Department of Education or other external agencies, or best practice guidance. Pupils, staff and parents may be asked to complete evaluation questionnaires prior to or post RSE programmes. Sample questionnaires are included in Appendix 2.

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**APPENDIX 1 – RSE PROGRAMME**

<b>Growth and Development Key Stage 3</b>	<b>Subject</b>
The physical and emotional changes that occur in males and females during puberty; individual variation and the rates of development	PE/Biol/PD
Hygienic practices associated with the physical changes at puberty	PE/PD
The male and female reproductive systems, what happens during intercourse; the biological aspects of human fertility and conception	Biol
The development of the child from conception to birth, including understanding of the various stages of pregnancy	RE/Biol
Factual information about the types of contraception	Biol/PD
The difference between HIV and AIDS, modes of transmission, practical hygiene and risky behaviour	Biol/PD
<b>Growth and Development Key Stage 4</b>	
Safer sex practices in relation to STIs, HIV and AIDS	Biol/PD/CD
Factual information about abortion	RE
The range of information, the services and support which are available from relevant agencies	PD
My stage of development e.g. physical, emotional, academic, spiritual, emotional, moral and sexual	PD/Biol
My motivation, enthusiasms, interests, viewpoints, goals, degree of independence and responsibilities	RE/PD
Respecting myself, my self-esteem and self confidence	RE/PD
Stereotyping and its influence on attitudes and behaviour	RE
Media messages about male and female behaviour	RE/PD
<b>Sexuality Key Stage 3</b>	
An awareness of what it is to be male and female	RE/PD
Equality and difference	Cz/RE
Uniqueness and individuality	Cz/RE
My abilities, talents, strengths, weaknesses and vulnerabilities	RE/PD
Influences on me, competing priorities	RE/PD
Responsibility	Cz/RE/PD
Male and female perspectives on a range of issues	RE/PD
<b>Sexuality Key Stage 4</b>	
Sexuality and sexual orientation	PD
Understanding the differences in sexuality and sexual relationships, including media messages	RE
Encouraging sensitivity towards different ways of life, beliefs and opinions	Cz/RE/PD
The range of information, the services and support which are available from relevant agencies	PD
<b>Relationships; Key Stage 3 and 4</b>	
Adolescence	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognising feeling, moods and emotions (sometimes conflicting) and knowing the language to express these appropriately</li> </ul>	Biol/PD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining positive relationships with, e.g. friends, parents, other family members and teachers</li> </ul>	RE/PD/HE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considering peer and other influences</li> </ul>	Cz/RE/PD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploring morals and values in a variety of contexts and recognising the personal implications</li> </ul>	RE/PD

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Relationships	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The differences between the various types of relationship, e.g. parents, siblings, other family members, peers, teachers, friends and acquaintances</li> </ul>	RE/PD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The factors influencing the different lifestyles of family, friends and acquaintances</li> </ul>	RE/PD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Different types of friendship, caring and loving relationships, e.g. parents, siblings, friends, neighbours, married couples, partners, work colleagues, acquaintances</li> </ul>	RE/PD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishing and maintaining relationships</li> </ul>	PD/HE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Abstinence as a positive option and an achievable reality</li> </ul>	PD/ Biol
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)</li> </ul>	PD

Biol	Biology	PE	Physical Education
Cz	Citizenship	RE	Religious Education
HE	Home Economics	PD	Personal Development
CD	Child Development		