



**Cookstown High School**

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

**October 2015**

## **Contents**

Rationale

School Ethos

Related School Policies

Aims and Objectives

Implementation of the RSE programme.

Responding to sensitive issues.

Recording and Referral

Parental partnership

Managing External Agencies

Evaluation and Policy Review

Dissemination of the Policy

## Rationale

All young people have a right to an education which adequately prepares them for adult life and good Relationships and Sexuality Education plays an integral part. Many young people are maturing earlier and parents tend to allow young people increased independence during their years at post primary school and greater freedom to participate in a wider range of social activities. This stage of development may also be marked by the first significant experience of sexual attraction.

Sexuality includes all aspects of the human person that relate to being male or female and is subject to change and development throughout life. Sexuality is an integral part of the human personality and has biological, cultural, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions. It especially concerns the ability to form relationships with others generally, the capacity to be affectionate, give and receive love and reproduce.

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 their school and adult life.

Relationships and Sexuality education is a statutory element of the Northern Ireland Curriculum through Learning for Life and Work. It supports the curriculum aim which is *“to empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives.”*

This policy is intended to provide a framework through which young people can develop the skills, attitudes and values necessary to deal with the challenges which they will meet through peer and media pressure and to help them make informed decisions based on self-respect and self-esteem.

## **School Ethos**

As a school founded upon Christian principles, we believe in and celebrate the uniqueness of each individual and encourage all members of our community to show respect for all.

We seek the development of Character through Knowledge believing each individual has a duty to build a community, to strive to do their best, to show compassion for those in need and to take responsibility for their own words and actions.

Cookstown High School seeks to develop young people who are independent learners and active citizens.

## **Related School Policies**

This policy is set within the broader school contexts of Personal Development and Pastoral Care and as such should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Pastoral Care Policy.
- Child Protection Policy.
- Misuse of Substances Policy.
- Positive Behaviour Policy.
- Anti-Bullying Policy.

## **Aims and Objectives**

**Through the delivery of RSE our young people should be able to:**

- Form values and establish behaviour within a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- Examine and explore the various relationships in their personal lives.
- Learn how to develop and enjoy personal relationships and friendships which are based on responsibility, mutual respect, honesty, trust, commitment and not exploitation.
- Gain the opportunities to explore values and attitudes and to consider how they and others are affected by them.
- Lay foundations for developing more personal relationships later in life.
- Make positive, responsible choices about themselves, others and the way they live their lives.

**Desired outcomes are:**

- Enhanced self-awareness and self-esteem.
- Healthy and respectful friendships and relationships.
- An understanding of a healthy attitude to human sexuality and relationships in a moral, social and spiritual framework.
- Responsible behaviour and the ability to make informed decisions.
- A sense of value for family life and marriage.
- An appreciation of the responsibilities of parenthood.
- An appreciation of the value of human life and the wonder of birth.

## **Implementation of the RSE Programme**

### **A. The RSE Programme AT Key Stage 3.**

The RSE curriculum forms part of the statutory statements of requirement for Personal Development within Learning for Life and Work. At Cookstown High School our pupils are given worthwhile experiences which help enable them to:

- Explore and express a sense of self.
- Explore personal morals, values and beliefs.
- Investigate influences on them as young people.
- Explore different ways to develop self- esteem.
- Explore the concept of Health as the development of a whole person.
- Explore the qualities of relationships including friendship, eg. Conditions for healthy relationships, types of relationships, healthy boundaries, gender issues in relationships.
- Explore the qualities of a loving, respectful relationship, eg. how choices within a relationship affect both physical and emotional development.
- Develop coping strategies to deal with challenging scenarios.
- Develop strategies to avoid and resolve conflict, eg. active listening, assertiveness, negotiation and mediation.
- Develop strategies to promote personal safety, eg. responding appropriately to different forms of bullying, developing safe practice in relation to the internet, road safety, understanding and managing risk, the place of rules and boundaries.
- Explore the emotional, social and moral implications of early sexual activity, eg. personal values, attitudes and perceptions, the Law and STI's.

## **B. The RSE Programme at Key Stage 4**

The RSE curriculum forms part of the statutory statements of requirement for Personal Development within Learning for Life and Work. At Cookstown High School our pupils are given worthwhile experiences which help enable them to:

- Develop an understanding of how to maximise and sustain their own health and well-being.
- Reflect on, and respond to, their developing concept of self.
- Recognise, assess and manage risk in a range of real-life contexts.
- Develop an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of parenting.

## **C. Sharing Responsibility for RSE.**

Our school believes that the responsibility for relationship and sexuality education should be appropriately shared between teachers, parents and the school community as a whole including the school nurse. Its effectiveness depends on a collaborative process involving teachers, parents, governors and other educational and health professionals. Each has distinctive contributions to make and the school will endeavour to fulfil its responsibility. Opportunities will be provided for teachers, parents and governors to raise any issues and concerns they may have regarding the RSE policy and programme. Consultation with these stakeholders will be facilitated using the school website.

## **D. Co-ordination of RSE Programme**

Under the direction and supervision of Mr Wayne Brown (Pastoral Vice-Principal), Mr Colin Hogg (Personal Development Co-ordinator) and Mrs Nicola Cheevers (Learning for Life and Wok co-ordinator) are the staff responsible for co-ordinating all issues related to the RSE policy and the development of the RSE programme.

Their role includes:

- Ensuring that the programme is taught effectively and is appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils.
- Liaising with SLT, designated teacher for Child Protection, Board of Governors, all staff, parents and health/educational visitors on RSE matters.
- Attending appropriate 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, eg.
  1. "Love for Life" in Year 10 which may be extended into KS4.
  2. Presentations on internet safety in relation to sexual exploitation.

## **Responding to Sensitive Issues**

We recognise that, on occasion, certain sensitive issues may require consideration. When attempting to deal with these issues the following procedures will be adopted:

### **Pregnancy**

We aim to support any young women who may become pregnant whilst enrolled in our school. Following consultation with the young mother to be, referral may be made to the SELB's SAM (School Age Mothers) project.

In the event of a young woman informing the school that she is pregnant, we will consider if child protection is an issue. Advice will initially be sought from the school's designated teacher for Child



Protection and if it is deemed necessary, the school will follow its Child Protection guidelines.

### **School Absences for Family Planning issues**

Our policy for permitting pupils to leave school during the day will be applied to all requests. This includes requests for absence in relation to family planning issues. Parental permission will be sought where the pupil is younger than the legal age of consent.

### **“Risky” Children**

This term has been applied to children who display behaviours that may be harmful to other children. Whilst these children have a right to education the school has an obligation to ensure the well-being of the entire school population. In order to do so risk assessments will be carried out and school will work closely with parents and relevant agencies.

### **Sexual Identity and Sexual Orientation**

We are aware that as young people are growing up they can experience sexual identity and orientation confusion. This may be temporary for some, while for others, it may become clear with time that their orientation is homosexual. It is important that all curricular delivery advocates abstinence as the acceptable option for all young people.

Bullying, on the grounds of sexual orientation, is as unacceptable as it is in any other situation where someone is mistreated because of their differences from those who are perceived to be the majority. All issues relating to bullying on the grounds of sexual orientation will be dealt with appropriately, in line with the school’s anti-bullying policy.

## **Sexual Exploitation**

Sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse. It refers to a number of different possible scenarios in which children or young people are exploited, coerced and/or manipulated into engaging in some form of sexual activity, in return for something they need or desire and /or for the gain of a third person.

Staff at Cookstown High School are committed to supporting any pupil who is a child in need by working closely with a range of agencies and the child's family. The school will adhere to guidelines in this policy and its Child Protection Policy to ensure the child is protected and their needs are met.

## **Other Sensitive Issues**

On occasions other sensitive issues may arise. These will be dealt with appropriately on a case to case basis. Advice will be sought from external agencies and other relevant authorities as deemed necessary. The school will, at all times, adhere to both this policy and its Child Protection Policy to ensure that all pupils are protected and their needs are met.

## **Child Protection**

If, for any reason, a young person is deemed to be at risk he/she will be reassured that he/she will be supported through the process. The school will adhere to its guidelines on Child Protection.

## **Recording and Referral**

Clear and concise records will be kept pertaining to all issues previously outlined.

## **Parental Partnership**

Parents and Carers are keen that their children are well prepared to handle situations around relationships and sexuality. Whilst the classroom teacher has a significant role to play in the implementation of RSE in school, this role cannot be considered in isolation to the role of parents and carers. Both should be complementary. 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.

Our school will never attempt to assume the role of parental responsibilities. Rather, we view parents and carers as having the prime responsibility for bringing up their children. It is paramount that we work in partnership with parents and carers, particularly in relation to sensitive issues.

We will therefore seek to ensure that our RSE programme complements and is supportive of the role of parents/carers and that they are made aware of the topics covered in lessons and workshops that contribute to the teaching of RSE.

## **Managing External Agencies**

The school acknowledges the importance of ensuring that any external agencies used to support the delivery of RSE/Personal Development must adhere to the values and ethos of the school.

## **Evaluation and Policy Review**

The policy will be reviewed and updated periodically. Pupils and teachers will be asked to complete evaluation questionnaires relating to the school's RSE programme. Departmental audits in relation to the delivery of the RSE programme will also be carried out. Information gained will then be correlated by the co-ordinator(s) and used to adapt the programme for the future.

## **Dissemination of the Policy**

The contents of this policy will be made available to all members of The Board of Governors, SLT, teaching and non-teaching staff as well as those providing substitute cover. It will also be available to all parents on request and can be found on the school website

[www.cookstownhighschool.org](http://www.cookstownhighschool.org).

All health or educational visitors discussing issues related to RSE will be provided with a copy of the school policy and will be encouraged to adhere to and follow its aims and objectives.