

# St Malachy's Primary School Ballymoyer



## Relationships and Sexual Education (RSE) Policy

## **RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE) POLICY**

*'...a lifelong 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.'*

### **Consultation**

The following policy was formulated through consultation between the school leadership and parents of St Malachy's Primary School.

### **The School Ethos**

In St Malachy's we aim to educate our pupils in an atmosphere of Faith, Acceptance and Love so the children will learn to respect themselves and others, develop a good moral foundation and be able to achieve their full potential in life.

We recognise that each child is unique and excels in different ways, so we try to encourage and support them in the discovery and development of their talents by delivering a broad and balanced curriculum. Our staff is very committed to the care and welfare of the pupils and work hard to ensure their well-being and learning.

### **Rationale**

Our school is committed to the education of children regardless of race, religion, gender or status. All pupils have a right to an education which adequately prepares them for adult life, and RSE plays an integral part. In the Northern Ireland Primary School Curriculum, one of the areas of learning is Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU). An integral part of the PDMU curriculum is the provision of RSE. As a Catholic school, St Malachy's Primary School advocates the promotion of a 'Personal Development' approach to RSE whereby children in our care are given the skills to help them resist peer and media pressure, and make informed decisions based on their own internal self-respect and self-esteem. Pupils are encouraged to recognise their individual needs and to respect the needs of others. RSE is a lifelong process that involves the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills and the development of attitudes, beliefs, morals and values.

### **Teaching RSE should provide opportunities which enable pupils to:**

- examine and explore the various relationships in their personal lives;
- learn how to develop healthy relationships and friendships which are based on responsibility and mutual respect;
- make positive and responsible choices for themselves and others;
- build the foundations for developing more personal relationships in later life.

### **Aims**

#### **The aims of RSE are to:**

- enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child
- help the child develop healthy and respectful friendships and relationships
- foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, social and spiritual framework
- promote responsible behaviour and the ability to make informed decisions
- help the child come to value family life
- appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood
- promote an appreciation of the value of human life.

## Learning Objectives

### The RSE curriculum should enable pupils to:

- develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth
- develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well-being of others
- understand the, growth and development of appropriate relationships within families, in friendships and in wider contexts (eg) internet/social media
- develop an awareness of differing family patterns
- to make good decisions and solve problems in various contexts
- become aware of the various ways in which individuals grow and change and understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity
- develop personal skills which will help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships
- develop strategies which actively seek to protect self and others from various forms of abuse
- acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction
- acquire and use an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development.

## SKILLS

The RSE curriculum should enable pupils to develop the skills necessary to form and maintain relationships and to make informed choices and decisions regarding health and well-being. Pupils should also be helped to develop skills to critically evaluate the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values.

### They need opportunities to develop:

- **practical skills** for everyday living and for forming healthy relationships
- **communication skills** - learning to listen to others points of view; putting one's own view forward clearly and appropriately; giving and receiving feedback; handling and resolving conflict peacefully; being assertive when needed;
- **decision-making and problem-solving skills** to help them make sensible choices when forming relationships (on-line and in real life contexts);
- **interpersonal skills** for managing relationships confidently and effectively.

## MORALS AND VALUES

RSE should enable pupils to clarify what they believe and why they believe it and develop a respect for and interest in the beliefs of others. Pupils need opportunities to explore values and attitudes and to consider how they affect them, and others.

Children should be taught RSE within a framework which models and encourages the following values:

- a respect for self and a respect for others
- commitment, trust and bonding within relationships
- mutuality in relationships
- honesty with self and others
- an exploration of the rights, duties and responsibilities involved in relationships
- compassion, forgiveness, mercy and care when people do not conform to their way of life
- self-discipline

## **THE SCHOOL ETHOS**

The ethos of St Malachy's is founded on principles where tolerance and respect for others is paramount. It is our intention that everyone feels valued and our pupils are encouraged to develop their full potential in a caring and supportive environment.

This policy reflects the ethos of our school.

## **Relationships between Home, School and Community**

The effectiveness of this policy and its implementation is dependent on a collaborative process involving teachers, parents/carers, governors and other educational and health professionals. Each of the partners has distinctive contributions to make.

Keeping parents/carers informed about the school's provision for health education is a vital element of RSE. Informal sessions may then be arranged so that interested parents/carers could consider issues such as the readiness of children for aspects of the RSE programme, the appropriateness of resources, the content and methodologies proposed, and the handling of sensitive topics.

The delivery of RSE must prepare pupils to view relationships in a responsible and healthy manner and should be taught in harmony with the ethos of the school and reflect the moral and religious principles.

## **Our RSE programme aims to provide opportunities for pupils to learn about:**

- themselves as unique human beings;
- their spiritual, social, emotional and physical growth;
- their friendships and relationships with others;
- the various physical and emotional changes that occur as they progress towards adolescence and adulthood. (Such programmes may be delivered by outside organisations, and Parental Consent will be sought).

## **Meeting the needs of pupils**

To ensure that the learning experiences are effective, positive and relevant to all pupils, the RSE programme should be developmental, accessible and be appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils. It should meet the needs of all genders and be a positive experience for all participants.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

- The Board of Governors examines and ratifies the school's RSE Policy
- The Principal and Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection will co-ordinate the school's approach to RSE and will consult with the Board of Governors, staff, pupils, parents/carers, and health professionals as needed.
- The teaching staff will deliver the school's RSE programme within the context of the Northern Ireland Curriculum and parental consent will be sought if outside organisations are to be involved.

## **Content / detail**

RSE will be delivered in a holistic, cross curricular way, ensuring that teaching is at all times appropriate to the maturity and understanding of the pupils. Teachers will be ever alert to the

personal and emotional circumstances of the pupils. RSE will include the physical and emotional changes that occur at puberty but will not include sex education.

### **Curriculum organisation and delivery**

The following outline the teaching programme in St Malachy's and illustrates the topics covered through the delivery of the Northern Ireland Curriculum in Primary School. Many of the aspects included below are also part of the Health Education curriculum, PDMU, RE, the World Around Us, PE, Drama or in reaction to specific situations. All teachers will deliver the RSE programme.

Topics and themes may be repeated at regular intervals. The sequence in which ideas are presented below is not intended to imply a teaching order.

### **Foundation stage and key stage 1**

#### **Myself**

- Myself: how I grow, feed, move and use my senses; caring for myself, for example, hygiene, sleep, exercise
- Naming parts of the body (basic) - developing an agreed language for our bodies
- Being myself - I am unique, my self-esteem, self-confidence, independence, respect and caring for myself
- Similarities and differences between myself and others, for example, uniqueness, fingerprints, gender issues, different rates of growth
- An introduction to the stages of human development - changes as we grow, for example, baby, child, teenager, adult, mother/father, grandparents
- Recognising moods, feelings and concerns and developing a language and an appropriate manner of expressing them, for example: What do I do if I feel sad or angry?
- Personal likes and dislikes.

#### **My Relationships**

- My family, special people in my life - what they do for me and what I do for them
- Friendships, getting on with each other, for example, communicating, playing together, listening, co-operating and sharing
- Loss and mourning - death of a person or a pet (*Note: the situations of the pupils should be taken into account prior to introducing this topic*)
- Respect and caring for family members and friends, for example, caring for a new baby
- Bullies and what to do about them
- Personal safety - simple skills and practices to maintain personal safety
- Realise that adults and older children are not always friends; the potential danger of relationships with strangers or acquaintances
- Strategies which pupils might use to protect themselves from potentially dangerous situations

#### **My Community/Environment**

- Awareness of different types of families and the roles of individuals within families
- Keeping safe, for example, dangerous places, dangerous situations, the adults who will help, how to get help from others
- Rules at home, at school and in the community
- Respect and caring for people in the community, e.g. elderly people

## **Key Stage 2**

### **Myself**

- My body, how it works and how to keep it healthy
- The physical, social and emotional changes that occur during puberty (*may be delivered via an outside organisation/school nurse. Parent Consent will be sought in all cases*).
- Myself and my peers - different rates of growth and physical development, maturity
- Valuing and respecting myself, identifying personal strengths and weaknesses
- Feelings, for example, things that make me happy, sad, excited, embarrassed, angry, scared; expressing our feelings, showing love and affection
- Making choices - the influences on me and the consequences of actions for oneself and others
- Secrets - knowing the difference between good and bad secrets, what to do about bad secrets and who they can turn to for help.

### **My Relationships**

- Differences and similarities in people; the need to respect other people's views, emotions and feelings
- Families and how they behave - what family members expect of each other
- The meaning of friendship and loyalty; making and maintaining friendships
- Social relationships, for example, identifying and understanding pressures and influences, taking account of other people's point of view (including Online Friendships)
- Handling difficult situations, for example, teasing, bullying, death of a family member
- Identifying the differences between good and bad relationships
- Identifying dangers and risks within relationships (in practical / online contexts)
- Being assertive in defending individual rights and beliefs
- People/Agencies who can help pupils when they have anxieties, concerns or questions

### **My Community/Environment**

- Appreciation of the family in relation to the school and the wider community
- Cultural differences in families and family relationships
- Helping agencies which can support families and individuals in different circumstances,
- Messages and images about health, gender roles and sexuality from the media, family and peers.

## **SELECTION OF TEACHING RESOURCES**

### **The selection of teaching resources should be:**

- consistent with the school's RSE policy and the aims and objectives of the RSE programme
- consistent with the school's morals and values framework
- appropriate to pupils' age, level of understanding and maturity
- factually correct and respectful of its audience

In St. Malachy's Primary School we believe it is essential that teachers create a classroom environment which is supportive, where self-esteem is fostered and where the pupils feel valued and affirmed. The climate of the classroom needs to promote mutual respect and the dignity of each individual. It is important to create an atmosphere in the classroom which allows all pupils to feel comfortable to express opinions and feelings in a secure and safe manner and to explore issues which may be sensitive and personal. Every effort should be made to ensure that the whole group is at ease, with pupils showing respect for each other and realising their responsibilities to each other.

Ground rules should be agreed to help to minimise embarrassment and encourage the respect of each other's opinion. Realistic scenarios, case studies, role-play, drama, videos and stories can be used to enable pupils to discuss issues without personal disclosure.

#### **Important considerations are the:**

- degree of trust, respect and positive regard for pupils
- relationships between the teacher and pupils, and between the pupils themselves
- need for clear expectations, goals and learning objectives
- use of teaching and learning methods which involve pupils actively in their own learning and encourage the consideration of attitudes and values and the ability to make informed and healthy decisions and need to be aware and take account of the current youth culture.

#### **Confidentiality and Child Protection/Safeguarding Children**

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Where there is disclosure by a child of abuse, Child Protection/Safeguarding Children procedures will be implemented.

The classroom is an open environment and confidentiality cannot be maintained. Therefore, staff and pupils are not encouraged to talk about their personal relationships or experiences during class discussions.

The child's right to privacy must be respected at all times by both the teacher and all other pupils in the class. A key rule to agree in advance of any discussion is that no one will be expected to ask or answer any personal questions. It is equally important that the teacher shares this right and never feels obliged to impart information about his/her own personal life.

#### **However:**

- Teachers cannot promise confidentiality. A child does not have the right to expect that incidents in the classroom or in the wider context of the school will not be reported, as appropriate, to his or her parents/carers and/or the principal. **(Refer to our Child Protection/Safeguarding Children Policy)**
- **The principal or designated teachers for Child Protection/Safeguarding Children must be informed of any disclosures which might suggest that a pupil is at risk or that physical or sexual abuse is suspected.** If a child confides in a member of staff and requests that the information is kept secret, the child must be told, sensitively, that **the matter must be reported to the appropriate agencies.** Decisions can then be taken in accordance with the procedures detailed in the school's *Child Protection/Safeguarding Children Policy*

- Teachers can provide general educational advice to all pupils as part of the curriculum. This general advice can be given to pupils individually or within group situations. It is important that the type of advice and the manner in which it is given is supportive of the role of the parents/carers
- There will be occasions when teachers will have to exercise their discretion and judgement about how to deal with particular issues raised by an individual or by a group of pupils. An initial judgement will need to be made about whether or not it is appropriate to deal with the issues with the whole class. The teacher may wish to discuss the issues with the parents/carers to see how they would like the matter to be handled. Teacher colleagues or a member of the school's Leadership Team/Safeguarding Team might also provide useful guidance. It may be appropriate to respond to the issues with individual pupils or to arrange time for group discussion outside class time. In all cases, teachers should encourage pupils to discuss any issues and concerns they might have with their parents/carers;
- Teachers are not medical professionals and will not give detailed personal medical advice to any pupil. Only doctors and health professionals should give medical advice to pupils;
- Teachers encourage young people, where possible, to discuss their concerns with parents/carers

#### **WITHDRAWAL FROM RSE**

Since RSE is a statutory requirement, it should be inclusive. As a school we actively promote the implementation of RSE and strongly discourage withdrawal. The school will, however, take account of parent/carer concerns in relation to sensitive topics which may be taught.

**SACREDNESS OF LIFE** The value of human life and the uniqueness of each individual will be at the heart of RSE teaching.

**SPECIFIC ISSUES** There will be no direct teaching of issues such as homosexuality, AIDS, contraception etc. However, if these issues are raised by pupils, the teachers will address them sensitively.

**USE OF VISITORS** Where appropriate, we may use the skills and expertise of outside agencies and professionals. Where this occurs, the school will be satisfied that contributions from informed outsiders are an integral part of the whole programme and in harmony with the aims and ethos of the school. Before such programmes are delivered to our pupils, parental/carer consent will be sought.

#### **STAFF TRAINING**

Training needs will be considered and will be accessed using the appropriate agencies. Where outside Agencies are used for training purposes, their remit will be clear and will reflect the ethos of the school.