



*'To Learn, Live, Love and Laugh'*

# *Relationships and Sexuality Policy*

*Maralin Village  
Primary  
School*

*January 2017*

## *Rationale*

Maralin Village Primary School aims to provide a working, caring and happy environment in which the potential of every child can be realised.

Our Mission Statement 'To Learn, Live, Love and Laugh' seeks to develop the emotional and caring aspect of the character of our pupils, as well as the intellectual and academic.

We wish to promote in all our pupils such values as will make them caring, responsible citizens.

We believe in the dignity and worth of each individual and in the development of the whole person.

All members of staff share these values and work to ensure a pupil-centred approach in which caring is a shared responsibility of all staff.

These values underpin and shape all our school policies.

## *Introduction*

The general aim of education is to contribute towards the development of all aspects of the individual, including the aesthetic, creative, critical, cultural, emotional, intellectual, moral, physical, political, social and spiritual development for personal and family life, for working life, for living in the community and for leisure. Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is clearly a part of this general aim.

## *The Importance of RSE*

There are many good reasons for teaching RSE in the primary school. MVPS has identified the following:

- The provision of RSE is an equal opportunities issue. All pupils require an education which adequately prepares them for adult life, and boys as well as girls need to receive adequate preparation for the emotional and physical changes which they are faced with especially as they approach puberty;
- Many children are maturing earlier. It is therefore important that pupils are provided with appropriate factual information and have opportunities to discuss their feelings and concerns;
- RSE can have a positive effect on self-esteem. At MVPS we seek to develop pupils' self-esteem by creating a climate of trust and acceptance in which each person is valued and respected and encouraged to feel good about themselves. Pupils are encouraged to recognise their own individual needs, and to respect the needs and wants of others;
- RSE can increase informed choice by providing opportunities for pupils to examine their own values and beliefs in the light of those held by others. Deeper understanding of the values and beliefs that they hold can help pupils to clarify why they think and behave as they do, to separate fact from fiction, to recognise prejudice and to respect the views, emotions and feelings of others.
- Many pupils cannot or are unwilling to talk to their parents about growing up and about sexual matters. Through our curriculum we offer information and provide opportunities to consider feelings and concerns within a secure environment.
- As part of our Pastoral Care and Safeguarding policies we seek to enable pupils to challenge inappropriate and unwanted attention from others.
- Parents are frequently concerned about the unhelpful and confused media and peer messages and pressures experienced by their children. At MVPS we seek to provide opportunities for pupils to consider these messages and ensure they receive accurate information.

## *RSE in the Northern Ireland Curriculum*

RSE is not a new area of the curriculum. The framework for sex education was initially established by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DENI) in *Guidance Circular 1987/45*.

The main recommendation of this Circular was that each school should have a written a policy on sex education which is endorsed by staff and governors and communicated to parents. It also stated that:

*Sex education should be taught in a sensitive manner which is in harmony with the ethos of the school and in conformity with the moral and religious principles held by parents and school management authorities.*

### *Aims and Objectives*

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is 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. The learning process begins informally with our parents (or those holding parental responsibility) long before any formal education takes place at school.

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 affectivity, the capacity to give and receive love; procreation and, in a more general way, the aptitude for forming relationships with others. It is a complex dimension of human life and relationships.

Teaching RSE should provide opportunities which enable pupils:

- to form values and establish behaviour within a moral, spiritual and social framework;
- to examine and explore the various relationships in their personal lives;
- to learn how to develop and enjoy personal relationships and friendships which are based on responsibility and mutual respect;
- to build the foundations for developing more personal relationships in later life;
- to make positive, responsible choices about themselves and others and the way they live their lives.
- to achieve their physical, psychological and social potential, and to improve their self-knowledge and self-esteem;
- to promote positive attitudes towards health;
- to provide a sense of responsibility in respect of individual, family and community health;
- to enable pupils to acquire skills in decision-making, in managing and handling situations of stress in relation to health;
- to provide a knowledge base and the skills to interpret it.

## *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 and marriage;
- appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood;
- promote an appreciation of the value of human life and the wonder of birth.

## *Objectives*

The RSE curriculum should enable pupils to:

- acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self;
- 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 nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and in wider contexts;
- develop an awareness of differing family patterns;
- develop strategies to make decisions, solve problems, and implement actions in various personal, social and health contexts;
- become aware of the variety of 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 some coping strategies 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;
- develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making.

## *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; for supporting others; for future parenting;
- **communication skills** - learning to listen, listening 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;
- **decision-making and problem-solving skills** - for sensible choices made in the light of relevant information; making moral judgements about what to do in actual situations and putting these judgements into practice; acting responsibly and with initiative as an individual or as a member of a variety of groups;
- **inter-personal skills** -for managing relationships confidently and effectively; for developing as an effective group member or leader;
- **morals and values** - to enable pupils to clarify what they believe and why they believe it; to develop a respect for and interest in the beliefs of others; to explore values and attitudes and to consider how they, and others, are affected by them.

## *Morals and Values*

We believe that it is important that children should be able to:

- distinguish between right and wrong;
- articulate their own attitudes and values;
- take responsibility for their own actions;
- recognise the moral dimension to situations;
- understand the long and short term consequences of their actions for themselves and others;
- develop for themselves a set of socially acceptable values and principles, and set guidelines to govern their own behaviour;
- recognise that their values and attitudes may have to change over time;
- behave consistently in accordance with their principles.

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

- a respect for self;
- a respect for others;
- non-exploitation in relationships;
- commitment, trust and bonding within relationships;
- mutuality in relationships;
- honesty with self and others;
- a development of critical self-awareness for themselves 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.

## *Roles and Responsibilities*

### *Home / School Relationship*

MVPS has a long history of working together with parents and families. We promote a 'partnership of care' where school, home and other agencies work together for the welfare of every child. Opportunities are provided for teachers, governors and parents to raise any issues and concerns they might have about the RSE policy and programme.

### *The Rights and Responsibilities of Parents*

Although all pupils are encouraged to take part in RSE lessons and topics as appropriate to their age and maturity, the school will take account of any parental concerns expressed to them. We will, as far as possible, make alternative arrangements for any pupil whose parent wishes him/her to be excused from particular classes. Parents are informed of visits/visitors to the school eg NSPCC/'Love for Life' and parental consent forms are used to seek agreement that their child may participate.

### *Responsibilities of the Principal*

It is the responsibility of the Principal to ensure that:

- **RSE** is implemented within the school;
- all staff receive training;
- the Chair of the Board of Governors and the Board of Governors are kept informed about RSE in the the school

### *Responsibility of Governors*

Governors:

- foster and support the development of an RSE policy and programme by collaborating with teachers and parents;
- examine and approve the completed policy and programme and review the policy at regular intervals;
- seek to accommodate and be sensitive to the religious and cultural beliefs of both teachers and parents while fulfilling their responsibility to ensure the availability of adequate RSE for all children.

## *The Role of Teachers*

The classroom teacher has a significant and diverse role to play in the planning and implementation of RSE in the school. This extends to include awareness of LGBT and FGM issues and to approach such issues if and when they arise. Staff will be supported should they have any concerns dealing with these issues and the Designated teacher must be informed of any concerns of a Safeguarding or Child Protection nature.

At all times the role must be considered to be complementary to that of parents, taking cognisance of the individual needs, age, maturity, stage of development and family background of the child.

Staff take part in training in RSE when available.

## *Involving pupils/ Taught Curriculum*

We endeavour to make children aware of RSE issues through good practice in the classroom and the taught curriculum, namely:

- Religious Education
- Assemblies
- Games and Teamwork
- Play
- Drama and Role Play
- Circle Time
- Visitors to the classroom including medical and fire service, PSNI and Childline
- 'Childline' posters are evident to all children in the school
- Love for Life Programme for P7 'What's inside'
- Love for Life Programme for Parents 'Birds and Bees' bi-annually P6/7
- PD&MU
- Resources from NSPCC
- Stranger Danger
- Health Education
- EMU
- Visitors to school eg PSNI, NSPCC, Barnardos
- Educational Trips and Residential Visits
- Annual Anti-Bullying Week
- Childline School Services visit school bi-annually to work with Primary 6 and Primary 7

Furthermore children are given a voice through class and school councils which meet regularly and discuss issues important and appropriate to them.

**It is important that should there be any issues regarding disclosure, the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures must be**

followed with a high degree of confidentiality. The principal or designated teacher must be informed of any such disclosures which might suggest that a pupil is at risk or that physical or sexual abuse is suspected.

### *Links with other school policies*

RSE policy links with other policies in the school including:

- Pastoral Care
- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Health Education
- PD and MU
- Positive Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying
- E Safety/Acceptable Use of the Internet
- Use of Reasonable Force
- Intimate Care

Parents are furnished with the above policies on admission to school and are asked to sign to acknowledge receipt of these.

### *Links with other Agencies*

In order to promote RSE, our school seeks to foster good relationships with the following agencies:

- School Health/Welfare
- PSNI
- Love for Life
- Education Welfare
- NSPCC
- Barnardos

**In line with our On line/E-Safety Policy, when using resources from an outside agency a member of the school staff should look at the resources which are to be used and judge the appropriateness of such materials for the age range and maturity of the pupils. This must happen before any resources are used.**

School retains the responsibility and right to terminate any input if deemed inappropriate for the class.

Teachers should always be present when a representative from an agency or other individual is taking a session with a class.

## *Monitoring, Evaluation and Review*

### **Monitoring**

On-going monitoring is an integral part of our policy. Problems and procedures are discussed regularly at staff meetings to ensure that the policy is being implemented as planned. Support will be given to those teachers who require assistance in carrying out any aspect of their role.

### **Evaluation**

Evaluation procedures are in place to discover ways of improving the quality of provision in school for the benefit of all pupils and teachers.

All aspects of the policy are evaluated on an on-going basis with the views of parents, pupils and teachers being requested through questionnaires, and informal interviews. Self-evaluation is a feature of every teacher's role and forms the basis of our staff development programme.

### **Review**

Our RSE Policy is reviewed bi-annually and regularly updated as and when required.

Next Review: September 2018

