



Victoria College Belfast

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

Policy Date – September 2022
Agreed by Governors – 12th September
2022
Review Date – September 2025
Drafted by – Mrs F Cromie

VICTORIA COLLEGE BELFAST

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE) POLICY

1. RATIONALE

In the College, Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) supports our ethos as a pupil centered, safeguarding school. We also acknowledge that RSE is a lifelong process encompassing the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. The delivery of RSE contributes to promoting pupils' personal development and to supporting their academic achievement, developing each child as a whole. Sexual health and relationships are important elements in the curriculum in terms of preparing pupils for life. It is designed to reinforce what has been done at primary school level and allows for the development of the subject in the secondary phase appropriate to the maturity and needs of the pupils. The RSE programme supports the establishment of an inclusive community where all pupils and staff are treated with dignity and respect, regardless of individual differences.

This policy seeks to promote a shared vision of RSE across the College and to show how RSE complements and supports the values, ethos and moral framework of the College. The policy sits alongside the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the Anti-Bullying Policy supporting the promotion of a clear understanding of diversity and inclusion. It provides a framework for wider curriculum development and facilitates school self-evaluation and improvement. It aims to establish consistent standards and practices in the delivery of RSE.

The policy takes account of The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 and the relevant sections of UNCRC. The policy contributes to the implementation of the Department of Education guidance contained in *Every School a Good School, Together Towards Improvement and Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education Policy*.

2. POLICY FORMATION AND CONSULTATION PROCESS

The RSE policy was drawn up through consultation involving pupils, teachers, parents and governors using the policy template provided by Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA). The policy is available on the College website and a link has been sent to all stakeholders. The Vice Principal (Pastoral) is the contact person for any feedback/comments regarding the policy. For all relevant guidance please follow this link to the CCEA RSE hub <https://www.ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/relationships-and-sexuality-education-guidance-post-primary>

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aims of the policy are:

- to provide pupils with up-to-date, accurate and accessible information, including the legal aspects (eg The Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008) in an objective and sensitive manner.
- to encourage pupils to consider their own attitudes and make reasoned and responsible decisions about the attitudes they adopt.
- to foster responsibility in sexual matters and to alert pupils to the potential physical, emotional and moral risks of sexual behaviour.
- to help pupils to recognise potentially exploitative and dangerous situations and teach them how to take preventative action. In particular, RSE aims to support pupils to navigate safely the digital landscape in order to identify potential threats including all forms of emotional, physical and sexual abuse and exploitation. Pupils should be helped to make informed choices and decisions, build their resilience and be aware of strategies which they can use to protect themselves.
- to help pupils to recognise and challenge the wide range of inappropriate behaviours.
- to teach pupils about the physical aspects of sexual behaviour within a clear moral framework in which pupils are encouraged to consider the importance of self-restraint, personal dignity, respect for themselves and for others.
- to help pupils appreciate the benefits of stability in relationships, marriage and family life.
- to develop the skills to build healthy and respectful relationships, stay safe and develop their own moral thinking and value system.

4. PROCEDURES

RSE is delivered predominantly through Learning for Life and Work (LLW) and Form Time, under the leadership of the Vice Principal. The Learning for Life and Work Coordinator is responsible for themes delivered through LLW. The Form Teacher delivers topics in Form Time and LLW where possible as they have the best knowledge about the pupils. Members of the Pastoral Team and external agencies will support the Form Teacher in delivering RSE. Staff are also provided with relevant training.

Teachers are provided with a framework for delivery. Lessons are designed to be interactive and discussion based and accessible to pupils with additional needs.

RSE resources are selected ensuring that they are inclusive and consistent with the College's moral and values framework. The most current and relevant information and research on RSE is used to plan and ensure relevance of the programmes in place. Senior Leadership will monitor the materials being used and parents will also have the opportunity to view these materials through the consultation process and on request.

Sensitive issues will be discussed as they arise in an open and objective manner. These issues will be presented in a way that is free from sensationalism and bias, and sensitively pitched to the needs of the pupils and situations. Pupils will be presented with a balanced and non-judgmental view that respects a range of religious beliefs and possible experiences of pupils.

The topics are dealt with through the following subject areas: Science, Home Economics, Religious Education, Physical Education, Learning for Life and Work and Form Time. The content delivered will be appropriate to the stage of development of pupils and over the different stages will grow and develop the pupils' understanding. The digital landscape will be taken into consideration when delivering each topic.

At **Key Stage 3** the issues covered include puberty, menstrual wellbeing, social media, sexting, child sexual exploitation, grooming, cyberbullying, domestic abuse, resilience, sexual orientation (Yr 10), contraception (Yr 10) .

At **Key Stage 4** the issues include menstrual wellbeing, sexual orientation, gender identity, healthy relationships, consent, domestic abuse, and teen parenting

The wider pastoral programme also supports and complements RSE through assemblies and workshops facilitated by external agencies.

4.1 CONFIDENTIALITY IN THE CLASSROOM

A pupil's right to privacy will be respected at all times and no pupil will be expected to ask or answer any personal questions in an RSE lesson. Personal medical advice will not be given by a teacher to any pupil. There will be acknowledgement that only doctors and health professionals should give medical advice and pupils will be advised to seek advice from parents or medical practitioners. Pupils should be reminded at the beginning of a relevant topic that the legal age of consent in Northern Ireland is 16 years old and the College has a statutory responsibility to follow safeguarding policies.

4.2 CHILD PROTECTION

No member of staff can give a guarantee of confidentiality to pupils concerning child protection issues. If details are disclosed, during either internal or external delivery of RSE, that reveal the pupil is at risk, the teacher/facilitator must follow child protection procedures as outlined in the Child Protection Policy. Pupils should also be reminded about who the designated teachers are so they can talk to them about any concerns.

Familyworks offer a counselling service in the College on a weekly basis. This provides one to one support for students who are experiencing a range of emotional and mental health difficulties. The counselling service can be accessed via the College website <https://www.victoriacollege.org.uk/counselling-self-referral> or by speaking to a member of staff.

Whilst RSE is a statutory component of the Northern Ireland curriculum, parents have a right to have their children educated in accordance with their wishes. Therefore, whilst 'there is no legislative provision permitting parental withdrawal from sex education', schools can grant these requests on an individual basis. Parents wishing to withdraw their children must seek the permission of the Board of Governors through the Principal.

5. INVOLVEMENT OF EXTERNAL AGENICES

Although many aspects of RSE can be taught in classes or groups, there may be occasions when outside agencies are invited to support the programme, Staff arranging such events must:

- ensure that the information provided by the external organisation reflects the College's ethos and values;
- discuss the suitability of the proposed visit with the Vice-Principal in advance. This discussion should include content, vetting and arrangements for the visit;
- ensure that staff member/s are present for the duration of the presentation.

When a visit is deemed to be potentially sensitive, information should be made available to parents in advance by letter. If a parent does not wish for a pupil to attend, suitable arrangements must be made.

6. REVIEW AND EVALUATION

RSE provision will be monitored and evaluated by the Vice Principal involving pupils, parents, and teachers through annual pastoral surveys and focus groups.

The policy will be reviewed every three years by the Board of Governors. The policy will be kept under review by senior members of staff who will keep Governors informed of any difficulties that may arise.

7. LINKS TO OTHER COLLEGE POLICIES

- Anti-bullying policy – in particular, bullying related to sex, gender or relationships
- Pastoral Care
- Child Protection and safeguarding policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- E-safety Policy
- Drugs Education Policy