

Relationships and Sex Education Policy

Overview

The Education Reform Act (Section 1) states that schools should provide a curriculum which "promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils...and of society; and prepare such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life." Relationship and sex education is an important dimension of this statutory entitlement.

RSE is an umbrella term for all the teaching and learning we offer pupils to understand our own and others' sexuality and to develop skills for relationships and informed decision making.

ODST believes that RSE is the entitlement of each child and is committed to deliver it within the context of a broad and balanced programme of health education.

Aims

At St Peter's we aim, through explicit learning experiences to:

- Ensure that RSE is fully integrated into the PSHE and Science curriculum and not isolated, taken out of context or over-emphasised in any way.
- Foster self-esteem and respect for others as the cornerstone of good health education and therefore good sex and relationship education.
- Encourage schools to provide a RSE programme tailored to the age and the physical and emotional maturity of the children.
- Nurture a partnership between caring adults - governors, teachers, other staff and parents – to ensure sensitive support for children and young people as they grow and mature.
- Ensure children have the ability to accept their own and others' sexuality.
- Encourage children to enjoy relationships based upon mutual trust and respect, free from any abuse.
- Generate an atmosphere where questions and discussions on sexual matters can take place without embarrassment.
- Avoid sexual stereotyping and sexual discrimination.
- Adopt a whole school approach to RSE.

Benefits

Effective teaching of sex education will increase children's knowledge of:

- Body language
- Human growth and development
- Families, parenting and life cycles.
- Safety and child protection.
- Helping agencies.

It will also enable children to:

- Improve their self-esteem.
- Make informed choices and decisions.
- Develop personal initiative and be able to take responsibility.
- Recognise personal skills and qualities in themselves and others.
- Maintain and develop relationships.
- Develop self-confidence.
- Develop assertiveness in appropriate situations.
- Develop the motivation to succeed.

Context

St Peter's recognises that a planned, appropriate and sensitive approach to the provision of sex education is a fundamental entitlement of all our children. This policy statement will be continually developed in consultation with parents, and governors, to reflect that the school plays a supportive and complementary role to that of parents in preparing pupils to meet maturely, the challenges of adult life.

The aim of the RSE policy is to clarify the provision of RSE to all children (including education about growth, puberty, and reproduction,) in line with the school's Christian values and as set out in the guidance published by the Department for Education in July 2000. Relationship and sex education is delivered through the PSHE and other appropriate elements of the curriculum.

This policy statement is designed to be complementary to, and supportive of, the role of parents in educating their children about sexuality and relationships. It recognises that the prime responsibility for bringing up children rests with parents/carers.

We aim to teach RSE in the context of the school's aims and values framework and in the belief that:

- It is an integral part of the learning process, beginning in childhood and continuing into adult life
- It should be provided for all children and young people including those; with physical, learning or emotional difficulties.
- It should encourage consideration of values, moral issues, sexuality, personal relationships and the development of communication and decision-making skills.
- It should foster self-esteem, self-awareness, the skills to avoid and resist unwanted sexual experiences and a sense of moral responsibility.
- RSE is part of a wider social, personal, spiritual and moral education process.
- Children should be taught to have respect for their own bodies and learn about their responsibilities to others.
- It is important to build positive relationships with others, involving trust and respect and taught in the context of marriage and family life.

The role of parents

This school is well aware that the primary role in children's RSE lies with parents and carers. We wish to build a positive and supporting relationship with the parents of children at our school through mutual understanding, trust and co-operation. In promoting this objective we:

- Inform parents about the school's RSE policy and practice.
- Answer any questions that parents may have about the RSE programme for their child.
- Take seriously any issue that parents raise with teachers or governors about this policy or the arrangements for RSE in the school.

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from all or part of any RSE provided, but not from teaching the biological aspects of human growth and reproduction necessary under the Science National Curriculum.

If a parent wishes their child to be withdrawn from RSE lessons, they should discuss this with the headteacher, and make it clear which aspects of the programme they do not wish their child to participate in. The school always complies with the wishes of parents in this regard.

The role of the headteacher

It is the responsibility of the headteacher to ensure that both staff and parents are informed about our RSE policy, and that the policy is implemented effectively. It is also the headteacher's responsibility to ensure that members of staff are given sufficient training, so that they can teach effectively and handle any difficult issues with sensitivity.

The headteacher may liaise with external agencies regarding the school RSE programme, and ensure that all adults who work with children on these issues are aware of the school policy, and that they work within this framework and that of the school safeguarding policies.

Confidentiality

Teachers conduct RSE lessons in a sensitive manner and in confidence. However, if a child makes a reference to being involved, or likely to be involved in sexual activity, then the teacher will take the matter seriously and deal with it as a matter of child protection. Teachers will respond in a similar way if a child indicates that s/he may have been a victim of abuse. In these circumstances the teacher will talk to the child as a matter of urgency. If the teacher has concerns, they will draw their concerns to the attention of the designated person (DP) for safeguarding in the school. The DP will then deal with the matter in consultation with health care professionals. (See also Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy.)

Implementation

The programme will teach about relationships, love and care and the responsibilities of parenthood as well as sex and reproduction. Young people need a clear understanding of the arguments for delaying sexual activity and resisting pressure, including the various moral and practical issues which need to be considered. It may be necessary to link RSE with issues of peer pressure and other risk-taking behaviour, such as drugs, smoking and alcohol, and ensure that young people understand how the law applies to sexual relationships.

Teachers have a responsibility to ensure the safety and welfare of children. RSE will be undertaken within the broad framework of the school's core underpinning Christian values. The personal beliefs and attitudes of teachers will not influence the teaching of RSE within the PSHE framework.

Pupils need to be taught to behave responsibly towards reproduction, and be able to make informed decisions about relationships and their behaviour.

It is expected that a programme will be taught in the transition year for pupils moving to secondary school which should include:

- changes in the body related to puberty, such as periods and voice breaking;
- when these changes are likely to happen and what issues may cause young people anxiety and how they can deal with these; and
- how a baby is conceived and born.

Organisation

In order to help children make informed choices, establish a healthy lifestyle and build up a carefully considered system of values, the teaching methods used are as important as the content of the lesson. The participation of children in lessons is essential in order to encourage them to learn from others and to help them to use appropriate language in ways which are understood by others. This requires the use of a balanced range of teaching methods.

Delivery of sex education

RSE may be carried out in a variety of different ways and by different specialists as well as teachers including:

- Trained staff within the PSHE programme
- School Nurse Team
- By reference to sexuality in curriculum areas other than PSHE.

Certain lessons are compulsory under the National Curriculum in Science and are excluded from the right of parents to withdraw their children. Such lessons will not include material on AIDS, HIV, and other sexually transmitted diseases, or any aspect, other than biological aspects, of human sexual behaviour.

RSE will not be isolated, taken out of context or over-emphasised in any way.

Morals and Morality

Morals and morality are essential dimensions of sexuality and relationships. The programme will respect individual differences - inspired by cultural, religious, ethnic and family backgrounds - and it will endeavour to promote those values of respect and dignity for human life which are common to all faiths and societies.

Other values drawn from the school's core beliefs include promoting respect for each individual, positive self-esteem, self-respect and care for others. Children will be encouraged to consider the implications of these core values within the context of their relationships and sexuality.

Relationships

Relationships have an important part to play in sex education. Friendship, making relationships, valuing friendship, will be topics in the early part of the programme. Choosing a partner, assessing personal qualities, considerations before marriage, together with relationships within the family, will be considered; together with roles, avoidance of stereotyping and acknowledging different attitudes and influences.

Sensitive issues

Avoiding sensitive or controversial issues does not make them go away and leaves children confused and at risk. This policy sets out how topics such as contraception, abortion, homosexuality, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases are to be included in the school's support and guidance for children and staff.

Menstruation

The onset of menstruation can be alarming for girls if they are not prepared. Research shows that about a third of girls are not told about periods by their parents and 10% receive no preparation at all before their first period. As with education about puberty our schools' programmes will include preparation for menstruation making adequate and sensitive arrangements to help girls cope with menstruation and with requests for sanitary protection.

Aspects of sexual behaviour raised outside the sex education programme

The teaching of apparently unrelated topics may occasionally lead to a discussion of aspects of sexual behaviour. Provided that such a discussion is relatively limited and set within the context of the other subject concerned, it will not necessarily form part of the school's RSE programme.

In such cases, particularly since they may involve pupils whose parents have withdrawn them from sex education as such, teachers will need to balance the need to give proper attention to relevant issues with the need to respect pupils' and parents' views and sensibilities.

The Governing Body expects that teachers will draw upon their professional judgement and common sense to deal effectively with such occurrences and that they will be conversant with this policy document and act accordingly.

Sexuality and physical development

The awareness of self and physical changes that occur are important in sex education, including development and puberty (physical/mental and social development) and acceptance of the nature of the sexuality in others together with the pressures imposed by such as peers and the media.

Online and social media

Children and young people are growing up in a culture where technology and social media are important and have created more opportunity for sharing personal information. RSE should encourage children to think about what they want others to know and see about them - whether on or offline. Teachers should address the core issues of safety, privacy, peer influence and personal responsibility. Internet safety is included in the

new computing curriculum, but doesn't cover the important relationship aspects, so it is vital to coordinate with colleagues responsible for the computing curriculum to ensure there is no unhelpful duplication or contradictory messages.

Visiting speakers

Visiting speakers may be used to help enhance the RSE programme. Where they are used, they will be required to conform to this policy statement. Health professionals are bound by their professional codes of conduct in a one-to-one situation with individual pupils but, in a classroom situation, they should follow the school's Confidentiality Policy.

Confidentiality Policy

Teachers are required to adhere to ODST's statement on confidentiality as set out in employee contracts of employment.

Children should be reassured that their best interests will be maintained. However, teachers cannot offer or guarantee absolute confidentiality. If confidentiality has to be broken, the child should be informed first and then supported, as appropriate.

It is only in the most exceptional circumstances that the school should be in the position of having to handle information without parental knowledge. Where younger children are involved this will be grounds for serious concern and child protection issues will need to be addressed.

Children should be encouraged to talk to their parents and given support to do so. If there is evidence of abuse, the school's Safeguarding Policy should be adhered to, ensuring that pupils are informed of sources of confidential help, for example, the school nurse.