

# Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

## Contextual Information

Lurgan College is committed to creating a caring, supportive, inclusive and safe environment in which all pupils are treated with respect and dignity, and are valued as individuals. It is our belief that all pupils are entitled to an educational provision which prepares them for the experiences, opportunities, challenges and responsibilities of life by equipping them with appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills.

## Policy formation and consultation process (Monitoring and Evaluation)

The Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) policy has been developed through a collaborative process which involved a wide range of stakeholders including parents, staff and pupils (through the School Council). Good practice was ascertained through liaison with other schools and guidance was sought from the Sexual Health Training Team (Belfast Health and Social Care Trust).

The school recognises and accepts the importance of on-going monitoring, evaluation and development of the RSE policy and programme. The policy will be reviewed in light of new documentation or guidance from the DENI, following the procedures for self-evaluation outlined in the DE document 'Together Towards Improvement'. This process may include questionnaires, focus groups, and the School Council. This will ensure that the policy complies with legislation and guidelines, reflects classroom practice and continues to meet the needs of all pupils.

The policy is underpinned by the school's ethos and is set within the framework of the following documents.

- Lurgan College's Pastoral Care, Child Protection/Safeguarding, Positive Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policies
- DENI circulars 2001/15, 2010/01, 2013/16, 2015/22
- CCEA Guidance for Post-Primary Schools: Relationships and Sexuality Education (2001)
- CCEA Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance: An update for Post Primary Schools (2015)
- DENI Letter Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) January 2014
- ETI – Report of an Evaluation of Relationships and Sexuality Education in Post-Primary School (2011).
- Equality Commission's Eliminating Sexual Orientation Discrimination in N Ireland March 2009
- Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 – revised February 2009
- DHSS Sexual Health Promotion: Strategy and Action Plan 2008-2013, December 2008
- CCEA Personal Development NI Curriculum 2007
- The Education (Curriculum Minimum Content) Order (Northern Ireland) 2007
- The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations NI 2006
- Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

## Aims and Objectives of the Relationships and Sexuality Policy

### Aims

The aims of RSE are to:

- Enhance the personal growth and development of pupils/students and support their academic achievement
- Enhance the self-esteem and well-being of the pupils
- Encourage pupils to build healthy relationships based on integrity, courtesy, tolerance, mutual respect, consideration and trust
- 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 pupils to value friendships, family life, marriage and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood
- Encourage pupils to develop self-respect, self-esteem, self-confidence and emotional resilience
- Encourage pupils to avoid risk taking behaviours which could be harmful to themselves and / or others
- 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
- Make informed choices and decisions by providing opportunities for them to examine their own values and beliefs in the light of those held by others
- Understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and in wider contexts
- Recognise the diversity of family life in today's society
- 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 the skills to build healthy and respectful relationships, stay safe, and develop their own moral thinking and value system
- 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
- Understand sexual development and identify and explore aspects of sexuality including sex roles, stereotyping, gender issues and cultural influences on sexuality
- Increase awareness of issues such as contraception and fertility; improve sexual health and well-being of young people and reduce unplanned teenage pregnancy and rates of sexually transmitted infections
- Identify potential threats or dangers, including the internet, child sexual exploitation, domestic violence, and all other forms of emotional, physical and sexual abuse.
- Build their resilience and develop coping strategies which they can use to protect themselves and others from peer pressure, mental health issues, conflict and potential threats or dangers to personal safety
- Access up-to-date, reliable, accurate and appropriate sources of advice and support
- Lead to the acquisition of understanding and attitudes which prepare pupils to view their relationships in a responsible and healthy manner by helping them to understand the importance of stable and loving personal relationships
- Foster respect for difference regardless of race, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, culture, gender and sexual orientation
- Challenge prejudicial attitudes, and promote equality of opportunity for all pupils.

## **Rationale**

'Relationships and Sexuality Education (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.'

(CEA Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance: An update for Post Primary Schools: 2015).

As a College community, we are cognisant of the need for young people today to learn to manage the situations, opportunities, challenges and responsibilities which life in a complex society may present.

We are committed to providing opportunities for all pupils to develop important life skills in a safe, supportive and secure environment. To do this effectively, they require access to a broad range of knowledge and skills to enable them to foster relationships through which they can develop their physical, mental, spiritual, social, moral and emotional well-being.

Effective RSE is essential to provide young people with the opportunity to make well-informed, responsible decisions about their lives. This includes enabling pupils to explore sensitive issues such as domestic violence and sexual abuse, recognise potentially exploitative and dangerous situations, build their resilience, and be aware of strategies they can use to protect themselves.

The RSE programme is designed to enable pupils to critically evaluate the information they are bombarded with today, particularly the often distorted and inaccurate information about sex and relationships they are exposed to from their peers, social media and other outside pressures.

It is anticipated that the RSE policy and programme will cater for and meet the needs of all pupils, and will ensure clarity and consensus on how RSE will be taught in the school.

## Values

At Lurgan College, the RSE programme will be taught in a sensitive and inclusive manner which will be:

- Relevant, accessible and appropriate to the pupils' emotional and physical age and stage of development
- Taught in harmony with the ethos of the school
- Set within a clear values framework of acceptance, tolerance inclusivity and respect for diversity to include pupils' culture, religion, sexual orientation and social background
- Seek to encourage respect for and empathy with the values and attitudes of others.

In keeping with the school's Christian ethos the following key messages will be promoted:

- The deferment of sexual activity until young people are physically and emotionally mature enough to understand the inherent responsibilities and the consequences of their actions
- The importance of self-restraint, dignity, and respect for themselves and others, including those of a different sexual orientation, and acceptance of responsibility
- An appreciation of the value of stable family life, marriage, permanent loving relationships and the responsibilities of parenthood
- A recognition of the positive benefits of seeking sexual fulfilment within a permanent, committed relationship with one person
- Abstinence as a positive option.

## The Management and Co-ordination of Relationships and Sexuality Education

Lurgan College is committed to offering an RSE programme which is designed to address the pressures and dangers to which young people may be exposed: in particular technology, the integral role it plays and how it impacts on their lives. It will be taught in a sensitive and inclusive manner, and in a way that is appropriate to the pupils' emotional, and physical age and stage of development. In order to ensure continuity and progression, it aims to build on the work done in the Junior High School and provide young people with:

- The opportunity to develop the skills to build healthy and respectful relationships, stay safe, and develop their own moral thinking and value system and;
- Up-to-date, accurate and accessible information about reproduction, sex and sexual health matters.

The RSE lessons are designed to meet the needs of boys and girls and will generally be taught in mixed groups in order to promote positive relationships and to enable pupils to gain an understanding of each other's perspectives. However, the programme is flexible, and certain aspects may be delivered to single sex groups if this is deemed to be more appropriate to the specific nature of the issues being explored or presented.

A broad range of teaching strategies will be used with a strong emphasis on active learning approaches such as scenarios, role plays and debates. The activities will provide opportunities to encourage both genders to discuss interests, attitudes, concerns and emotions. This will promote the acquisition of knowledge, understanding, thinking skills and personal capabilities, attitudes and dispositions. The lessons will be delivered in a learning environment which seeks to avoid stereotyping and in which issues are discussed using non-pejorative language and appropriate terminology.

Teaching resources will be carefully selected to ensure that they:

- Reflect the school's moral and values framework
- Are age-appropriate, inclusive, and sensitive to the pupils' needs and experiences; and
- Are factually accurate, up-to-date and make clear distinctions between fact and opinion.

Sensitive issues including child sexual exploitation, domestic violence, abortion, same-sex marriage, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual abuse and family lifestyle will be dealt with in line with the Christian ethos of the school.

At Key Stage 4, we seek to fulfil the statutory requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum and the Key Stage 4 Entitlement Framework by ensuring that students in Years 11 and 12 are enabled to:

- Recognise, assess and manage risk in a range of real-life contexts;
- Develop their understanding of relationships and sexuality and the responsibilities of healthy relationships;
- Develop an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of parenting.

At Key Stage 4 the RSE programme is delivered through:

- The Personal Development (PD) Programme, which is co-ordinated by the Heads of Year and delivered by House Teachers and external agencies
- The compulsory subjects of Learning for Life and Work (Personal Development Strand) and Religious Studies.

At Key Stage 5 pupils continue to undertake the PD programme and receive presentations and workshops delivered by external agencies which supplement and complement the in-house programme.

At both Key Stages, a variety of departments contribute to the RSE programme. Appendix 1 provides details of the specific topics covered in different subject areas. In addition, assemblies address personal, social and moral issues which are relevant to young people and are often used to develop and reinforce the themes covered in the PD Programme.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

Lurgan College recognises its responsibility to develop appropriate policies, procedures and practices which safeguard all pupils within our care and to ensure that individuals who are at emotional or physical risk can be identified and appropriate support provided. We also acknowledge our key role in providing pupils with supportive learning experiences, as well as information and skills, to help them make informed and appropriate life choices, thereby promoting their physical, social, emotional and mental well-being.

### ***The Principal***

It is the responsibility of the Principal to ensure the development, implementation and regular review of a RSE Policy and programme.

### ***Vice-Principal (Pastoral)***

The Vice-Principal (Pastoral) co-ordinates the RSE policy within the College and is responsible for all issues relating to the RSE policy and programme including its monitoring, evaluation and development. This involves:

- Leading the Pastoral Care Team in the development of age-appropriate PD lessons which build on prior learning and show progression
- Liaising with the Co-ordinator of Learning for Life and Work and Heads of Departments which contribute to teaching RSE to ensure that pupils avail of a coherent, purposeful and relevant programme
- Liaising with external agencies to ensure the effective provision of a RSE programme
- Ensuring that the Pastoral Team and all teaching staff participate in relevant training opportunities
- Liaising with staff, parents and external agencies to ensure individual pupil support as required

The Vice-Principal (Pastoral) is also the Designated Teacher for Child Protection/Safeguarding.

### ***Teaching staff***

As well as the valuable contribution made by the Pastoral Team (Heads of Year and House Teachers) in delivering aspects of the RSE Programme, it is important that all teachers, are aware of their responsibilities regarding the implementation of the RSE Policy.

Staff development will seek to build the capacity of staff to respond to sensitive issues related to relationships and sexuality. For example,

- Staff will learn more about responding appropriately to pupils who approach them with pastoral concerns
- Staff will be made aware of the professional and legal limits to the support they can give in this area.

Teachers' and pupils' right to privacy must be respected at all times. Therefore during class discussions, no one will be expected to ask or answer any personal questions, or feel obliged to impart information about personal relationships or experiences.

Teachers should exercise their own discretion and professional judgement as to whether it is appropriate to deal with particular questions which may arise in an RSE lesson in a whole-class forum. It may be more appropriate to respond on an individual basis or to arrange time for group discussions outside class. The teacher may also wish to discuss the issue with the Head of Year or Pastoral Vice-Principal to ascertain the most appropriate way to deal with the situation.

'All pupils have the right to learn in a safe and secure environment, to be treated with respect and dignity, and not to be treated any less favourably on grounds of their actual or perceived sexual orientation' (Equality Commission). All staff and pupils must be sensitive and respectful of difference, ensuring that no pupil ever feels or is excluded or experiences bullying, due to their personal circumstances, cultural background, sexual orientation or gender identity. Respect for all people will be promoted in line with the school's ethos. Pupils have the right to hold other views in a peaceful manner. Bullying or any other form of homophobic abuse will not be tolerated. Sexual

orientation will be handled in a sensitive manner and all teachers have a responsibility to counteract prejudice and support the development of self-esteem and personal responsibility in all pupils.

The foundation for the effective delivery of RSE is the building of secure, trusting, respectful relationships between the teacher and their pupils. Pupils should feel reassured that their teacher cares about their well-being and be aware that there are adults to whom they can talk. However, since teachers are not medical professionals, they cannot give personal medical advice to any pupil. The Pastoral Care Notice Board and Appendix 2 contains information on a variety of sources where pupils can access help and advice.

Pupils must know and understand that the promise of confidentiality is never an option in the classroom or school setting. They must know where the sources of confidential help are and how they can access them. It must also be made clear to pupils that whilst teachers will offer support, any disclosures which might suggest that a pupil is at risk, or that physical or sexual abuse is suspected, teachers must follow the procedures outlined in the Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy.

### ***Partnership with Parents/Guardians***

Lurgan College recognises that parents/guardians exert a major influence on all aspects of a young person's life, particularly in the area of relationships and sexuality. As an integral aspect of our pastoral care of all pupils, we endeavour to ensure that our RSE Programme is complementary and supportive of the parents'/guardians' role as lead educators in this sensitive area, and will be delivered in the context of the school's distinctive ethos. Where issues of a personal or sensitive nature arise, teachers should refer pupils to a member of the Pastoral Care Team who will encourage them to seek appropriate advice from parents/guardians and/or health professionals.

If an external agency/individual is coming into school to support the RSE programme, parents/guardians will be made aware in advance. They will be provided with a brief outline of the content of the presentation and the type of activities which will take place. They will have the opportunity to raise any concerns they might have before the visit and their written consent will be sought before their son/daughter is permitted to participate. Whilst RSE is a statutory component of the Northern Ireland curriculum, the school will respect the wishes of a parent who chooses to withdraw their child from all or part of the RSE programme. However, the school will discuss with the parent the potentially detrimental effect this may have on the social and emotional well-being of the pupil and try to determine ways in which the school can best support the pupil.

Should parental concerns arise regarding any aspect of our RSE provision, parents/guardians are welcome to discuss these with the Principal or Vice-Principal (Pastoral).

### ***External Agencies***

Lurgan College may use the expertise and skills of education and health professionals from external agencies or individuals from the wider community to complement the in-house RSE lessons through presentations, workshops and special assemblies.

External agencies used to support the delivery of the RSE Programme will:

- Receive a copy of the school's RSE Policy and agree to comply with the content;
- Be made aware of and adhere to the school's Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy regarding pupil confidentiality and disclosure
- Agree to respect the ethos of the school;
- Be vetted as appropriate.

Prior to the use of an external agency, the Vice-Principal (Pastoral) or Head of Year will liaise with the organisation about the details of the proposed session, aims, learning intentions, methodology and evaluation. To maximise learning from the session and to ensure coherence and continuity, any preparatory and follow-up work which needs to be completed will also be discussed.

At least one teacher is always present when external agencies are delivering any aspect of the RSE Programme. Following the presentation, staff and pupils are asked to discuss their experience and evaluate the quality and usefulness of the external provision. This feedback and any evaluation carried out by the external agency, will be used to inform future planning and provision.

## **Linked Policies**

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

- Anti-Bullying
- Child Protection/Safeguarding
- Acceptable Use of ICT
- Online Safety
- Pastoral Care
- Positive Behaviour
- Drugs Education

### Departmental Provision of Relationships and Sexuality Education within Lurgan College

#### ***Personal Development***

- The school's Personal Development (PD) programme encourages the development of high self-esteem, healthy relationships, sexual health, managing peer pressure, positive self-image, internet safety (including 'sexting'), positive thinking, mental health, developing resilience, personal responsibility and stress management
- External agencies are used to help promote healthy relationships; these include Adapt Eating Distress Association, ASCERT, Freedom Acts, Reach Team, Love for Life, Aware and MensSana.

#### ***Religious Studies***

- GCSE – Relationships, civil partnerships, pre-marital sex, single life, celibacy, marriage, divorce, gender equality.
- AS – Abortion, assisted conception, reproductive technologies, surrogacy, pre-implantation genetic diagnosis, embryo research, mitochondrial donation.
- A2 – Sexual identity and gender justice e.g. same sex relationships, marriage, parenthood, birth control and contraception, violations such as female genital mutilation.

#### ***Learning for Life and Work***

- Maximising and sustaining health and well-being
- Concept of self
- Building and maintaining healthy relationships
- Recognising, assessing and managing risk

#### ***Nutrition and Food Science***

- GCSE - Healthy relationships, peer support, working collaboratively, self and peer assessment, developing empathetic skills (difficulties surrounding obesity, disability, consumer proficiency, challenging relationships that may influence diet and health (toddler independence, peer pressure and teenagers). Impact of poor money management upon relationships.
- A2 - Pupils complete a 4,000 word research project of choice – often this explores relationships (underage drinking and peer pressure, adolescent's dietary choices and the impact upon health)
- A2:1 option A is based upon food security - explores issues such as: Global food security, food poverty, food banks, food sustainability and food waste. Pupils have the opportunity to discuss the barriers that prevent consumers from making positive food choices. Much of this study is based around relationships and other influencing factors.

#### ***Biology***

- GCSE - Reproduction, puberty, fertility, pregnancy, menstrual cycles, ethical implications of sexual activity, infertility, awareness of sexual health (STIs) and contraception.

#### ***Psychology***

- Relationships – the maintenance and break up of romantic relationships
- Evolutionary theory and how sexual selection impacts on mating behaviour
- The influence of childhood, especially early attachment types, on adult relationships
- The influence of culture on relationships

#### ***Music***

- Songs and lyrics are composed which are relationship-based
- Relationships are built as pupils perform together in ensembles.
- Expression of emotions through performance and composition.
- Pupils have the opportunity to convey and interpret another composer's emotions as they perform their music.

### **Business Studies**

- Looks at empathetic skills through the study of the role of stakeholders in companies – appreciating the perspectives of different stakeholders in business and economic activities (at GCSE), recognising potential conflict between different stakeholder groups (A Level)
- The need for belonging and feeling a part of the organisation as a way of motivating employees

### **ICT/Digital Technology**

- Managing emotions/Developing resilience – through exploring the benefits and problems of social networking

### **English**

- Building positive relationships e.g. through group work and discussion, promoting personal viewpoints, positive feedback and the building of self-esteem among pupils
- Deals with the issues of life experiences, managing emotions, empathetic skills – e.g. through role play, debate
- Develops empathy through the reading of a range of literary texts in each key stage.
- GCSE Spoken Language analyses speech patterns and dialogue; develops relational communication.
- A2 students read and respond to a literary text about the nature of violence in the home.

### **Modern Languages**

- GCSE – The topic of Relationships examines how well pupils get on with family versus with friends. Tensions which might arise in the household and ways in which these could potentially be lessened are discussed.
- AS – The topic of Relationships occurs throughout the AS course and provides opportunities to discuss e.g. physical well-being, risk taking behaviour, dealing with stress, etc.
- AS & A2 – The novels chosen deal with teenagers and identity issues, focusing on characters which are seen to be adapting to rapidly-changing circumstances. Pupils are asked to empathise with the characters and to articulate what they would do in similar situations.
- A2 – Topics such as 'societal attitudes and young people' and 'equality / inequality and discrimination / prejudice' provide scope to discuss any issue which might affect young people.

### **History and Politics**

- The department explains relationships issues from a Christian perspective e.g. principles of anti-bullying strategy are taught in the context of Nazi Germany and the USSR
- The development of pupils' empathetic skills e.g. in teaching Northern Ireland topics in GCSE History and AS Politics
- The department explains how relationships can change and why e.g. in the context of the Cold War at GCSE
- The importance of good interpersonal relationships in producing success in the past and in current day situations e.g. in an explanation of the functions of government and parliament
- Conflict resolution and the role of bodies which seek to do this

### **Health and Social Care**

- The changing structure of families and the range of support available to meet family needs including government initiatives and voluntary groups
- The role of the family in influencing the behaviours associated with depression, aggression, stress, eating disorders and phobias
- The social effects of ill-health on individuals and their families with regard to education, employment, income, leisure activities and relationships

### Useful contacts

1. The NSPCC has produced resources to make it easier for children and young people to get help about 'sexting'.  
[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)
2. Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) 'thinkuknow' website contains advice and resources for teachers exploring the risks which children and young people are exposed to when online. CEOP have produced targeted advice and guidance for 11–13 year olds, 14+ years, parents or carers, and teachers  
[www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)
3. The Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum includes help and advice on cyber bullying and homophobic bullying.  
[www.endbullying.org.uk](http://www.endbullying.org.uk)