



Contextual Information

Portadown College is committed to creating a caring, supportive, inclusive and safe environment in which all students are treated with respect and dignity, and are valued as individuals. It is our belief that all students 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.

'All students 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 students must be sensitive and respectful of difference, striving to ensure that no student experiences exclusion or bullying, due to their personal circumstances, cultural background, sexual orientation or gender identity.

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 student representatives (School Council). Good practice was ascertained through liaison with other schools and CCEA guidance (2015) materials were used in the revision of the policy.

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 Student Voice (The College's school council). This will ensure that the policy complies with legislation and guidelines, reflects classroom practice and continues to meet the needs of all students.

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

- Portadown College's Pastoral Care, Child Protection/Safeguarding, Behaviour Management 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 students and support their academic achievement
- Enhance the self-esteem and well-being of the students
- Encourage students 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 students to value friendships, family life, marriage and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood
- Encourage students to develop self-respect, self-esteem, self-confidence and emotional resilience
- Encourage students 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 students 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, conflict and potential threats or dangers to personal safety
- Access up-to-date, reliable, accurate and appropriate sources of advice and support
- Develop understanding which prepare students 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 students

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.'

(CCEA 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 students 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 students 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 students 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 students, and will ensure clarity and consensus on how RSE will be taught in the school.

At Portadown College, the RSE programme will be taught in a sensitive and inclusive manner in keeping with the school ethos.

Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme

Portadown College is committed to offering an RSE programme which is relevant, accessible and age-appropriate for all students, including those with Special Educational Needs. The provision 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 students' 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 Schools 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.

At Key Stage 4, we seek to fulfil the requirements of 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, our Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme is delivered through:

- Personal Development programmes undertaken by students in Years 11 and 12 delivered by the Pastoral Team (Year Heads and Group Tutors) and external agencies;
- Religious Studies;
- Assemblies;
- Workshops.

The GCSE Biology course includes content on sex hormones and development, contraception and STIs.

At Key Stage 5, Sixth Form students continue to undertake a Personal Development programme delivered by the Pastoral Team (Year Heads and Group Tutors) and external agencies. Students in Years 13 and 14 also attend special assemblies and presentations focusing on Relationships and Sexuality Education.

Roles and Responsibilities

Portadown College recognises its responsibility to develop appropriate policies, procedures and practices which safeguard all students 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 students 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 Head of Learning for Life and Work and Heads of Department which contribute to teaching RSE to ensure that students 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 student 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 (Year Heads and Group Tutors) 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 students who approach them with pastoral concerns
- Staff will be made aware of the professional and legal parameters to the support they can give in this area

Teachers' and students' 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 Year Head or Pastoral Vice-Principal to ascertain the most appropriate way to deal with the situation.

The teaching programmes will focus on respect for self and others, personal responsibility, physical health and emotional well-being in sexual relationships. Students 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 students.

We also acknowledge that teachers often provide positive role models to students and, as such, have a duty to exercise professional care and concern for the young people with whom they have contact. Teachers therefore provide a point of contact for referral to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

The foundation for the effective delivery of RSE is the building of secure, trusting, respectful relationships between the teacher and their students. Students should feel reassured that their teacher cares about their well-being and be aware that there are adults whom they can talk to and confide in. However, students 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 students, that whilst teachers will offer support, any disclosures which might suggest that a student 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/Carers

Portadown College recognises that parents/carers 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 students, we endeavour to ensure that our RSE Programme is complementary and supportive of the parents/carers 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 encourage students to discuss these with their parents/carers.

If an external agency/individual is coming into school to support the RSE programme, parents/carer will be made aware in advance. They will be provided with a brief outline on the nature 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 they will be offered the opportunity to withdraw their son/daughter from the presentation if they wish. 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 student and try to determine ways in which the school can best support the student.

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

External Agencies

Portadown 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 student confidentiality and disclosure
- Agree to respect the ethos of the school;
- Be vetted as appropriate.

Parents/carers should always be informed as appropriate of any external agency involvement and be provided with a brief overview of proposed content.

Prior to the use of an external agency, the Year Head or Vice Principal (Pastoral) or 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 students may be 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
- Child Protection Code of Conduct for Staff
- Acceptable Use of ICT and E-Safety
- Pastoral Care
- Drugs Education

This policy was approved at a meeting of the Board of Governors held on 29 April 2014.
Amendments to the Policy approved at a meeting of the Board of Governors held on 9 May 2017.

Appendix 1

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

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 teacher

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