



St Mary's High School
Downpatrick

Principal: Ms R McLaughlin



Celebrating 60 Years of
Education

Relationships and Sexuality Policy 2019

Key Messages

All young people have a right to an education which prepares them for adult life not only academically, but also in how they make and sustain good relationships. We, in St Mary's aim to promote and support each child in a way that facilitates all aspects of their learning and wellbeing during their school life.

As a recipient of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) **Level 1 Silver Award as a Rights Respecting School** we hold the **Right to Education (Article 29)** as the basis for our work in school.

Relationship and Sexuality Education is a statutory component of Personal Development.

'Relationship 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 our personal and social relationships and gender issues. The learning process begins informally with our parent or those holding parental responsibility long before any formal education takes place at school'

CCEA (2001)

Our Personal Development Programme as well as the many themes that are developed through the taught curriculum encourages each child to become physically, emotionally, socially and intellectually effective in being able to lead healthy and happy lives. This will in turn lead to confident independent citizens who are able to make informed choices in our ever-changing world about many aspects of their health and relationships.

We encourage our students to consider and assess different viewpoints in relation to issues of morality. We give students the opportunity to, through a variety of taught subjects the opportunity to prepare for participation in society and the working world.

Here in St Mary's through our mission statement we aim to:

... Grow together, learn Together, Care Together.....

We are mindful that RSE is a lifelong process where a developing maturity plays a part in how our young people progress attitudes, beliefs and values and even though this process begins in the home, we in St Mary's play a vital part in furthering this as the girls move through their school life.

Background information

Young people feel many pressures and challenges in today's ever changing world where peers have increasing power in some cases rather than the significant adult within a young person's life. There is an increase in the opportunity to adopt risky lifestyle choices due to the mature nature of the adolescent population of the 21st century.

To help young people make choices that will have positive outcomes for their health and well being, we in St Mary's help our students to build a resilience and a skill set which enables this to happen.

Aims of this policy

The Ethos of St Mary's High school is directly linked and intertwined with the aims of our RSE Policy stating that:

- All pupils are treated with dignity and respect and our expectation is that each pupil will treat those around them likewise no matter what religious persuasion, ethnic background or sexual orientation they may belong to.
- Pupils should be able to learn in a safe environment.
- The education received by our pupils will lend itself to the personal development of the whole person.
- We aim to raise self-esteem and self-confidence of the young person.
- Our pupils are valued as part of our school community and we foster the ideals of a strong sense of respect for self and for others.
- The development of healthy and respectful friendships/relationships to include a healthy attitude to human sexuality

Objectives of the policy based on morals and values

Through the delivery of RSE (delivered through both the taught curriculum and the Pastoral support programmes) we would hope that our pupils would be able to:

- Display behaviours which are within a moral, spiritual and social framework, which will help our pupils to become model citizens.
- Develop a variety of relationships within their personal lives based on mutual respect and responsibility being aware that these should flourish in an atmosphere of honesty, trust and commitment.
- Explore their own values and attitudes and understand how these affect those around them.
- Appreciate the value of family life in all its forms as well as the importance of having healthy relationships.
- Understand the importance of dignity, self restraint and respect for themselves and others.
- Consider the needs of others through a sensitive approach and a sense of loyalty to not only classmates but other acquaintances.
- Understand the law in relation to lifestyle choices and the consequences of poor choices.
- Recognise that both genders should be appreciated, respected, valued and seen as equal but different and which complement each other.
- Understand that compassion, mercy, tolerance and care are essential skills to develop within a relationship.
- Develop an appreciation of the responsibilities of parenthood.
- Understand the value of human life and the wonder of children as an outcome of the sanctity of marriage.

Sharing responsibility for Relationships and Sexuality Education

Relationships education is a statutory element of the Northern Ireland curriculum; the aim of which is *'to empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives'*

In St Mary's we believe that the responsibility for teaching the various aspects of RSE should be shared appropriately between teachers, parents and other educational and health professionals. The programme will be reviewed on a yearly basis by the Pastoral team and support organisations will make necessary contributions as the need arises. The pupil voice will be heard as a review of the programme will be carried out by each HOY in term 3. This gives the pupil an opportunity to have input to the content of the Personal Development class, this is especially relevant to the post 16 pupils.

The RSE programme is delivered by many subject areas but the main focus is through the Personal Development Programme across the key Stages. The Pastoral team structure is made up of the Form Teachers and the relevant HOY. In order to ensure a close relationship

and bond between the pupil and the teacher the same Form teacher stays with a class for the whole of their time in St Mary's where possible.

In Years 11 and 12 in addition to the PD programme some elements are delivered through GCSE LLW.

Appropriate external agencies contribute to the delivery of RSE and in turn complement the ongoing programme within the school. As far as possible these visits coincide with elements of the taught programme being delivered. The list of agencies is being increased on a yearly basis.

The school has a well-established link with outside agencies involved in counselling of the students through third party or self-referral.

RSE Programme at KS3

The RSE programme forms part of the statutory statements required for the Personal Development with LLW.

The main components are as follows:

- Explore and express a sense of self
- Explore morals and values and beliefs
- Investigate influences on young people
- Explore ways to develop self esteem
- Explore the concept of health as developing the whole person
- Develop understanding about how to manage effects of change on the body, mind and behaviour
- Explore qualities of relationships
- Explore qualities of a loving relationship
- Develop coping strategies to deal with challenging relationship scenarios
- Develop strategies to avoid and resolve conflict
- Explore the implications of sexual maturation
- Develop strategies to promote personal safety responding appropriately to different forms of bullying

RSE Programme at KS 4

The aims below are delivered through the PD programme as well as through elements within the taught Curriculum:(see appendix 1)

- Develop an understanding of how to maximise and sustain their own health and well being
- Reflect on and respond to concept of self
- Develop their understanding of relationships and sexuality
- Develop and understand the role of parenting

Parental Input

It is important that parents are involved and fully informed about the school's programme on RSE and its approaches to sensitive issues. The classroom activities should reflect the

positive family relationships and the role parents play in the lives of their children. If possible there should be parental involvement in some relevant presentations from outside agencies across the Key Stages.

The addition of 2 school counsellors and the recent introduction of the Parent Support group from Bryson House will help reinforce and complement the link between school and home. This advice, which is available to the pupil with parental knowledge, should help parents understand the needs of their own child and how in an atmosphere of partnership these are being met.

Opportunities should arise whereby parents are invited into school to discuss sensitive issues that may arise during the course of the school year and this is an area we in St Mary's strive to develop.

Confidentiality

Pupils are aware that St Mary's is a 'telling school'. We adopt an open and transparent approach to encourage pupils to inform their teachers of any issues which may be causing them concern.

If there is a sense of a pupil being in danger or seen to be breaking the law or if the teacher is concerned that there may be a Child Protection issue the teacher or counsellor must inform the pupil that all information must be passed on to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection. In consultation with the principal and other professionals a judgement will be made as to the correct way forward. This information is well explained in the school's *Child Protection Policy*

It is also important to note that young people have a right to privacy about their sexuality and any discussions must be treated in an atmosphere of support and understanding. Teachers will deal sensitively with any questions they are asked and seek advice from a colleague or a member of the Pastoral team if necessary. It is important that it is suggested that the pupil communicates with a parent if this is an appropriate response.

Equal Opportunities

In St Mary's the RSE programme takes into account that in Northern Ireland the values of Section 75 must be recognised i.e. that all people should be prepared for adult life regardless of age, gender, culture, disability, social status, religion or social class. These principles should permeate the various programmes, but especially in the delivery of the Citizenship strand of LLW at KS3 and 4.

Teachers will deliver the various aspects of the programme to all pupils and will take cognisance of the existing knowledge of pupils as well as their capacity to understand the various issues. The resources used and the outcomes will be reflective of the ability of the specific class.

Use of Resources and Outside agencies

Support activities delivered by outside agencies are an important strand of the RSE delivery in St Mary's. All staff will be aware of their presence by the inclusion of the date and time of the visit in the weekly information sheet on the SIMS Homepage

It is important that all visiting speakers or activities complement the on going programmes within the school. Conversations and pre planning is necessary with the relevant agency and the Pastoral Team in advance of any activity. As far as possible evaluation of the activity includes the views of the pupils. This may well decide if the activity is worthy of being a permanent aspect of the programme.

Choice of support activities will be based on the credentials of the organisation and their reputation in the delivery of such programmes.

Members of the Pastoral Team will always be in attendance at any talk or workshop as it is important that they have an overview of the contribution this activity will make to the RSE programme.

Links with other policies

The RSE Policy has links with the following policies:

- Behaviour for Learning Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Child Protection Policy

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Director of Pastoral Care in conjunction with the HOYs HODs will write the RSE Policy . Consultation will be sought from Staff, Governors ,Parents and Students. This policy contributes to and is closely linked the other Pastoral Care Policies in the school. Information and guidance from DENI and CCMS will be adhered to.

This policy will be reviewed and updated on a yearly basis.