



DE LA SALLE HIGH SCHOOL  
DOWNPATRICK

**RELATIONSHIPS  
&  
SEXUAL EDUCATION  
POLICY**

## **1 Context**

- 1.1 Relationships and sex education is an important element in the curriculum of the school. RSE is included on a statutory basis within the Northern Ireland Curriculum through the science programme of study and the health education cross-curricular theme. Health Education is taught mainly through the medium of science with important contributions coming from Physical Education, English, Personal and Social Education and Religious Education.
- 1.2 The first two aims of De La Salle are concerned with forming the pupils as social and spiritual beings and preparing them to face the challenges which the world today offers. The pastoral curriculum of the school promotes the spiritual, moral, intellectual and physical development of each pupil, based on a Christian ethos and shaped by the philosophy of John Baptist De La Salle. Through these influences the programme can best be described as “Education for Love”
- 1.1 Many pupils coming to the school have already been “educated” about sex from videos, TV and listening to their peers. Since some parents feel uncomfortable talking openly to their children about love and sex it follows that many pupils have a one sided hedonistic attitude to sex.
- 1.2 The purpose of RSE in De La Salle is to give each pupil a knowledge of the nature and importance of his sexuality and of the role of sexuality in the growth to physical, psychological and spiritual maturity.
- 1.3 RSE is taught in a sensitive manner which is in harmony with the ethos of the school and in conformity with the moral and religious principles held by parents and school management authorities. RSE is not value-free and it leads to the acquisition of understanding and attitudes which prepare pupils to view their relationships in a responsible and healthy manner.

## **2. Aims of the RSE Programme**

- 2.1 to enable the pupils to become aware of the different attitudes to sex that exist in our society.
- 2.2 to help them examine their own understanding of, and attitude to sex.
- 2.3 to give them the opportunity to communicate about sexual matters without embarrassment in a group situation.
- 2.4 to help them understand the concept of creation, and of human reproduction within the context of family life.
- 2.5 to help them understand their own physical and emotional development.
- 2.6 to enable them to examine and accept their responsibilities towards Themselves and others.
- 2.7 to help them develop skills which will enable them to analyse and evaluate sexual standards presented through the media.
- 2.8 to help them recognise sexual exploitation, and how to take appropriate avoiding action.
- 2.9 to help them develop coping strategies to counteract adverse peer pressure in sexual matters.
- 2.10 to give them the opportunity to have their questions about sexual matters answered openly and frankly.

### **3. Objectives of Relationship Sex Education Programme**

Pupils should be able to:

- 3.1 be aware of their own attitude to sex.
- 3.2 understand Christian attitude to sex.
- 3.3 recognise the responsibility associated with sexuality and the range of interpersonal relationships.
- 3.4 discuss with others issues related to sexuality and their understanding of sex.
- 3.5 show awareness of proper sexual expressions and terms.
- 3.6 understand the process of conception, prenatal development and birth.
- 3.7 understand the physical and mental changes of adolescence.
- 3.8 describe the function of the male and female reproductive organs.
- 3.9 show awareness of sexual abuses in society.
- 3.10 understand the family planning.
- 3.11 show understanding of S.T.D's including A.I.D.S.
- 3.12 show awareness of the pressures put on young people to be sexually active.

### **De La Salle High School Relationships and Sexuality Policy**

#### **Introduction and Rationale**

All young people have a right to an education which adequately prepares them for adult life and good Relationships and Sexuality Education plays an integral part. Many young people are maturing earlier and parents tend to allow young people increased independence during their years at post primary school and greater freedom to participate in a wider range of social activities. This stage of development may also be marked by the first significant experience of sexual attraction.

Sexuality includes all aspects of the human person that relate to being male or female and is subject to change and development throughout life. Sexuality is an integral part of the human personality and has biological, cultural, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions. It especially concerns the ability to form relationships with others generally, the capacity to be affectionate, give and receive love, and reproduce.

Relationships and sexuality education is a lifelong process where there is a need to acquire information and develop attitudes, beliefs and values about personal and social relationships and gender issues. The learning process begins informally with parents/carers, and continues throughout their school and adult life.

The age at which sexual intercourse first takes place has been decreasing over the past few decades.

Northern Ireland has one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in Europe and the incidents of sexually transmitted diseases continue to rise. There is also an increasing concern over the continuing rise of HIV infection in Northern Ireland. It is against this backdrop that the Department of Education has commissioned CCEA to produce guidance for Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) (2002) and have stated that every school should have a policy setting out how the school will address RSE within the curriculum.

However the 'Young Persons' Behaviour and Attitudes Survey' which is carried out with over 6000 pupils aged 11-16 every three to four years, has found that interventions around sexual health are beginning to have an impact.

### **School Ethos**

Our mission statement:

The De La Salle High School mission statement reads – *'Take care, show care, teach care, evoke care'*.

### **A Framework for Morals and Values**

RSE should enable pupils to clarify what they believe and why they believe it and develop a respect for and interest in the beliefs of others. Pupils need opportunities to explore values and attitudes and to consider how they and others are affected by them. There should be an appreciation that friendships and relationships should be based on self and mutual respect, non exploitation, honesty, trust and commitment. Within relationships there should be recognition that rights, duties and responsibilities are involved. Through our attainment of the Rights Respecting School Award (RRSA) we have been able to promote relationships within the school and the rights of children and others.

Relationships and Sexuality Education is not intended to be value free. It should be tailored to the age, maturity and understanding of pupils. The programme therefore aims to present facts in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner, set within a clear framework of values and an awareness of the law on sexual behaviour. Pupils will be encouraged to appreciate the value of family, marriage, and permanent loving relationships, and the responsibilities of parenthood. They will be helped to consider the importance of self restraint, dignity, respect for themselves and others, acceptance of responsibility, sensitivity towards the needs and views of others, loyalty and fidelity. They will be enabled to recognise the physical, emotional and moral implications and risks of certain types of behaviour and to accept that both sexes must behave responsibly in sexual matters. Teachers will however acknowledge that many children come from backgrounds that do not reflect such values and experiences. Sensitivity is therefore needed to avoid causing hurt and offence to them and their families, and to encourage the development of their sense of worth.

The following key messages will be promoted throughout the school:

- An appreciation of the value of family life, marriage, permanent loving relationships, and the responsibilities of parenthood.
- The deferment of sexual activity until marriage/young people are physically and emotionally mature enough to understand the inherent responsibilities.
- A recognition of the positive benefits of seeking sexual fulfilment within a permanent committed relationship with one person.
- A recognition that sexual abstinence outside of marriage and fidelity within it, is a positive (and desirable) option which is an achievable reality to which young people can aspire.
- A recognition that both genders, male and female, are to be appreciated, respected, valued and seen as equal, different and complimentary.
- An appreciation that friendships and relationships should be based on self and mutual respect, empathy, non exploitation, honesty, trust and commitment.
- Within relationships there should be recognition that rights, duties and responsibilities are involved.

### **The RSE Curriculum**

The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 requires all grant aided schools to offer a curriculum which:

- Promotes the spiritual, emotional, moral, cultural, intellectual and physical development of pupils at the school and thereby of society; and
- Prepares such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life by equipping them with the appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills.

Relationships education is a statutory element of the Northern Ireland Curriculum through Learning for Life and Work. It supports the curriculum aim which is 'to empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives.'

### **The RSE Programme at Key Stage 3**

The RSE curriculum forms part of the statutory statements of requirement for Personal Development within Learning for Life and Work. Teachers will ensure that pupils are given worthwhile experiences which enable them to:

- Explore and express a sense of self
- Explore personal morals, values and beliefs
- Investigate influences on them as young people,
- Explore the different ways to develop self esteem,
- Explore the concept of Health as the development of a whole person,
- Develop understanding about, and strategies to manage, the effects of change on body, mind and behaviour, for example, puberty, body image, mood swings, etc.
- Explore the qualities of relationships including friendship, for example, conditions for healthy relationships, types of relationships, healthy boundaries, gender issues in relationships, etc.
- Explore the qualities of a loving, respectful relationship, for example, how choices within a relationship affect both physical and emotional development, friendships etc.
- Develop coping strategies to deal with challenging relationship scenarios, for example, sibling rivalry, caring for relatives, domestic violence, teenage rebellion, child abuse, sexism, change in family circumstances, coping with rejection, loneliness and loss, etc.

- Develop strategies to avoid and resolve conflict, for example, active listening, assertiveness, negotiation, mediation etc.
- Explore the implications of sexual maturation, for example, sexual health, fertility, contraception, conception, teenage pregnancy, childbirth etc.
- Develop strategies to promote personal safety, for example, responding appropriately to different forms of bullying, abuse, physical violence; developing safe practice in relation to the internet, getting home; understanding and managing risk, the place of rules and boundaries etc.
- Explore the emotional, social and moral implications of early sexual activity, for example, personal values, attitudes and perceptions, the Law, STIs, the impact of underage parenting etc.

#### **The RSE Programme at Key Stage 4**

The RSE curriculum forms part of the statutory statements of requirement for Personal Development within Learning for Life and Work. Teachers will ensure that pupils are given worthwhile experiences which enable them to:

- Develop an understanding of how to maximise and sustain their own health and well-being
- Reflect on, and respond to, their developing concept of self
- 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

#### **Sharing Responsibility for Relationships and Sexuality Education**

Our school believes that the responsibility for relationships and sexuality education should be appropriately shared between teachers, male and female; parents and the school community as a whole. Its effectiveness depends on a collaborative process involving teachers, parents, governors and other educational and health professionals. Each of the partners has distinctive contributions to make and the school will endeavour to define and fulfil its responsibility, providing an opportunity

for teachers, governors and parents to raise any issues and concerns they might have about the RSE policy and programme. Appendix 2 shows how and where RSE is taught throughout the school.

### **Role of RSE Co-ordinator**

This role includes:

- Ensuring that the programme is taught effectively and is appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils.
- Liaising with the principal, designated teacher for child protection, Board of Governors, all staff, parents, health and educational visitors on RSE matters.
- Attending in-service training and disseminating appropriate information to other members of staff.
- Organising training for staff as and when appropriate.
- Liaising with outside agencies for curriculum purposes.

### **Equal Opportunities**

All pupils, male and female; have a right to an education which adequately prepares them for adult life, regardless of their age, gender, culture, sexual orientation, disability status, religion or social class. (Section 75)

The RSE programme will meet the needs of both genders and aims to be a positive experience for all participants. It is developmental, accessible and appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils. As maturity is not always determined by chronological age, teachers are sympathetic to the personal and emotional circumstances of each individual pupil. They are aware of, and take into account the variety of existing pupil knowledge, differing attitudes and beliefs and the pupil's capacity to understand issues. This is particularly important in relation to children with special educational needs where physical development may outstrip emotional maturity.

“Children/young people with special educational needs have the same rights and needs as all pupils but the content and delivery of the RSE programme will be



different.....tailored to pupils' needs in terms of content, methodology and the resources used." (Guidance for Primary/Post-Primary Schools, CCEA page16/19)

### **The Involvement of Parents**

Many parents/carers are keen that their children are well prepared to handle situations around relationships and sexuality. Whilst the classroom teacher has a significant role to play in the implementation of RSE in school, this role cannot be considered in isolation to the role of the parents and should ideally be additional and complementary. The home exerts a major influence on all aspects of a young person's life and especially so in the domain of relationships and sexuality.

There is no statutory parental right to withdraw a child from classes in RSE. The school will consider any parental concerns expressed, attempt to deal with any misunderstandings, identify the specific issues and lessons which are problematic and explain the implications for the pupils in terms of the parts of the statutory programmes of study which will be missed. The social and emotional effects of exclusion will be considered as well as the likelihood that pupils will discuss the content of the RSE lesson outside the classroom. However, the school will as far as possible try to arrive at a mutually acceptable resolution.

### **Specific Issues for Consideration**

#### **The status of the family**

The school supports the institutions of marriage and the family, while being sensitive to those with different family circumstances. Marriage will be presented as the ideal to which most aspire, being achieved for many through hard work and commitment.

#### **The centrality of abstinence**

In line with the school ethos, sexual abstinence should be promoted until young people are physically and emotionally mature enough to understand the consequences and their inherent responsibilities. Sexual abstinence before marriage, and fidelity within it, will be presented as a positive and desirable option and an achievable reality.

### The sacredness of life

In line with the ethos of the school, the value and sacredness of life will be actively promoted. This will influence teaching on abortion and casual sex.

### Sexual Orientation

All pupils have the right to learn in a safe environment, to be treated with respect and dignity and not be treated any less favorably, or isolated in any way on the grounds of their actual or perceived sexual orientation. Pupils have the right to hold different views/lifestyles in a peaceful manner. This will be promoted in line with the school ethos. Antagonism/bullying or other forms of abuse against pupils on the grounds of their sexual orientation will not be tolerated by the school.

### Confidentiality and Child Protection

Staff cannot give a guarantee of confidentiality to pupils around issues relating to child protection. If details are revealed that would lead staff to suspect that sexual abuse is involved, the teacher must follow the child protection procedures outlined in that policy.

### Answering Pupils' Questions

If pupils raise issues that are offensive to some or beyond the maturity level of the majority of the pupils, staff will not answer in class. If the teacher feels the question was a genuine one, he/she may suggest that the pupil ask his/her parents or if this is an inappropriate option, the teacher may decide to answer the question in a sensitive manner, which may require the presence of another colleague. If the question asked raises child protection issues, this will be referred to the designated teacher for child protection.

### Terminology

All staff teaching RSE related issues will use the proper biological names for body parts and sexual acts, where appropriate and relevant to the RSE programme. The use of common slang will be avoided where possible. Parents are welcome to view the programme and become familiar with the language used within it.

### **The Use of Resources and Outside Agencies**

All resources (books, videos, TV programmes, internet sites, CD roms etc) are vetted before use to ensure they are consistent with the school's policy and ethos.

When education and/or health professionals from statutory or voluntary organisations are invited into the school, the activities which the agency or individual undertake will complement the ongoing programmes within the school. Care will be taken to ascertain that they have read and are willing to comply with the school policy, and that they know what has been taught in preparation for their visit and what will be done as follow-up.

**The teacher will always be present when an individual or a representative from an agency is taking a class.** (appendix 1)

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

As is the practice with other school policies, this policy will be reviewed and updated periodically. Pupils and teachers will be asked to complete an evaluation questionnaire relating to the school's RSE programme. The ongoing process of monitoring and evaluation will be linked to assessment for learning within the NI curriculum, and developed as an integral part of the programme.

Information gained will then be correlated by the co-ordinator and used to adapt the programme for the future.

### **Dissemination of the Policy**

The contents of this policy will be made available to all members of the Board of Governors, teaching staff, and those providing sub cover. It will also be available to all parents on request, and can be found on the school website [www.dlshl.org.uk](http://www.dlshl.org.uk) All health or educational visitors discussing issues related to RSE, specifically the school nurse, will be provided with a copy of the school policy and will be encouraged to adhere to and follow its aims and objectives.

## **Appendix 1**

While many agencies and individuals are professional in their approach, it is useful to ask some or all of the following list of questions which take account of the experiences of schools

involved in the European Network of Health Promoting Schools Project (1997) in Northern Ireland. It is reproduced with the kind permission of the Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland.

*Does the agency have a specified Child Protection Policy and is the individual Child Protection vetted?*

(If so, ask to see a copy and, if necessary, question any points that are unclear or are not in accordance with recognised good practice.)

*How will the issue of confidentiality be dealt with?*

The school will wish to ensure that the representative from the agency or other individual is clear that confidentiality cannot be maintained. The principal or designated teacher for child protection must be informed of any disclosures, which might suggest that a pupil is at risk.

*Are resources such as videos/tapes/role plays appropriate?*

A member of the school staff should look at the resources which are to be used and judge the appropriateness of such materials for the age range and maturity of the pupils.

*Has the agency/individual worked with any other schools?*

A simple and effective way of checking the ability of any agency or individual is to contact schools that have used them in the past. If this is done, the person making

contact should specifically ask if there are any reasons why the agency or individual should not work with their pupils. Schools contacted in this way should voice any concerns they may have. Officers of the local Education and Library Board, CCMS Diocesan Office and members of the area Child Protection Team will also offer guidance on this matter.

*Does the agency/individual have a clear set of aims and objectives as well as lesson plans?*

Schools should ask to see these and question any items they may think are inappropriate or at odds with the school's RSE programme. They should also enquire about the overall mission statement of the agency.

*Has the agency/individual read the school's RSE Policy and are they prepared to adhere to it (especially the ethos, morals and values of the school)?*

*Do parents/guardians know that an agency/individual is being used by the school?*

Contacting parents/carers and explaining the types of activities that are taking place will ensure that parents/carers have the opportunity to raise any objections prior to the event. It has the added effect of letting parents/guardians know what is going on.

*Will teachers be present?*

Teachers should always be present when a representative from an agency or other individual is taking a session with a class.

*Will the input by the agency or individual be monitored?*

After the session, the teacher should discuss the positive aspects and any difficulties that arose with the agency representative or individual. Any issues or concerns about the session should also be raised.

*Will the pupils be asked how the session/class with the agency/individual went?*

The teacher should check that pupils are not uncomfortable or unhappy with the topics being dealt with, and the methodologies used.

*Can the school terminate the work of the agency or individual if the classes or sessions are deemed inappropriate?*

It should be made clear to agencies or individuals that the school may end any input if the school thinks it appropriate to do so. This should be a reciprocal agreement.

*Are evaluations carried out by the agency/individual and if so will the school have access to them?*

The school may wish to see what impact the agency or individual has had, especially if there is a financial arrangement. The school may wish to measure the effectiveness of any such programme along with its own evaluations.

Schools have a responsibility for what is taught to their pupils and therefore it is necessary for schools to clearly define the role of the outside agency/individual and outline the expectations of each planned session.

## Appendix 2

### Audit

<b>Year Group</b>	<b>Personal Development</b>	<b>Science</b>	<b>Religious Education</b>	<b>Home Economics</b>
8	Gender and Identity Relationships including friendships Personal hygiene		Topic "Me" - about self and r'ships	Roles and Responsibilities in family and family structures How families provide for children's needs Stages of the life cycle
9	Friendships including romantic friendships		Topic- Friendships- Good and Destructive Friendships	Resolving conflict in the family
10	Dating Sexual Relationships Safe Sex (STI's) Teenage Pregnancy Abortion Rejection	Male/Female reproductive organs and functions Changes in male/female adolescence Reasons for having a baby Sexual intercourse, Conception <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stages of pregnancy through to birth</li><li>• Looking after a baby</li></ul>	Topics The Commandments Sanctity of Life (Abortion, Sexual R'ships)	Parenting Nutritional needs through the life cycle
11	Responsibilities of healthy relationships	Sexual reproduction in terms of genes/ Chromosomes Inherited features		
12	Roles and responsibilities of parenting	Cloning, GM controversy Evolution	Contraception IVF Parenting Adoption/ Fostering Sex Outside/inside marriage	