**Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy**

 **Definition**

*“Relationships 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 personal and social relationships and gender issues.”*

*“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 affectivity, the capacity to give and receive love; procreation and the aptitude for forming relationships with others”*

***CCEA, Guidance for Post-primary Schools: ‘Relationships and Sexuality Education’***

*“Our sexuality is a central and significant part of who we are and how we see ourselves in relation to other people. It is part of our overall health and contributes to our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being”.*

***CCEA, Personal Development, NI Curriculum***

**Contextual Information**

Brownlow Integrated College is open to pupils of all abilities regardless of race, class or creed. We seek to bring together our diverse communities in an atmosphere of respect and trust. The college strives to be a centre of academic excellence, whilst providing opportunities for personal, social, moral and spiritual development in preparation for a meaningful adult and working life.

**Aims**

* To strive for understanding through mutual respect both on a personal and institutional level. To provide each pupil was opportunities to develop attitudes and abilities that will improve the individual’s quality of life both now and in the changing future.
* To educate together in a Christian environment, the children of Catholics and Protestants and those of other or no religious beliefs on the basis of equality in an integrated school.

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

* *Brownlow Integrated College’s Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy, Pastoral Care, Anti-Bullying and Positive Behaviour Policies*
* *DENI Circulars 2001/15, 2010/01 and 2013/16*
* *CCEA Guidance for Post-Primary Schools: Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance (2015)*
* *CCEA Personal Development NI Curriculum 2007*
* *DHSS Sexual Health Promotion: Strategy and Action Plan 2008 – 2013*
* *Equality Commission’s Eliminating Sexual Orientation Discrimination in N Ireland March 2009*
* *Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 – revised February 2009.*
* *The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006*.
* *Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education- DENI 2011*
* *Every School a Good School- DENI 2009*
* *Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework- ETI 2017*

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

The Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) policy has been developed through collaboration with a range of stakeholders of the college. These have included staff, parents and pupils through the PD programme and Student Council. The consultative process included class discussion, input to the drafting process of the policy and dialogue around areas identified as requiring further input.

Training has previously been provided by Belfast HSCT and Cara-Friend to promote inclusion. The policy will be made available to parents, carers on request from the school office and will be made available on the college website.

The policy will be subject to regular scrutiny and review through on-going monitoring, evaluation and continued development of the RSE policy and Personal Development 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.

**Aims and Objectives of the Relationships and Sexuality Policy**

***Aims***

The RSE framework gives pupils valuable experiences that will enable them to:

* Understand human physiology in relation to puberty, fertility, sexual intercourse and reproduction
* Understand sexual development and identity including gender issues, stereotyping and cultural influences including the media
* Be aware of differing family structures and patterns
* Explore their own and others’ feelings and emotions
* Acquire and develop appropriate vocabulary to discuss sexual feelings
* Develop strategies to make decisions, solve problems and implement actions in various personal, social and health contexts
* Enhance the personal growth and development of pupils/students, supporting their self-esteem, self-confidence, emotional resilience and well-being.
* Encourage pupils to build healthy relationships based on integrity, courtesy, tolerance, mutual respect, consideration and trust.
* Develop an understanding of and healthy attitudes to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, social and spiritual framework
* Promote an appreciation of the value of human life.
* 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 avoid risk taking behaviours which could be harmful to themselves and / or others.

***Objectives***

The RSE curriculum should enable pupils to:

* Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self
* Explore their own and others’ feelings and emotions
* Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth
* 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
* 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
* Develop personal skills to cope and protect oneself from peer pressure and threats to personal safety
* Build respect for difference regardless of race, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, culture, gender and sexual orientation- challenging prejudicial attitudes, and promote equality of opportunity for all pupils.
* Acquire knowledge of the services and support available from relevant agencies
* Understand family issues re parenting, childcare and lifelong responsibility

**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 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 develop 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 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 Brownlow Integrated 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 relation to the ethos of the school and in a culture of integration which values equality acceptance, tolerance, inclusivity and in respect of include pupils’ culture, religion, sexual orientation and social background
* 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 teaching of this area and all aspects of Personal Development is based on the bedrock of respectful, safe and secure relationships between pupils and staff. It is central to our college community that pupils know that they are cared for by staff and valued as individuals. Appropriate help and support is always available.

As a school we liaise and discuss the individual needs of pupils both as a staff and through the pupil body to ensure that our provision meets the needs of all pupils and is fully inclusive.

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

The RSE Programme is delivered primarily through the Personal Development strand of the Revised Curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4. At Key Stage 3 guidance materials for teaching are provided through the CCEA ‘In-Sync’ programme.

Key Stage 4 is addressed through a tailored Personal Development programme which largely reflects continuity from K3. 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 compulsory subjects of Learning for Life and Work (Personal Development Strand) and Religious Studies

Mr Callender (Pastoral Care Director) teaches PD/RSE classes throughout the school and may from time to time supplement this with assistance from skilled external practitioners from a range of external agencies in order to supplement and complement internal provision. All classes have one period of PD a week and 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.

We at Brownlow Integrated College appreciate that RSE is best taught collaboratively through active partnership and encourages parents to support the college programme. Parents are informed in the event of external agency involvement and will be presented with a brief synopsis of proposed content. They will have the opportunity to raise any concerns they might have before the visit and written consent will be sought before their child may 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. If this is the case, the college 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 develop ways in which the school can provide alternative support.

Opportunities for RSE also arise across the curriculum in subjects such as English, Science, Home Economics, Physical Education and Religious Education. Relationships and sexuality issues are explored from a variety of

perspectives. Teaching methodologies are in accordance with the collaborative and active thrust of the Revised Curriculum. The programme of Relationships and Sexuality Education is kept under review annually and amendments made to meet the needs of pupils who contribute to the Action Planning of Pastoral Care.

The programme is designed to meet the needs of all pupils and is generally taught in mixed groups to enable pupils to work alongside one another, thus promoting positive relationships with each gaining an understanding of the other’s perspective. However, in certain circumstances, mixed gender arrangements may be altered when it is deemed more appropriate to teach to single sex groupings due to the specific nature of the issues being explored or presented. A broad range of teaching strategies are used with a strong emphasis on active learning approaches such as debates, scenarios and role plays. These activities provide opportunities to encourage pupils to share interests, attitudes, concerns and emotions. This will promote the acquisition of knowledge, understanding, thinking skills and personal capabilities, attitudes and dispositions.

RSE classes 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. Tolerance and sensitivity to the needs, experiences and views of others are of paramount importance. In relation to children with SEN, thought is given to how this information can be presented in an inclusive and accessible way. Where appropriate, parents and staff, including SENCO work in tandem to meet the particular needs of these young people. At times external professionals come in and meet in small groups with certain pupils in a different setting to explore issues for example Autism Advisory Service. This can be done to help prepare for classes or to help supplement knowledge.

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.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

Brownlow Integrated College recognises its responsibility to develop appropriate policies, procedures and practices which safeguard all pupils and support pupils so that any whom are at emotional or physical risk can be identified and supported accordingly. The college also seeks to provide and develop information and skills, to help them make informed and appropriate life choices, enhancing and promoting physical, social, emotional, spiritual and mental well-being.

***Pastoral Care Director***

Mr Callender is responsible for

* ensuring the development, implementation and regular review of a RSE Policy and programme.
* Coordinating all issues related to the RSE Policy and programme development. He is also responsible for its monitoring and evaluation. He is also the Designated Teacher for Child Protection.
* 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 effectiveness, relevance and quality provision of a RSE programme
* Ensuring that all teaching staff participate in relevant training opportunities
* Liaising with staff, parents and external agencies to ensure individual pupil support as required

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 and responding appropriately to pupils who approach them with pastoral concerns

***Confidentiality in the Classroom***

All members of staff should be familiar with RSE Policy and procedures regarding pupil confidentiality and disclosure. Child Protection. No member of staff can give a guarantee of confidentiality to pupils concerning child protection issues. If details are disclosed, during either internal or external delivery of RSE, that reveal that

sexual abuse is involved; the teacher/facilitator must follow Child Protection procedures as outlined in the Child Protection Policy.

Pupils’ and teachers’ right to privacy will be respected at all times and no pupil will be expected to ask or answer any personal questions in an RSE classroom or feel obliged to share information about personal relationships or experiences.

Personal medical advice will not be given by a teacher to any pupil. There will be an acknowledgement that only doctors and health professionals should give medical advice to pupils.

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.

***‘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 Pastoral Care Notice Board outside the Pastoral Care Office contains information on a variety of sources where pupils can access help and advice.

Brownlow Integrated College understand that parents/guardians are influential in the area of relationships and sexuality. As a key aspect of our pastoral care, we endeavour to ensure that our RSE Programme supports parents’/guardians’ role and will be delivered in the context of the school’s ethos.

Where issues of a personal or sensitive nature arise, teachers should refer pupils to Mr Callender (Pastoral Care Director) or Mrs J Thompson (Deputy Designated Teacher), who will encourage them to seek appropriate advice from parents/guardians and/or health professionals.

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Should parental concerns arise regarding any aspect of our RSE provision, parents/guardians are welcome to discuss these with the Pastoral Care Director

***External Agencies***

Brownlow Integrated College may use education and health professionals from external agencies or the wider community to complement RSE lessons through presentations, workshops and special assemblies.

External agencies used to support the college 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 and operate in line with the College’s Supervision of Visitors and Volunteers Policy.

Prior to the use of an external agency, the Pastoral Care Director or organising teacher in consultation with the Pastoral Care Director 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
* Supervision of visitors and volunteers