

RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

POLICY FOR SEX EDUCATION

Introduction

PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) is one of the subjects in the National Curriculum which pupils have an entitlement to experience throughout their education.

The Governors see Sex Education as a major component of the Schools' comprehensive programme of Personal, Social and Health Education.

In all areas of human experience a good base of knowledge and understanding is deemed necessary for informed opinions and decisions to be made – human sexuality is no exception. It is vital that pupils receive effective sex education before they become sexually active or put themselves at risk in other ways. It is also vital to correct prejudice and misinformation which may affect relationships with others both now and in the future.

The importance of sexual relationships in all our lives is such that sex education has a crucial role to play in preparing children for their lives now and in the future as adults and parents. In sex education, learning about the physical aspects of sex, is complemented by learning about family life and the exercise of personal responsibility towards other individuals and the broader community.

In drawing up the Schools' Policy due regard has been given to:

- Consultation with parents, governors, teachers, school nurse and others in the local community
- The issues of content, organisation, methodology, resources, outside speakers, the explicitness and presentation of their material (including the presence or intervention of teachers as appropriate)
- Encouraging pupils to have regard to moral considerations and to appreciate the value of a stable family life, self-restraint, dignity, respect and to behave responsibly in sexual matters.

Copies of the policy have been made available to all concerned parties including the LA, teachers and parents.

Specific Aims

The following aims reflect those of the Schools and PSHE and show how Sex Education is delivered within the context of a moral framework.

1. To provide a broad and balanced Sex Education Programme which
 - Offers full entitlement and access for all including pupils with Special Needs
 - Operates in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect so as to encourage pupils to put forward and explore their ideas
2. By exploring moral and sexual issues and values to
 - a) endow the pupils with positive pro-active attitudes, patterns of behaviour, lifestyles, values, communication and decision making skills with respect to sexuality and personal relationships, for example
 - An understanding that both sexes have responsibilities in sexual matters
 - The skills to identify, resist and report any unwanted sexual experience
 - b) to foster self-esteem, self awareness and a sense of moral responsibility.

3. To give pupils knowledge and understanding of the following in order for them to make informed choices in later life.
 - a) the physical and emotional aspects of an individual's development as a male or female, responsible attitudes and appropriate behaviour.
 - b) family life – the value and importance of the family as a social institution; its contribution to the development of attachment, love and concern in caring for others.
4. To give pupils an elementary understanding of human reproduction and to approach Sex Education by an active/creative process of enquiry and investigation through projects, discussions, role-play, etc. Observation and analysis are central to this process.
5. To clarify the modes of transmission of HIV for reasons of personal safety – see separate policy on Drugs/HIV education.

Informing and Involving Parents

The views and participation of parents is vital for the most effective sex education. The Schools inform parents when sex education is to take place and they are invited to come into school to discuss any aspects that may concern them. In a limited number of cases parents may borrow videos to watch at home – this may be for review purposes or simply to watch and discuss them with their child. Parents are fully informed and encouraged to enhance that part of the Sex Education Programme provided by the School by having discussions at home.

Offering Advice

The Governors and staff believe that the Schools' function is to provide a general education about sexual matters and issues and not to offer individual advice, information or counselling on aspects of sexual behaviour and contraception – however sources of professional information and advice will be identified when appropriate. If the offering of outside expert advice is not taken up, then a teacher may only give such advice after receiving written permission from the Headteacher and the parents/guardians – clearly this would not be done if the pupil did not wish it. Advice does not legally require consent but the following procedure protects the teacher and the pupil, it also acknowledges that teachers may not be qualified to give the required advice.

Teachers Cannot

- Give personal advice or counselling on sexual matters to a pupil (either individually or within a group) if a parent has withdrawn that pupil from sex education
- Give personal contraceptive advice to pupils without parental consent

Teachers Can

- Provide pupils with education and information about where and from whom they can receive confidential advice and treatment, eg the school nurse, their GP or Brook Advisory Centre. This is not the provision of sex education, but merely the imparting of factual information as to where advice, counselling (and treatment) can lawfully be obtained. Appointments to see the nurse can be arranged by the pupil through the Class teacher or Headteacher.

Explicit Questions

It is unlikely to be appropriate to deal with a pupil's explicit questions by dealing with it in front of the whole class, eg questions on oral and anal sex. In practice this means that

teachers have to say “I am sorry but the School Policy and legislation does not allow me to answer that question”. The teacher may deem it appropriate to discuss the child’s concerns with the parents – a decision may then be taken on how best to deal with it. Answers to the ‘questions in a box’ approach must only be given after very careful screening of the questions.

Confidentiality

Having considered all available advice and guidance the Governors and Headteachers state that in circumstances where a pupil is considered at some risk of any type of abuse (eg moral or physical) or in breach of the law, the teacher must refer this immediately in writing to the Headteachers in compliance with the LA procedures for Child Protection. The Headteachers will decide whether to inform parents and/or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling. Although there is no legal duty on a teacher, or a Headteacher, to inform parents of matters which a child has confided to them –

- Teachers must not promise confidentiality even though they cannot be made to break it once given
- Pupils must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the Headteacher and possibly to parents
- Teachers must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard the information
- Teachers must indicate clearly to pupils when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential – the pupil can then decide whether to proceed or not

NB failure of staff to adhere to this statement may constitute grounds for disciplinary action.

Withdrawing pupils from the Sex Education Programme

Relevant sections of this policy are made available to parents in the School Prospectus together with details about the parent’s right to withdraw their child from the non-biological aspects of sex education. Parents will always be provided with a full copy of this policy following a request to do so. The biological content of the Sex Education Programme is deemed to be that described in the National Curriculum. Shortly after enrolling at the School, a pupil’s parents are sent a letter detailing the content of the Sex Education course and identifying those biological aspects from which the parents can exercise their right to withdraw their child.

A full audit of PSHE has shown that issues such as over population, birth control and other sexual matters are met in a minor way in subjects such as Geography and RE. However, as any discussion is limited and set within the context of the other subject concerned, it does not constitute part of the Sex Education Programme.

NB parents do not have to give reason for withdrawal, but we respectfully invite them to do so – sometimes we can then resolve misunderstandings. Once a parent’s request to withdraw is made, that request must be complied with until revoked by the parent.

What we do if a request for withdrawal is made by a parent?

- We discuss the nature of the concerns with the child’s parent and if appropriate attempt to reassure them
- We consider whether the programme can be amended or improved in a way that will reassure parents – care is taken not to undermine the integrity of the Sex Education Programme and the entitlement of the other pupils, eg it may be appropriate and desirable to have single sex classes for some sections of the Sex Education Programme

- We attempt to ensure that where a pupil is withdrawn there is no disruption to other parts of their education
- We point out that pupils who have been withdrawn are vulnerable to teasing – we therefore attempt to cause minimal embarrassment to the pupil and minimal disruption to the programme
- We also point out that pupils may receive inaccurate information from their peers
- We offer the parents access to appropriate information and resources

NB If the pupil does not agree with the parents desire to withdraw their child from the Sex Education Programme the pupil can challenge the parents under Section 8 of the Children Act – the child has to apply to the court for a ‘specific issues order’.

Using visiting speakers and others

We believe that most of the Sex Education Programme is best discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by the pupils. However visitors such as nurses, family planning or sexual health workers, can greatly enhance the quality of the provision as long as they are used in addition to, not instead of a planned programme of sex education.

Care is taken to provide the visitor, well in advance of the visit, with a copy of the Sex Education policy. After gaining approval from the Headteacher for the visit the organiser makes the visitor aware of the ethos of the School and the manner of delivery of the Sex Education Programme. Issues to consider are –

- The degree of explicitness of the content and presentation
 - Will the visitor be accompanied by teaching staff?
 - Will the staff take an active role in the visitor’s activities?
 - How will the visitor be prepared for the visit?
 - How will the visit be built upon and followed up?
1. Visitors should be given advance notice of the composition of the audience/target group and an idea of how their contribution fits into the scheme of work.
 2. In order to inform the visitor of the precise requirements of a group it is advisable for the group to draw up questions in advance and these should be forwarded to the visitor. This will involve the pupils in the visit and will make the experience more relevant for them – it also facilitates planning.
 3. Reception/Office should be informed of the date and name of the visitor.
 4. Where applicable, refreshments should be arranged with the catering staff.
 5. The visitor should be welcomed at the main door and escorted to the office.
 6. At the Office the visitor will ‘sign in’, prominently display a ‘Visitor’s Badge’ and will then be escorted to the appropriate venue.
 7. At the end of the session a vote of thanks should be given by a pupil and the visitor escorted to the Office before the pupils are dismissed.
 8. After the visit the visitor will ‘sign out’, return the ‘Visitor’s Badge’ and will then be escorted to the exit.
 9. A written acknowledgement of their contribution should be sent to the visitor and appear in the School Newsletter.

NB The health professionals are able to offer young people confidentiality and can provide a link between the School and support services.

Lesbian and Gay Issues

Teachers do not promote any one life-style as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that homosexuality will be discussed during a

programme of sex education. Teaching about homosexuality is not avoided although teachers take care not to advocate homosexual behaviour, present it as the norm, or encourage homosexual experimentation by pupils. One of the many advantages of exploring gay and lesbian issues is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions and address prejudice.

Equal opportunities issues and Special Needs

The nature of work undertaken must be appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils. As pupils mature and develop at different rates the Sex Education Programme is a 'spiral system' in as much as key concepts are revisited several times throughout the programme. This allows for reinforcement as well as the differentiated stages of pupil maturity.

Children with learning difficulties may need more help than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up; they may also need more help in learning what sorts of behaviour are and are not acceptable, and in being warned and prepared against abuse by others. Some parents find it difficult to come to terms with the idea that their child (special needs or not) will some day become sexually active.

Inset

All teachers involved in this work do not necessarily have to be 'experts' on the issues concerned. However, they do require sensitivity to the needs of the group, an ability to deal with questions openly/honestly and a preparedness to refer to more expert advice if necessary. Areas that have been specifically addressed by In Service Training are –

- An examination of the School's Sex Education policy
- An examination of the timing of the different elements of the Sex Education Programme
- Developing skills related to managing group work and discussion

Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the Sex Education Programme

We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this programme. Specifically important to the Sex Education Programme are

- Pupil feedback
- Staff review and feedback, particularly at staff meetings
- Parental feedback

Other Benefits

Sex Education can also contribute to the School by contributing to the quality of display work, assembly themes etc.

Review

This policy is reviewed annually

Signed : Chair of Curriculum Committee

Dated :