

2024 - 2026

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION POLICY



RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION POLICY FOR ABBEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

OTHER RELEVANT POLICIES:

- Teaching for Learning
- Inclusion Policy
- Pastoral Care
- Mobile Phone
- Online Safety
- Drugs Education
- Confidentiality Safeguarding/child protection policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy

SUMMARY:

The revised curriculum aims to prepare young people for all aspects of life and the Department of Education recognises the importance of delivering appropriate age - related relationship and sexuality education within a clear values framework as a means of developing the child as a whole.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

DENI Guidance: Circular Number: 2015/22
Circular Number: 2013/16
"Report of an Evaluation of Relationships and Sexuality Education in Post-Primary Schools"

CCEA have produced specific guidance to support all schools to plan and develop approaches to teaching controversial/sensitive issues. Found here:



HISTORY:

Policy updated - March 2024

By: Mrs C McNaghten

Emailed to Board of Governors:

Discussed at Board of Governors:

Circulated to staff:

To be reviewed: June 2026

INTRODUCTION

As an inclusive, caring and child centred school Abbey Community College enhances and supports the personal, social and academic development of each individual student in all aspects of College life.

The delivery of RSE is essential to the school motto; **'Believe, Achieve, Succeed.'** The purpose of the RSE programme is to enhance the overall personal, social and moral development of young people which will support them to succeed. 'The delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education contributes to 'promoting students' personal growth and development and in supporting their academic achievement' (ETI, 2011, page 22) At Abbey Community College we aim to foster self-esteem, a sense of moral responsibility, and the skills to make informed choices and discussions. The delivery of this programme should be within a framework of mutual trust and respect, allowing students to discuss their concerns with their teacher.

Why Relationships and Sexuality Education is important:

- Respects the rights of children and young people (UNCRC 1989)
- Promotes a better understanding of diversity and inclusion
- Helps young people keep themselves safer in the digital world
- Helps young people to recognise and challenge inappropriate behaviour and touch
- Provides reliable, accurate and age-appropriate information

Young people regularly contact organisations such as Child Line as they lack basic knowledge on issues such as sexual health, puberty, pregnancy and relationships. NSPCC evidence suggests that young people feel that they are not obtaining such information in school (Wanless, 2013).

Young people should have access to reliable, accurate and relevant information which reflects their age and maturity. All young people, including those with minority needs, must also know where to access a range of services if they need help or support.

Relationships and Sexuality Education provides opportunities for young people 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 and social media.

Relationships and Sexuality Education can lead to young people making informed choices and decisions by providing opportunities for them to examine their own values and attitudes in the light of those held by others. A deeper understanding of their own personal values and beliefs can help young people to clarify why they think and behave as they do, separate fact from fiction, recognise prejudice, and respect the views, emotions and feelings of others. (CCEA 2015)

AIMS:

The aim of the RSE programme is to enhance the overall personal, social and moral development of students. This is at the core of 'Believe, Achieve, Succeed.'

The development of this policy aims to:

- Promote a shared vision of Relationships and Sexuality Education across the school;
- Show how Relationships and Sexuality Education compliments and supports other aspects of school life;
- Establish consistent standards and practices in the delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education;
- Create a framework for wider curriculum development and review;
- Provide a foundation for the monitoring and evaluation of Relationships and Sexuality Education provision; and
- Prepare for inspection and help to promote school self-evaluation and improvement.

This policy was drawn up in consultation with parents, students, and staff before being ratified by the Board of Governors.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RSE CURRICULUM

The RSE curriculum, as part of the statutory minimum entitlement for personal development should ensure that students are given worthwhile experiences which enable them to explore:

- Self-esteem, self-confidence, and to develop as individuals
- Their own and others feelings and emotions
- Strategies to promote personal safety and health and resist various forms of abuse
- Relationships with friends and families, valuing them as a source of love and mutual support
- The similarities and differences between people
- Dignity, uniqueness, wellbeing and sense of responsibility for themselves and others
- Differing family structures and patterns
- Strategies to make decisions, solve problems and implement actions
- Growth and change and understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity
- The development of personal and inter-personal skills including communication and social interaction, in order to help establish and sustain healthy relationships
- The use of appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development
- The physical, social and emotional changes which occur during puberty
- How babies are conceived, grow and are born.
- The impact of internal and external influences, such as peer pressure and conflict management, on lifestyle and decision making
- Sexual development and identity including aspects of sexuality such as gender roles, stereotyping and cultural influences

IMPLEMENTATION

The Role of the RSE Co-ordinator:

The RSE Co-ordinator is the member of staff appointed to be responsible for co-ordinating all issues related to the RSE policy, the Department of Education specifications and the programme designed for the students of Abbey Community College. This individual will be skilled in delivering personal development programmes and committed to the aims and objectives of RSE. The RSE Co-ordinator's role includes:

Staff Training

Staff training will be organised by the RSE Co-ordinator and will include:

- Specific themes or topics related to young people in Abbey Community College or deemed a priority area through the preventative Curriculum
- Appropriate training for staff

We believe that all staff at Abbey Community College have a collective responsibility to ensure RSE is part of the fabric of our curriculum.

Methodology

An RSE programme is about more than imparting factual information. It also aims to develop personal and social skills, and clarify attitudes and values within a moral framework. RSE seeks to promote behaviour which will allow students to take increasing responsibility for them, as they grow and develop. Teaching methods which involve students actively in the process of their own learning is most beneficial

Cross curricular approach

The preventative curriculum map can be found in Appendix two. It highlights how the preventative curriculum is monitored and evaluated as well as the steps which are required to engage with external agencies. Specific Issues for Consideration - A curriculum audit was carried out across all subjects to ascertain what is being covered within each subject area. (Appendix One)

Equal Opportunities

All students 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. "Children/young people with special educational needs have the same rights and needs as all students but the content and delivery of the RSE programme will be different and tailored to students' needs in terms of content, methodology and resources used." (Guidance for Primary/Post-Primary Schools, CCEA 2015 pages16/19)

Sexual Orientation

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

Confidentiality and Child Protection

Abbey Community College follows the advice and guidance of CCEA 2015 which states:

The provision of effective Relationships and Sexuality Education can play a key role in meeting schools' child protection/safeguarding obligations. Schools have the responsibility to develop appropriate policies and practices which safeguard and keep young people from harm. They must ensure that they can identify students who are 'at risk' so that they can provide the appropriate support. A study revealed that 62 per cent of young people who were groomed for child sexual exploitation never told their parents or an adult in a position of authority (Beckett, 2011). This finding is a stark reminder of the significant role teachers play in the early detecting of 'at risk' students and why they must always be alert to students experiencing distress and/or changes in their behaviour, as the majority of young people do not tell when they are being abused or exploited. The foundation for the effective delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education is the building of secure, trusting, respectful relationships between the teacher and their students. Students should feel reassured that their teacher cares about their wellbeing and be aware that there are adults whom they can talk to and confide in. Students must also 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 clear to students that, whilst teachers will offer support, they are obligated to notify the child protection/safeguarding teacher/team if they are concerned that the student may be 'at risk'. Teachers must take decisions relating to personal disclosures in accordance with the procedures set out in DE's booklet Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection (Circular 1999/10).

The following is a summary of these procedures:

- The staff member should immediately inform the designated child protection teacher/ member of the safeguarding team.
- The designated child protection teacher/member of the safeguarding team must inform/ consult with Social Services and/or the PSNI where appropriate.
- No staff member should take on the role of investigator – this is the responsibility of Social Services and the PSNI.

- Staff members should explain their responsibilities to refer cases of alleged abuse to the appropriate authorities, but they also must ensure that the matter will only be disclosed to the people who need to know about it.
- Staff members should give the student time to talk without interrupting or probing, recording exactly what the student says, whilst not promising confidentiality; as set out in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

It is very important that any student who feels that they cannot talk to or does not wish to talk to their parents or carers has access to other sources of support

Withdrawal from class

RSE is a statutory component of the Revised Curriculum (NI). We do not encourage withdrawal from class and are willing to discuss concerns that parents or carers may have. Each child has the right to an education that adequately prepares them for adult life. Parents/Guardians are notified, in advance, of sensitive topics being addressed in either lessons or via external agencies.

Terminology

All staff teaching RSE related issues should use the proper biological names for body parts and sexual acts, where appropriate and relevant to the RSE programme.

Special Educational Needs

Materials will be adapted through teacher differentiation to meet the SEN of individual students and, where necessary, the particular needs of groups of students. On occasion the SENCO may be asked for advice/input in the development of these materials.

Monitoring and Evaluating the RSE Programme:

- The RSE co-ordinator, in partnership with all Heads of Departments involved in delivering the RSE programme, will be involved, on an ongoing basis, in monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness and relevance of the programme. This will be based on feedback from the students, teachers and parents.
- The aims of the RSE programme, as listed in this policy, will be at the forefront of any monitoring and evaluation in order to ensure the aims are being achieved.
- An audit of the preventative curriculum will be completed bi-annually which will allow any topics or themes not covered within the curriculum to be addressed through external agencies or organisations.
- Evidence of students learning might include:
 1. Students' LLW Booklets
 2. Class Contracts – 'What's In, What's Out'
 3. Evaluation sheets at the end of each unit of study

Resources

All resources (which include Multi-Media, Internet sites, CD ROMs, DVDs, books, articles and periodicals) should be vetted by the RSE Co-ordinator before use to ensure they are consistent with the school's policy and ethos.

As part of the curriculum, teachers provide general information about sexual health issues, but will also encourage students to develop strong communication channels with parents and medical practitioners.

The students will also receive information about where, and from whom, they can receive confidential advice, treatment and support. Personal advice (including medical) is not to be given to individual students.

The use of outside agencies

When Education and/or Health professionals from statutory or voluntary organisations are invited into the school, the activities which the agency or individuals undertake will complement the on-going 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. A member of staff will always be available to support when an individual or a representative from an agency is taking a class or giving a presentation to a Year Group. Outside agencies need to add value to what school has taken ownership for. (Appendix Two)

Who will teach it?

We believe at Abbey Community College that all teachers should be a supportive role model for our students and that it is every teacher's responsibility therefore to build secure, nurturing classrooms that will develop protective factors essential for resilience in our students.

Many aspects of RSE are explored both within the taught curriculum and within the 'hidden curriculum.' Much of the content is delivered or reinforced in a cross-curricular manner within the Science, Religious Education, Physical Education, Home Economics, English, Learning for Life and Work and ICT curriculum. This cross-curricular approach is conducive to the development of those life skills amongst students that a good RSE programme will promote. (See Appendix One)

DENI/CCEA Guidance on RSE

All students have a right to learn in a safe environment; to be 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 on Eliminating Sexual Orientation Discrimination in Northern Ireland).

- Age of Consent for sexual activity in NI is 16 years (Sexual Offences Order 2008)
- Teachers and students will not be expected to ask or answer any personal questions.
- Students and parents should be informed that confidentiality cannot be maintained.
- The Designated Teacher must be informed of any disclosures which might suggest that a student is at risk or that physical or sexual abuse is suspected.
- Teachers can provide general educational advice to all students as part of the curriculum which is supportive of the role of parents.
- There will be occasions when teachers will have to exercise their discretion and judgement about how to deal with particular issues raised by an individual or a group of students. In all cases, teachers should encourage students to discuss any issues and concerns they might have with their parents.

Monkstown Boxing Club (MBC)

When external agencies are invited to MBC, the activities which are to be undertaken will complement the on-going programmes being carried out. Care will be taken to ascertain that they have read and are willing to comply with the policies, and that they know what previous learning has taken place in preparation for their visit and what will be done as follow-up. A member of staff will always be available to support when an individual or a representative from an agency is giving a presentation or taking a session to young people during school hours. Outside agencies need to add value to what MBC has taken ownership for.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Abbey Community College will update this Policy and procedures in the light of any further guidance and legislation as necessary and review it annually.

On-going evaluation will ensure the effectiveness of the Policy.

Date Policy Reviewed:

Signed:


_____ (Chair of Board of Governors)

_____ (Principal)

_____ (Designated Teacher)

APPENDIX ONE

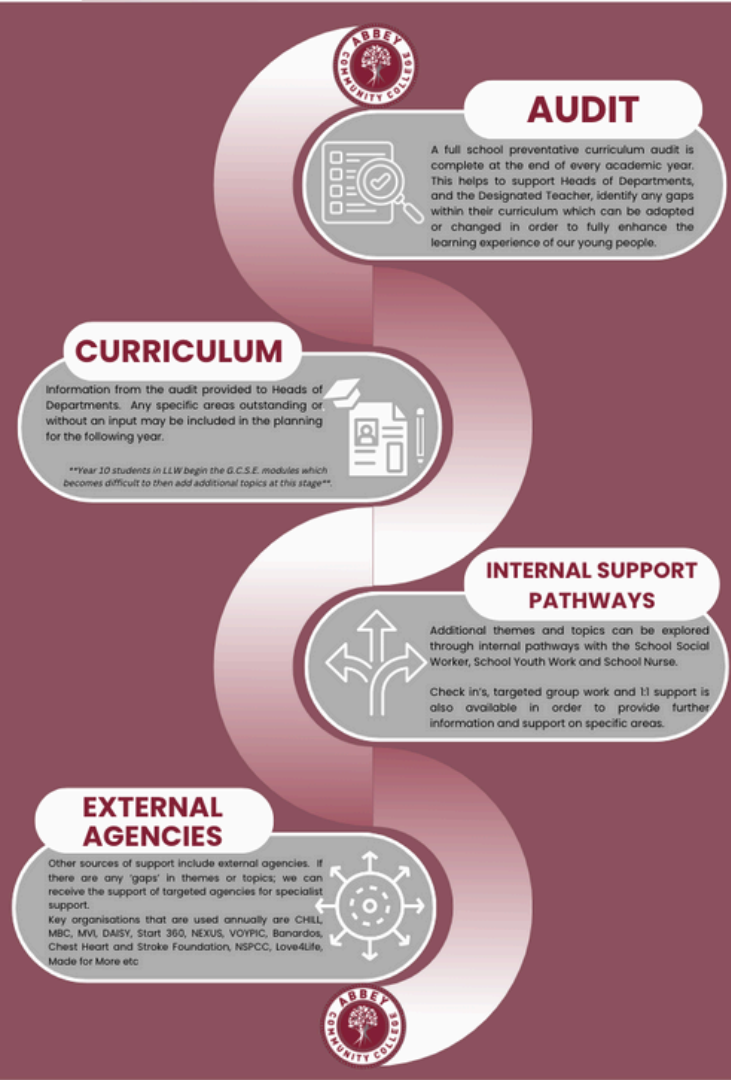
Year	Subject	Mental Health	Healthy	Substance Abuse	Family	Sexual Health	Domestic	Internet safety	Bullying	Health and	Health	Focus Areas
8	ICT											
	LLW	Feeling good	Conflict, My Story		Family Life	Puberty			Cyberbullying	Dealing with	Healthy Diet, Exercise, Sleep	Substance Abuse,
	HE				My Story, Family Life				Healthy		Persuasive texts	Bullying,
	RE	Who am I - self			Who am I?	Reproductive			My Story	Health and	Healthy Eating	mental health
	Science Assembly				Growing Up							
	Class Tutor	Life Skills	Life Skills		Life Skills					Life Skills	Life Skills Programme	
	Workshop	GFC - Mental										
	ICT											
9	LLW	Self Awareness, Problems	Types of Problems	Addiction, Alcohol abuse, Impact of	Types of Problems, Family Life	Relationships	Problems in	Esafty - Term	Cyberbullying	Emergencies,	Aspects of health and wellbeing,	Drugs Awareness, Sexual Health
	English							Bullying - cyber	Peer group	Personal	Healthy Eating	
	HE							News	Problems,			
	RE											
	Science											
	Assembly											
	Class Tutor	Hopeful Minds	Hopeful Minds	Smashed Project - Alcohol								
	Workshop											
10	ICT											
	LLW	Benefits of taking	Emotional and		Parenting		Issues within		Cyberbullying		Benefits of taking part in regular	Substance Abuse,
	English	Conflict	Conflict		Conflict				Conflict		Lifestyle Choices	Sexual Health,
	RE										The Human Body -	bullying
	Science											
	Assembly											
	Class Tutor	Bounce	Bounce	DAISY Project Awareness								
	Workshop											
11	ICT											
	LLW	Impact of a	Healthy living	Problems associated with drugs and	Impact of	Safe s*x and	Impact of DV		Cyberbullying		Healthy eating, guidance for healthy	Bullying, Health and Safety
	English/English		novel study	novel study	novel study				novel study			
	Health and											
	RE		Addiction	Drugs misuse and the impacts	Personal	Safe sex					The impact of unhealthy eating on	
	Science			Addiction		CCEA personal &					OCN addiction	
	Public Services			Alcohol		Reproductive						
	Assembly			Alcohol		Impact of poor					Sleep	
Class Tutor	Bloom	Bloom						Bloom		Bloom Programme		
Workshop												
12	ICT											
	LLW		Inclusion and						Cyberbullying			Domestic Abuse, Mental Health
	English/English	play study	play study	play study	play study						play study	
	RE				Life & Death							
	Science					Reproduction					Genetic conditions	
	Assembly											
	Class Tutor											
	Workshop											
13/14	ICT											
	English/English	A2 coursework,	AS drama, A2	AS drama, A2 coursework	AS novel, AS	A2 coursework,	AS drama		Cyberbullying		AS drama	Sexual Health,
	Health and	Mental health		Drug misuse and treatment		Reproduction	Legislation for			Health and	Nutrition	Health, Drugs awareness, Mental health
	RE											
	Science											
	Assembly											
	Class Tutor	Bloom	Bloom						Bloom		Bloom Programme	
	Workshop		SOAR Programme								SOAR Programme	



PREVENTATIVE CURRICULUM MAP

ABBEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

STRATEGIES, STEPS AND MEASURES TO HELP SUPPORT THE PREVENTATIVE CURRICULUM




Key Areas

Throughout every academic year Mental Health remains a priority. The Safeguarding Reports show that due to the broad spectrum of areas within 'mental health' it will remain a theme with a lot of complex needs. Support to young people in this area is vital.

Subjects

Curriculum subjects included each year within the preventative curriculum audit include:
 Science LLW English Home Economics Child Care
 Public Services ICT Religious Education
 Health and Social Care

CCEA Support Hub Resources



A variety of themes and topics are included within the RSE Support Hub. This was reviewed in March 2024 and provides a broad spectrum of specialised resources.

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Appendix 2

List of contacts websites:

Keeping young people safer in the digital world. UK Safer Internet Centre have produced a range of resources to help schools teach pupils about staying safe online. These include resources on teaching about the consequences of 'sexting' and how to prevent the sharing of images. There are also links to other valuable websites which offer similar resources.	www.saferinternet.org.uk
The NSPCC has produced resources to make it easier for children and young people to get help about 'sexting'.	www.childline.org.uk
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 teachers.	www.thinkuknow.co.uk
Childnet International provides in-depth advice for teachers in their 'hot topics' section, covering issues such as 'sexting', online grooming, cyber bullying and online gaming safety. There is also an online resource bank which contains lesson plans and activity ideas suitable for young people up to nineteen years old - this is available at www.childnet.com/resources .	www.childnet.com/teachers-and-professionals
Information on policy and procedures relating to sexting in Northern Ireland is available from the Association of Chief Police Officers of England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Recognising and challenging inappropriate behaviour	www.ceop.police.uk/Documents/ceopdocs/externaldocs/ACPO Lead position on Self Take n Images.pdf
CEOP have created a short film entitled Exploited to help young people stay safe from sexual exploitation by being able to recognise the signs. It compares an exploitative friendship or relationship with a healthy relationship, and gives young people clear information about reporting abuse and accessing support.	www.thinkuknow.co.uk
The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland's (SBNI) website contains useful information and resources to raise awareness on child sexual exploitation.	www.safertoknow.info
Expect Respect: A Toolkit for addressing Teenage Relationship Abuse is a teaching resource that challenges the attitudes of teenagers to violence and abuse in relationships. Sexual health issues	www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97773/teen-abuse-toolkit.pdf
This website provides advice for young people about healthy relationships and also has links to other organisations in Northern Ireland.	www.thinkitthrough.org.uk
This provides useful advice for young people about sexual health and pregnancy.	www.nidirect.gov.uk
This factsheet summarises some of the key points of UK law relating to sexual behaviour.	www.fpa.org.uk
Queen's University Belfast have produced a resource entitled If I were Jack about teenage men and unintended pregnancy. It encourages pupils to consider and reflect on all of the options and consequences associated with unintended pregnancy.	www.qub.ac.uk
As part of their Crisis Pregnancy Programme the Health Service Executive in Dublin have produced B4UDecide, a free, downloadable teaching resource for Relationships and Sexuality Education.	www.crisispregnancy.ie
As well as classroom activities and lessons, posters and leaflets, Brook also offers training for teachers to develop their knowledge and confidence of teaching issues such as safeguarding, contraception choices, relationships and sex advice, sexuality, sexual health and pregnancy advice.	www.brook.org.uk
Sexual orientation, gender identity and homophobic bullying	www.stonewall.org.uk
Schools Out is a UK charity committed to helping make schools safe and inclusive for everyone.	www.schools-out.org.uk
This website provides detailed advice on many aspects of teaching and learning to make LGBT people visible in education. It includes presentations, detailed lesson plans and a range of inclusive teaching resources celebrating diversity.	www.the-classroom.org.uk
The 'exceeding expectation initiative' is designed to tackle homophobia and address sexuality with young people. This website is divided into three main sections and provides useful background information on what homophobia is, responding to homophobic bullying and the homophobic bullying experiences of young people.	www.exceedingexpectations.org.uk
The Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum includes resources on cyber bullying and homophobic bullying.	www.endbullying.org.uk
The Rainbow Project in partnership with Cara-Friend offers free training to schools on homophobic bullying. They also develop educational resources and offer awareness-raising workshops for pupils.	www.rainbow-project.org and www.cara-friend.org.uk
This website provides information for young people on sexual identity.	www.nidirect.gov.uk
This website provides advice for schools who want to explore issues around gender and identity, and advises on dealing with transgender issues for children at school.	www.transgenderni.com

REFERENCES:

CCEA 2015 RSE Guidance

SBNI professional Guidance CSE

Gregg JE and Johnston J Every Child Really Does Matter: An International Interdisciplinary Conference, QUB Belfast (February 2014)

Wanless P NSPCC Great start Dave but now the real work begins on better sex education



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