

Relationships and Sexuality Education

Ethos Issues

The nature of an Integrated college means that, throughout the Relationships and Sexuality Education programme, staff and students will be aware that the various faith communities and those who do not identify with a faith community, differ in their teachings, beliefs and attitudes to aspects of sexuality. Coverage of topics will be comprehensive and inclusive, and students will be actively encouraged to explore the values of their family and faith, and to respect the teachings, beliefs and attitudes of others, including those they do not share. It will be a priority to ensure that no individual or group is made to feel isolated or odd, nor encouraged to do other than to think for themselves within the context of their family, faith, community and personal sexuality.

“All cultures and religious groups will be respected equally and the students will be aware of the ideas, beliefs and practices of major world religions and humanist philosophies.” (Shimna Integrated College Agreed Statements)

The different values evident in society will be articulated and respected, both those which promote “no risk” options and those which promote “safe sex” options. By developing both our policy and programme in the context of an Integrated ethos, we trust that all parents/guardians will be happy to consent to their children participating in all aspects of the programme. The elements of the programme delivered through the science curriculum are a statutory requirement. Parents will be informed of the content and approach of the whole programme, and if it transpires that the views of an individual parent/guardian cannot be accommodated without compromising the entitlement of other parents/guardians and students, that parent/guardian has the right to withdraw her or his child from the elements of the programme delivered through personal development.

Every class will include students with a range of sexual identity, or potential sexual identity, and relationships and sexuality education takes place in this context. We recognize that in the context of a society learning to respect all sexual identities equally, individual students may not feel free to discuss their own sexual or gender identity openly, or may even feel compelled to disguise their sexual or gender identity. It is our aim to create a safe space for every student.

Drawing up and Reviewing our Policy

Our policy has been drawn up in the light of the Agreed Statements of the founding parents of Shimna Integrated College, and with reference to DE circulars and guidance. Parents/guardians are consulted through SchoolComms and the policy is reviewed annually by the Board of Governors. Students are consulted through the Student Council and focus groups.

Aims of Relationships and Sexuality Education

- To provide students with accurate information about relationships, sex and sexuality;
- To provide students with appropriate sources of information for personal research and support on topics of relationships, sex and sexuality, so that they can explore and find support confidently throughout their future lives;
- To provide a context for students to ask questions and to discuss and explore their own attitudes to relationships, sex and sexuality, and also attitudes they come across in family, community and society;

Teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education

Every member of staff contributes to our students' experience of Relationships and Sexuality Education through our Integrated ethos, and their respect for every student's developing relationships and sexuality.

Teachers of science contribute specifically through the elements of human reproduction which are part of the science curriculum.

Teachers of Personal Development contribute specifically through the LLW curriculum.

Our child protection team contributes specifically through CEOP sessions on child sexual exploitation and the internet.

Staff involved with extra-curricular groups in school offer contexts for students to find identity specific information and support, eg. GayStraightAlliance; Scripture Union; Umbrella group (all faiths and none);

The organiser of 6th form induction organises sessions specifically for 6th form students.

Management and Coordination of Relationships and Sexuality Education

R&SEd is overseen by: Kevin Lambe (principal); Jamie Meaklim (LLW coordinator); Derek Bailey (head of science); John McClosley (head of RE) Aine Harrison (CEOP Ambassador); Shirley McMillan (alternative chaplain); Alicia Rooney (6th form induction organiser).

R&SEd takes place in timetabled LLW classes in years 8-11. In year 12 and 6th form, specific sessions are organised to ensure that students have clear channels for finding information and support as they move towards an independent adult life.

R&SEd teaching takes place in mixed gender groups, and specific sessions in single gender groups, though taking account of potentially transgender students.

Students of all genders have the opportunity to learn about and to discuss all aspects of R&SEd.

Approaches to learning and teaching are planned to encourage participation and questioning, and ensure that there are opportunities for students to follow up on an individual basis, and to talk to any member of staff they feel they can trust (see our Who Can I Turn To? leaflet).

Particular care is taken to explore and update R&SEd resources from a wide range of sources in order to ensure information and approaches are relevant, up to date and meet the needs of the full range of students.

Confidentiality and Disclosure

Confidentiality and disclosure are managed within the school Child Protection policy. Any child protection concern will be referred through a UNOCINI to social services. This includes female genital mutilation, which is a criminal offence, and any concern that FGM is planned, or has been carried out, will always be referred.

Outside Agencies

Outside agencies delivering any aspect of R&SEd are made aware of our Integrated ethos and of this policy document. Outside speakers are made aware that students will be asked to listen to and work with visitors, and to weigh their input with their own views and other influences and input. A member of our staff will always take part in a session led by an outside agency.

Any member of an outside agency working regularly with students will be accessni vetted specifically for Shimna.

Learning Difficulties

Particular care will be taken to ensure that students of all abilities have access to all the information and support they need. Particular care will be taken to ensure that parents/guardians who have an issue with any aspect of our policy, or who find the policy document difficult to understand, have the opportunity to come and talk about it.

Links with Other Aspects of School Life

As well as the links across the curriculum as set out above, the R&SEd policy links with our anti-bullying policy, our child protection policies, our counselling policy, discipline policy, internet/e-safety policy, drugs education policy etc. R&SEd relates particularly to our policy in relation to anti-homophobic bullying, cyber bullying, sexual harassment and transgender bullying. The R&SEd policy also links with the ethos of our assemblies, iMatter and our pastoral care programme with the form teacher. The R&SEd policy links directly with the work of the alternative chaplain.