



POLICY STATEMENT ON THE TEACHING OF SEX AND RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION IN SCHOOL

Introduction

Sex and Relationship Education enables children to understand their bodies and to become aware of their sexuality. It helps children to analyse situations and to understand their feelings and responses. It encourages them to develop an awareness of and respect for themselves and others, to become aware of the options open to them and to make responsible decisions based upon an exploration of the facts.

Our school's policy on sex and relationship education is based on the DCSF document 'Sex and Relationship Education Guidance'. We will refer in the rest of this policy simply to 'sex education'. Sex education is part of the overall provision of personal and social education in school. It is concerned not only with the knowledge of facts but also with the development of attitudes and values. 'It is about understanding the importance of marriage for family life, stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality, and sexual health' (DCSF 0116/2000).

Aims and Objectives

We teach children about:

- the physical development of their bodies as they grow into adults;
- the way humans reproduce;
- respect for their own bodies and the importance of sexual activity as part of a committed, long-term, and loving relationship;
- the importance of family life;
- moral questions;
- relationship issues;
- respect for the views of other people;

Context

Sex education forms part of Garden Fields School's health education programme, which in turn fits into the personal and social provision in the school. It is likely that aspects of sex education will occur in many areas of school life at all stages.

Sex education will arise spontaneously when children ask questions. It also occurs across the curriculum throughout the year, e.g. through Science lessons on life processes. Pupils questions will be answered sensitively and with due consideration for any particular religious or cultural factors (where known).

We believe that staff and parents have a joint responsibility for helping children with this topic. In the early years honest answers and teaching are given to satisfy a child's natural curiosity and at a level suitable for the child to understand. Opportunities are taken to discuss embryos, birth and bodies as part of the general cycle of human, animal and plant life – sometimes introduced through topics such as "Ourselves and other animals" and discussed when celebrating the birth of a new baby in the family, or the arrival of animal babies, which is an exciting event and the topic of individual or class conversation.

Particular care and sensitivity is taken in matching discussions to the maturity of the pupils involved, which may not always be adequately indicated by their chronological age. Our teaching aims to help pupils cope with the physical and emotional challenges of growing up and to give them an elementary understanding of human reproduction.

Organisation

In both Key Stages, teachers inform children about reproduction and life cycles through science and PSHCE lessons. For this aspect of our teaching, we follow the guidance material in the national scheme of work for science. In Key Stage 1, we teach children about how animals, including humans, move, feed, grow and reproduce, and we also teach them about the main parts of the body. Children learn to appreciate the fact that people are not all the same, and that we need to respect each other.

In Key Stage 2, we teach about life processes, and the main stages of the human life cycle, in greater depth. In the top juniors we place a particular emphasis on health education, as many children experience puberty at this age. We deal more directly with maturation and puberty and involve the school nurse who leads a session with Year 5 girls [and their mothers] to discuss menstruation. A class teacher is in attendance at these sessions. Sex education is only dealt with as a separate subject with the Year 6 children through the use of appropriate materials (such as "All About Me") and discussions led by the school nurse. Topics covered in the programmes include growing up, physical development, personal hygiene, exercise and human reproduction. These programmes are not only concerned with knowledge of facts but also with the development of attitudes and values, relations with other people, respecting the rights and feelings of others and developing responsible relationships. We always teach this with due regard for the emotional development of the children.

The teacher and nurse, who are both present at these sessions, will answer sensitively and appropriately questions arising in the discussions following the programmes. It is usual for the children to raise questions but if questions are not forthcoming from the children the teacher or school nurse will encourage discussion.

The role of Parents and Carers

We arrange a meeting for all parents and carers of children in Year 6 to discuss this particular programme of lessons, to explain what the issues are, and how they are taught, and to see the materials the school uses in its teaching. Parents and carers have the right to withdraw their child from all or part of the sex education programme that we teach in our school. If a parent wishes their child to be withdrawn from sex education lessons they should discuss this with the Headteacher and make it clear which aspects of the programme they do not wish their child to participate in. The school always complies with the wishes of parents/carers in this regard.

We use the teaching of sex education as an opportunity to discuss moral considerations, the value of committed long term relationships (within or outside marriage) between individuals and the importance of strong family values. We believe that sex education can protect children and instil an attitude of respect. Taught with openness before puberty it can prevent what is sometimes called "an unhealthy attitude to sex" borne of ignorance and half truths gleaned from peers. Children are exposed to sex and sophisticated sexual innuendo from the mass media, so we believe it is important that this school presents a balanced view.

Confidentiality

Teachers conduct sex education lessons in a sensitive manner, and in confidence. However, if a child makes a reference to being involved (or being likely to be involved) in sexual activity, then the teacher will take the reference seriously, and deal with it as a matter of child protection. Teachers will respond in a similar way if a child indicates that they may have been a victim of abuse. They will not try to investigate, but will immediately inform the named person for child protection issues about their concerns. The head teacher will then deal with the matter in consultation with health care professionals (see also our policy on Child Protection).

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