

Sex and Relationships Education Policy

Rationale and Objectives

Rationale:

Sex education provides an understanding that positive, caring environments are essential for the development of a good self-image, personal confidence and young people who are in charge of and responsible for their own bodies. It ought to provide knowledge about the processes of reproduction and the nature of sexuality and relationships, with a particular focus on some of the difficulties and pressures faced by young people in modern relationships. It should encourage the acquisition of skills and attitudes which allow students to manage their relationships in a responsible and healthy manner.

Objectives:

- To enable students to understand the biological aspects of reproduction, primarily through their studies in science
- To recognise and be able to discuss sensitive and controversial issues such as conception, virginity, birth, child-rearing, abortion, sexually transmitted diseases and technological developments which involve consideration of attitudes, values, beliefs and morality
- To make students aware of the range of sexual attitudes and behaviour in present day society and recognise the importance of personal choice in managing relationships so that they do not present risks to health and personal safety
- To make students aware that feeling positive about sexuality and sexual activity is important in relationships and that people have the right not to be sexually active; to recognise that relationships do not have to be sexual
- To recognise that parenthood is a matter of choice, and that parenthood poses a range of challenges at any age
- To critically analyse moral values regarding relationships and explore those held by different cultures and groups, with particular reference to Female Genital Mutilation and forced marriage
- To understand the concept of stereotyping and how gender myths are perpetuated by the media and in particular pornography
- and to discuss issues such as sexual harassment in terms of their effects on individuals, and the extent to which we are responsible for the feelings of others
- To understand aspects of legislation relating to sexual behaviour
- To make students aware of the dangers of technology with regard to sex and relationships, with particular reference to photographs and child sexual exploitation
- To raise awareness of the facilities available to support young people both locally and nationally, and how they can access them safely and confidently
- To build upon their learning at KS2 and KS3, ensuring a consistent continuum of knowledge and understanding at appropriate levels (in conjunction with local high schools and primary schools)

Delivery

Sex education at King Edward VII is taught through the science curriculum (the biological aspects of reproduction) and the PSE curriculum. The diverse staffing and the variety of experience contained within this teaching body is seen as a valuable resource for the delivery of sex education. The provision of sex education is seen as progressive in terms of language, concepts and content which increases in depth and complexity as students progress through the School.

Throughout the course of teaching a variety of sensitive issues will inevitably be explored. It is recognised that an individual's sexuality is a highly personal matter, and sexuality is therefore covered early on in year 10.

Students will have access to information about contraception through guidance leaflets, Teen Health Stop and displays around school, but taught lessons take place at High School level. Students also have access to the 'Your Questions, Answered' facility for any difficult questions they may have.

The 'Worth It' project involves group coaching sessions with an outside agency, enabling young people to cope more effectively with issues of gender, sexuality and identity. Students are able to self-refer but have also been referred by the pastoral team.

The school nurse team provides help and guidance to staff and students in supporting young people to have healthy relationships. The Teen Health Stop programme provides confidential advice and support on a range of issues, and now includes a male-only session, by student request.

Sex Education in the Curriculum

Introduction: King Edward VII provides a holistic education which accounts for the development of body, mind and spirit, as well as academic learning. The sex education programme at King Edward VII aims to be a sensitive and responsible one which recognises the changing nature of modern relationships. It also aims to meet the statutory provision which has been outlined in various Government documents.

Context: The prime responsibility for bringing up children rests with parents. Schools must recognise that parents are key figures in helping their children cope with the emotional and physical aspects of growing up and in preparing them for the challenges and responsibilities which sexual maturity brings. The teaching offered by schools should be seen as complementary and supportive to the role of parents. In an attempt to achieve this, the 1988 Education Reform Act (Section 1) states that all students should be offered the opportunity of receiving a comprehensive, well-planned programme of sex education during their school careers through a curriculum which:

- "promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of students at school and of society; and

- prepares such students for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life."

It is recognised that sex education is a difficult issue which will place demands on schools and teachers. However, the purpose of sex education should be to provide knowledge about loving relationships, the nature of sexuality and the processes of human reproduction, in an environment in which students feel safe and supported. The provision should enable students to develop healthy relationships now or in the future and feel confident enough to be able to deal with any difficult situations they may find they have to deal with.

The Sex Education curriculum at King Edward VII is developed in recognition of the ages and maturity levels of the students concerned. Most students have had a significant input into their biological knowledge of sex and contraception but still require a great deal of support in terms of their ability to form loving and healthy relationships. This is particularly the case in an age group where many students have already embarked on relationships, and a significant proportion are sexually active. Students will be encouraged to appreciate the value of a stable family life, marriage and the responsibilities of parenthood. Such matters will be treated with sensitivity and great care will be taken to encourage all children to feel a sense of worth, whatever their stage of maturity. There will be particular focus on giving students the tools with which to make healthy choices within relationships, such as the ability to say "no" where they feel they are not ready to have a sexual relationship, and where they are able to get out of a dangerous or unhealthy relationship. In this regard, working on self esteem through the Art of Brilliance programme is particularly important as it develops students' self worth ambition. This in turn feeds into their ability to make appropriate choices for themselves.

Most sex education is provided directly by tutors under guidance from the pastoral team. In addition to this students also have access to a range of other sources of support which enables them to further their knowledge, confidence and understanding of sex and relationships. External providers (such as the Chlamydia team and the school nurses) also support the curriculum.

Provision is evaluated annually by staff, governors and students and evolves according to local and national need.

Definition of Sex Education:

The law does not give a definitive statement as to what sex education is. At King Edward VII it is regarded as education about sexual matters within a values framework, focusing upon responsibility within caring, committed relationships. Among the things it will consider are knowledge of the facts of human reproductive processes and behaviour, HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, contraception and abortion, and a consideration of the broader emotional and ethical dimensions of sexual attitudes and relationships.

The Parental Right to Withdraw their Son or Daughter from Sex Education

Lessons:

Section 241 of the Education Act 1993 gives parents the right to withdraw their children from any or all parts of the school's programme of sex education, other than those elements which are required by the National Curriculum Science Order. It is realised that, under exceptional circumstances, a very small number of parents may wish to exclude their children from this programme. In this case, such parents should write to the Principal, stating their objections.

Advice to Individual Students:

It is understood that it is important to distinguish between the School's function of providing education generally about sexual matters and the giving of advice to individual students on these issues. Good teachers have always taken a pastoral interest in the welfare and well-being of their students. It is also understood that this function should never trespass on the proper exercise of parental rights and responsibilities. It is understood that particular care must be exercised in relation to giving advice to students under the age of sixteen, for whom sexual intercourse is unlawful. The message that abstinence is both acceptable and preferable is delivered at several junctures during the delivery of provision.

Where students don't feel able to speak to their tutors directly, there is well defined access to the Pastoral and Progress room, the School Nurse and the 'Your Questions, Answered' facility. This ensures that all students feel they have a support network which suits them.

Safeguarding

Where the circumstances are such as to lead a teacher to believe that the pupil has embarked upon, or is contemplating, a course of conduct which is likely to place him or her at moral or physical risk or in breach of the law, the teacher has the general responsibility to ensure that the pupil is aware of the implications and is urged to seek advice. Where a student is actually at risk, teachers are well aware of the responsibility to pass on this information to the appropriate senior member of staff.

Equality

Sex education must take careful notice of the validity of a range of sexual relationships and allow students to make decisions about their own sexuality. This means a careful recognition of homosexual and transgender lifestyles. There is particular focus on homophobia and the potential harms it can cause within the school and wider community. All students complete lessons on LGBT equality, and there is a burgeoning peer support network. Staff are given training on dealing with homophobic issues and the levels of homophobic language/abuse are falling.

There is also a more recent focus on the multicultural nature of British Society and the need to challenge some unhealthy aspects of relationships such as forced marriage, and encourage family values such close-knit extended families.

Aims

In the attempt to enable students to acquire knowledge, skills, responsible attitudes and behaviour with regard to sex education, King Edward VII aims:

- to help students to consider the importance of self-restraint, abstinence, dignity, respect for themselves and for others, acceptance of responsibility, sensitivity towards the needs and views of others, loyalty and fidelity;
- to enable students to recognise the physical, emotional and moral implications, and risks, of certain types of behaviour and to accept that both sexes should behave responsibly in sexual matters;
- to support the personal development and social skills of the students;
- to ensure that students have an understanding of and respect for their own and others' sexuality;
- to enjoy relationships based upon mutual respect and responsibility which are free from abuse and exploitation;
- to provide information and knowledge which will counteract prejudice and ignorance;
- to develop an understanding of risk and to promote strategies for personal safety;
- to enable students to be aware of sources of help and to acquire the skills and confidence to use them.
- to enable students to recognise unhealthy relationships and to develop the skills and confidence to be able to resolve them