

Guidance on the Curriculum: Sex and Relationships Education Policy

Standard Circular GSE 1

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This circular aims to outline to schools the key principles to deliver sex education.
- 1.2 The advice covers all formal education settings – nurseries, primaries, secondaries, behaviour support centres and special education schools and units. These will be referred to as schools in the rest of this circular.
- 1.3 The advice replaces Appendices 4 and 4a of the Health Promotion Policy issued by Fife Council Education Service in March 1998. This revision results from the publication by the Scottish Executive in 2000/01 of Sex Education in Scottish Schools, Standards in Scotland’s Schools etc Act 2000: Conduct of Sex Education in Scottish Schools and the 5-14 National Guidelines Health Education 2000.
- 1.4 Schools may adopt this circular as school policy.
- 1.5 Schools developing their own policy must take account of the statutory guidance given here.
- 1.6 Schools must ensure all staff are aware of the advice provided within this circular.
- 1.7 Notes of Guidance accompany this advice. They give information that will provide a fuller understanding of this circular.

2 Legal Context

- 2.1 This section provides a summary of the key elements of legislation that have specific implications for the local authority and schools. The Education Authority and schools must bear the legal framework in mind in developing policy and practice for sex education. (See Notes of Guidance p 2, Further Legal Advice.)
- 2.2 The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 places Education Authorities under a duty to secure adequate and efficient provision of education in their area. The Standards in Scotland’s Schools Act 2000 establishes a complementary statutory right in favour of every child to have a school education provided by, or under arrangements made by, the local authority. It describes key aims towards which school education must be directed by the Education Authority.
- 2.3 The aim is to make the development of the personality, talents etc, of the child or young person central to the direction of school education.
- 2.4 This new provision puts the Education Authority under a statutory duty to look beyond general provision to the development of the individual child.
- 2.5 This Act also introduces a right for pupils at school to have the opportunity to make their views known when the school is preparing its Development Plan, which sets out the education objectives for the school.
- 2.6 The Act enables Ministers to issue guidance on the conduct of Sex Education in schools. This is detailed in the circular, Standards in Scotland’s Schools etc Act 2000: Conduct of Sex Education in Scottish Schools. It is the responsibility of the Education Authority, under the Act, to have a regard to the guidance outlined in this circular.
- 2.7 This legislation affects consultation with parents and carers. Parents and carers have an important role to play in sex education. They are considered by law to have a major responsibility for the education of their children. These responsibilities are balanced by certain rights, some of which relate to education and are enshrined in European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and Scots Law. Children and young people also have rights enshrined in ECHR and Scots Law. (See Notes of Guidance p2, Rights and Responsibilities.)

- 2.8 The guidance in Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000: Conduct of Sex Education in Scottish Schools makes it clear that all schools must consult parents when developing or reviewing programmes of sexuality and relationships.
- 2.9 Additionally the guidance makes it clear that schools must have simple, direct procedures in place for parents to raise concerns.
- 2.10 In respect of sex education the authority is placed under the requirement by Ethical Standards in Public Life Act (Scotland) 2000 – Section 35: Conduct of Sex Education in Scottish Schools to have regard to two principles in the performance of their functions that relate principally to children. These principles are:
- the value of stable family life in a child's development.
 - the need to ensure that the content of instruction provided by the Authority is appropriate having regard to each child's age, understanding and stage of development.

3 Principles

- 3.1 Sex education can be defined as a lifelong process whereby children and young people acquire knowledge, understanding and skills, and develop beliefs, attitudes and values about their sexuality and relationships within a moral and ethical framework.

3.2 Key Principles

- 3.2.1 Sex education should be viewed as one element of Health Education, set within the wider context of health promotion and the health-promoting ethos of the school.
- 3.2.2 Sex education should contribute to the physical, emotional, moral and spiritual development of all young people within the context of today's society.
- 3.2.3 Education about sexuality and relationships should reflect the cultural, ethnic and religious influences within the home, the school and the community.
- 3.2.4 Sex education should be non-discriminatory and sensitive to the diverse backgrounds and needs of all young people.
- 3.2.5 Sex education starts informally at an early stage with parents and carers, and continues both within the home and at all stages of school life through to adulthood.

4 Aims

- 4.1 Sex education programmes need to provide learners with opportunities to acquire information appropriate to their needs, age and stage of development and their existing level of understanding and experience.
- 4.2 Sex education programmes should:
- 4.2.1 Provide accurate and relevant information about the physical and emotional changes that children and young people will experience throughout their formative years and into adulthood.
- 4.2.2 Establish an awareness of the importance of stable family life and relationships, including the responsibilities of parenthood and marriage.
- 4.2.3 Provide opportunities for children and young people to develop personal and interpersonal skills that will enable them to make and maintain appropriate relationships within the family, with friends and within the wider community.
- 4.2.4 Enable children and young people to develop and reflect upon their beliefs, attitudes and values in relation to themselves and others within a moral, ethical and multicultural framework.

- 4.2.5 Foster self-awareness and self-esteem and a sense of responsibility and respect for themselves and others.
- 4.2.6 Provide opportunities for young people to consider and reflect upon the range of attitudes to gender, sexuality and sexual orientation, relationships and family life.
- 4.2.7 Develop an appreciation of, and respect for, diversity and the need to avoid prejudice and discrimination.
- 4.2.8 Provide information about the skills for accessing, where appropriate, agencies and services providing support and advice to young people.

5 Confidentiality

- 5.1 Health related issues can raise concerns about confidentiality. Pupils may have questions or may inadvertently reveal information which suggests that someone has acted unlawfully. Teachers may be willing to listen to pupil concerns or queries but are not in a position to guarantee confidentiality. This should be made clear to pupils before they have any opportunity to make any disclosure.
- 5.2 A teacher cannot guarantee the confidentiality of information that is evidence that a criminal offence has been committed.
- 5.3 If a pupil is in moral or physical danger, the teacher and the school must act to protect them. Such action may involve disclosure to appropriate people or agencies.
- 5.4 All schools must act in accordance with procedures on child protection.
(See Notes of Guidance p3, Confidentiality Issues and p4, Support for Individuals.)

6 Management Organisation and Planning

- 6.1 Schools must have an identified Sex Education Co-ordinator.
(See Notes of Guidance p8, Role of Co-ordinator.)
- 6.2 Sex education is an important part of the overall personal, social and moral development of each pupil.
- 6.3 Schools have to promote sound attitudes to healthy living and help pupils to develop the skills necessary for making sensible decisions in their lifestyles and personal relationships.
(See Notes of Guidance p8, Inclusion and Diversity.)
- 6.4 From an early age sex education needs to be integrated into the school's programme of Health Education/Personal and Social Development as part of a developmental curriculum with pupils receiving relevant and appropriate education about sexuality and relationships at all stages of their development and maturation.
- 6.5 Issues of sexuality should be viewed by pupils as normal issues for discussion and consideration.

6.6 Pre-School Education

- 6.6.1 The contribution of pre-school education lies in developing and broadening the range of children's learning experiences to make them confident, eager and enthusiastic learners.
- 6.6.2 In nurseries aspects of sexuality and relationships will be addressed in Personal and Social Development and in Developing Knowledge and Understanding of the World.

- 6.6.3 The 3-5 education curriculum framework for children identifies the importance of children's emotional, personal and social development, where children should learn, for example, to:
- express feelings appropriately
 - form positive relationships with other children
 - develop friendships with children
 - develop positive attitudes to others whose gender is different from their own.

There are clear links from these learning experiences to sexuality and relationships in the 5-14 Health Education Curriculum.

6.7 Primary Schools

- 6.7.1 In primary schools the planning framework for a sex and relationships programme should be within the framework for health education and embedded within the ethos of a health promoting school. Health Education should have clearly embedded links within Personal and Social Development and Religious and Moral Education.
- 6.7.2 There are significant links between learning outcomes in the emotional and social strands of Health Education 5-14 and those in Personal and Social Development of self awareness, self esteem, interpersonal relationships and independence/interdependence.
- 6.7.3 In primary schools some aspects of a sex and relationships programme may be delivered through other curricular areas eg Science, Environmental Studies.
- 6.7.4 Within the outcome 'Taking Responsibility for Health' and the strands of physical, emotional and social health; planning for sex and relationships education must ensure that there are appropriate, structured, coherent learning opportunities that help pupils understand and cope with the changes involved in growing from childhood to adulthood.
- 6.7.5 Whatever the approach adopted by primary schools there requires to be coherent, documented tracking to ensure that all aspects of the programme are covered.

6.8 Secondary Schools

- 6.8.1 In secondary the main programme of sex and relationships should be within Personal and Social Education. This programme should have a clear health component and take into account the health promoting school ethos. Where appropriate, other subject departments may contribute to aspects of the programme eg Science, Home Economics, Physical Education, Social Subjects.
- 6.8.2 The 5-14 Health Education Guidelines make it clear that as pupils develop and mature there is a need to revisit a range of sexual health issues. Progression through to Level F focuses on taking increased responsibility for health and developing an appreciation of moral and ethical issues. Progressively, through the physical, emotional and social strands, the concepts, language and skills will become more challenging within the sex and relationships programme. This approach should continue beyond S2.
- 6.8.3 By S5/6 negotiated elements to deal with issues identified by the learners should be incorporated within the programme.

6.9 Special Education

- 6.9.1 Within special education settings sex and relationships programmes should be part of Personal, Social and Health Education. The content and approaches will vary according to pupils' age, level of maturity, understanding and experience. Pupils need to learn through active learning approaches with time given to develop an understanding of relevant language and contexts. (See Notes of Guidance p9, Vulnerable Young People) also HESEN p41-49.

- 6.10 Education about sexuality and relationships should assist the development of pupils' values and exploration of attitudes and prejudices. It is important that opportunities to practise skills of listening, communicating, negotiating and decision making are provided.
- 6.11 Schools must develop sex and relationships programmes that encourage pupils to appreciate the value of stable family life and offer continuity and progression applicable to the age and maturity of the pupils. Programmes should assist pupils to:
- increase their knowledge and understanding about human development, sexuality and relationships.
 - develop a range of skills which will help them form positive relationships and make healthy informed choices.
 - respect and value themselves and develop relationships based on mutual respect and responsibility.
 - develop the ability to recognise peer and social pressures and to resist such pressures where appropriate.
 - increase awareness of sources of help and develop the confidence and skills to use them.

(See Notes of Guidance p9, Sensitive Issues in Sex Education.)

- 6.12 Schools should develop clear agreements regarding teaching and learning programmes to ensure continuity and progression at transitions from nursery to primary and primary to secondary stages.

6.13 Staff Development

- 6.13.1 Teachers with a range of experiences and backgrounds teach sex and relationships programmes and there will therefore be a need to provide clear direction, practical support and staff development.
- 6.13.2 Identifying teachers' needs through for example, CPD, and by monitoring and reviewing programmes, schools can ensure that teachers are confident and comfortable with the content of the programme, the methodologies and the resources.
- 6.13.3 The policy of inclusion means that an increasing number of pupils with special needs are likely to be educated in mainstream schools. Staff in these schools may require additional support or specialised training to help them tailor programmes to meet the specific circumstances of pupils who may spend some time in a support unit and the rest in mainstream classes.

7 Parental Consultation

- 7.1 Education for sexuality and relationships should be viewed within the context of a clearly articulated partnership with parents.
- 7.2 Recognition of learners needs and the wishes of their parents is vital in the partnership between home and school.
- 7.3 Schools develop good working relationships with parents/carers by involving them in all aspects of the school's activities, valuing their participation and contribution, consulting them on learning planned for their children, taking account of their views and responding to their concerns. Schools must also understand the ethnic, cultural and religious influences within their community. (See Notes of Guidance p10, Consulting Parents.)

- 7.4 For the development of sex and relationships programmes schools must, in advance actively inform and consult parents. Ensuring that:
- the Sex Education Co-ordinator acts as a point of contact for parents/carers,
 - procedures are in place to deal with parental/carers concerns,
 - parents/carers are aware that any concerns should initially be raised with the school,
 - information is given in the school handbook/prospectus,
 - parents/carers views are considered,
 - parents/carers are familiar with the approaches used in the delivery of the programme,
 - parents/carers are aware of the use of any outside agencies or speakers in the delivery of the programme,
 - there are clear arrangements for pupils who are withdrawn from the programme at the request of parents/carers to have alternative positive educational provision.
- 7.5 In the event of unresolved issues between the school and parents/carers:
- schools must provide simple, direct procedures for parents/carers to raise their concerns with the Education Service,
 - schools should, as soon as possible notify Education Service Senior Management Team with details of the parents'/carers' concerns.
- 7.6 If concerns remain unresolved parents retain a statutory right to withdraw their children from a sex and relationships programme. (See Notes of Guidance p2, Further Legal Advice.)

8 Teaching Approaches

- 8.1 In schools teachers should be the prime facilitators in the delivery of sexuality and relationships Education. (See Notes of Guidance p11, Who Should Deliver the Programme?)
- 8.2 Teachers may be supported in this by a range of other school staff who also work with pupils on a daily basis and have developed a relationship of trust with them.
- 8.3 Teachers may also be supported by the planned involvement of a range of outside agencies. (See Notes of Guidance p17, Involvement of External Agencies, Groups and Speakers.)
- 8.4 Formal teaching in large groups is not an effective way of working as it does not allow consideration of the different stages of development or variation of the experiences of the pupils.
- 8.5 Effective teaching has to be based on involvement in relevant activities and experiences. (See Notes of Guidance p11, Effective Programmes.)
- 8.6 Teaching approaches should interest and motivate pupils and should display the values of:
- listening/valuing
 - empathising/encouraging
 - respecting privacy/building trust
 - being non judgemental
 - allowing choice
 - showing flexibility/sensitively
 - involving pupils in their own learning.
- 8.7 Interactive learning and teaching approaches should be used to assist in the process of exploring, sharing, discussing and challenging difficult issues and in helping pupils to make informed choices. (See Notes of Guidance p12, Teaching Approaches.)

- 8.8 The learning process is as important as the learning content with a high value placed on the development of the skills of:
- communication
 - working with others
 - negotiating
 - decision making
 - problem solving.
- 8.9 These teaching approaches operate best in a supportive atmosphere/ethos. Climate setting is an important pre-requisite for sex and relationships programmes and must include establishing ground rules where acceptable behaviour, confidentiality, trust and dignity have been agreed with pupils to ensure pupils are comfortable with each other. Consequences should be agreed if any pupil breaks these ground rules. (See Notes of Guidance p14, Responding to Questions and Requests for Advice and p13, Climate for Teaching and Learning.)
- 8.10 Methods selected to deliver the programmes will depend on the age of the pupils, how well the pupils know one another and how well the teacher knows the class. (See Notes of Guidance p14, Teaching Methods.)

9 Assessment, Recording and Reporting

- 9.1 Assessment, recording and reporting of sex and relationships education involves an overall judgement about pupils' attainment in terms of knowledge, skills and values.
- 9.2 Assessment approaches must provide opportunities for pupils to demonstrate attitudinal and skills development as well as knowledge and understanding.
- (See Notes of Guidance p15, Assessment Activities.)
- 9.3 Evidence of progress and attainment in sex and relationships education comes from what pupils say, write and do.
- 9.4 Observation of pupils as they work towards planned learning targets can be a useful method of assessment.
- 9.5 There should be a consistent structure for recording pupil progress.
- 9.6 Record keeping should be kept manageable. Too detailed record keeping takes time away from interacting with pupils in the learning and teaching process.
- 9.7 A teaching plan, annotated with brief notes can provide teachers with a means of recording classroom activities and deciding next steps in a pupil's learning. This will also assist teachers to identify any changes needed to the sex and relationships programme eg pace or level of tasks.
- 9.8 Records need to provide teachers with straightforward and useful information to plan pupils next steps in learning.
- 9.9 These records will form the basis of reporting pupil progress to pupils, parents and teachers and contribute to the overall 5-14 Health Education Report.

10 Resources

- 10.1 Schools must review all resources prior to their inclusion in a sex and relationships programme.
- 10.2 No single resource is likely to fully meet the needs of all pupils.
- 10.3 The choice of resources should take account of the needs, age, stage and development of the pupils, their religious and cultural backgrounds and the views of their parents/carers.
- 10.4 Resources should use easily understood language and appropriate illustrations.
- 10.5 Resources must provide accurate and up-to-date information.
- 10.6 The range of resources selected to support a whole school programme should reflect the aims stated in 4.2.1 to 4.2.8 of this circular.
- 10.7 Suitability of resources for the programme must be re-assessed by the school every five years. (See Notes of Guidance p16, Resource Checklist.)

11 Involvement of External Agencies

- 11.1 Many groups may be able to offer support to teachers by working in partnership to bring either:
 - increased specialist knowledge that will broaden the teacher's own expertise OR
 - to directly complement teaching approaches used with pupils in the classroom.
- 11.2 Fife Education Service requires schools to consider the following when deciding whether to accept offers of support from outside agencies:
 - Has the group got good links with statutory bodies?
 - Is the group willing to work collaboratively?
 - Is the group's staff subject to SCRO checks or subject to a system of disclosure?
- 11.3 Where groups are to work with teachers directly in the classroom then (in addition) the following criteria must also be met:
 - The group contribution should offer something specific and useful that teachers cannot.
 - Staff from the group should have experience and expertise in working with young people of school age.
 - Care should be taken not to criticise or imply criticism of other organisations.
 - Teaching staff should always be present.
 - Contributions to the school's programme should be jointly planned in advance.
 - The input should be appropriate to the ages and stage of the pupils involved.
 - The approach should complement the school's sex and relationships programme.
 - Materials that are to be used should be shared with schools in advance.
- 11.4 It should be noted that:
 - the school must inform and consult parents about the involvement of an external group.
 - contributions must be in line with Fife Council Education Service standard circulars and policy.
 - external group are not permitted to sell publications or ask for donations directly from pupils.

(See Notes of Guidance p17, Involvement of External Agencies.)

- 11.5 Involvement of external groups has significant implications for schools particularly with issues of confidentiality. Schools should request information about a group's code of confidentiality.
- 11.6 In classroom based support as the teacher has class responsibility, the school's code of confidentiality applies.
- 11.7 With non classroom based support, eg 'drop in sessions', the external group code of confidentiality applies.
- 11.8 Parents/carers should be aware of when an external group's code of confidentiality is operating. (See Notes of Guidance p3, Confidentiality Issues.)
- 11.9 All schools should:
- have a procedure on the involvement of external agencies and the issues of counselling and advice.
 - use the school handbook to inform parents about procedures.
 - clarify for parents the issue of confidentiality and external groups.
 - inform parents in advance of any sensitive visit or presentation.

12 Evaluation

- 12.1 Evaluation of Sex and Relationships Education is essential. It assists pupils to be aware of their feelings and to process their learning. Teachers are able to discover what was successful and use the information in future development of the programme. Evaluation provides information to inform policy review.
- 12.2 Schools should achieve continuity and consistency of approach to Sex and Relationships Education through liaison and collaboration with associated schools. Evaluation is important at transition stages to ensure continuity and meet pupils needs. A range of evaluation techniques should be employed by staff. (See Notes of Guidance p 25, Evaluation Issues.)

13 Working with the Media

- 13.1 In Health Education, sensitive areas such as Sex and Relationships Education, require care when working with the media. Schools should always liaise with Fife Council Communications Unit prior to any media involvement. (See Notes of Guidance p26, Working with the Media.)

