Department of Education
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AN ROINN Oideachais
MÄNNYSTRIE O Lear

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Subject:

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION POLICY IN SCHOOLS

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Target Audience:

- Principals and Boards of Governors of all grant-aided schools;
- Education and Library Boards;
- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools;
- Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment;
- Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta; and
- Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education.

Summary of Contents:

This Circular is to remind schools of the need to have a policy on Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in place.

Enquiries:

Any enquiries about the contents of this Circular should be addressed to:

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Governor Awareness:
Essential

Status of Contents:
Advice

Related Documents:
DE Circular 2001/15

DE Circular 2010/01

CCEA Guidance Material (DE Circulars 2001/15a and 2001/15b)

Superseded Documents:
None

Expiry Date:
Not applicable

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RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION

Introduction

1. 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.

2. RSE is an integral part of the revised curriculum in both primary and post-primary schools and must be delivered in a sensitive manner which is appropriate to the age and understanding of pupils and the ethos of the school.

Department of Education's Policy on Relationships and Sexuality Education

3. The Department requires each school to have in place its own written policy on how it will address the delivery of RSE. A school's RSE policy should be subject to consultation with parents and endorsed by a school's Board of Governors.

4. The delivery of RSE must prepare pupils to view relationships in a responsible and healthy manner and should be taught in harmony with the ethos of the school and reflect the moral and religious principles held by parents and school management authorities.

5. Advice for schools on developing or reviewing their RSE policy is provided in DE Circular 2001/15 "Relationships and Sexuality Education" and the accompanying guidance for primary and post-primary schools (DE Circulars 2001/15a and 2001/15b) which are available on the Department's website: www.education-ni.gov.uk. Guidance and resources on RSE are also provided on the NI Curriculum website at http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk/ In addition, pupils should also have the opportunity to provide feedback about the content of the programme of RSE delivered by the school so that it can be responsive to their needs.

6. The Department is currently liaising with the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) to commission a review of existing guidance and develop resources to address any identified gaps in provision. Schools will be notified of any new guidance/resources as soon as it is available.

7. All pupils have the right to learn in a safe environment, to be treated with respect and dignity and not to be treated any less favourably on grounds of their actual or perceived sexual orientation. Schools are therefore also reminded of the need to take account of guidance produced by the Equality Commission on eliminating sexual orientation discrimination. This guidance relates to the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 and is available on the Equality Commission's website

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