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# Curriculum for Excellence: health and wellbeing relationships, sexual health and parenthood education policy

Standard Circular GSE 1, 2011.



POLICY

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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This circular aims to outline to schools the key principles to deliver relationships, sexual health and parenthood education.
- 1.2 The advice covers all formal education settings – nursery, primary, secondary, special schools, pupil support service and departments of additional support. These will be referred to as schools in the rest of this circular.
- 1.3 The reviewed advice replaces Fife Council Guidance on the Curriculum: Sex and Relationships Education Policy Standard Circular GSE 1.

This revision results from the publication of:

- Standards in Scotland’s Schools etc. Act 2000: Conduct of Sex Education in Scottish schools (Scottish Executive 2000/01)
  - Respect and Responsibility Strategy and Action Plan for Improving Sexual Health (Scottish Executive 2005)
  - Curriculum for Excellence: Health and Wellbeing experiences and outcomes (HMIE 2009)
  - Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007: Health Promotion Guidance for Local Authorities and Schools (The Scottish Government 2008)
  - National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland, December 2010 (The Scottish Government)
  - National Guidance: Under Age Sexual Activity: Meeting the Needs of Children and Young People and Identifying Child Protection Concerns (The Scottish Government)
  - The Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009 (The Scottish Government).
- 1.4 Schools will adopt this circular as school policy.
  - 1.5 Schools must ensure all staff are aware of the advice provided within this circular.
  - 1.6 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 Local Authority and schools must bear the legal framework in mind in developing policy and practice for relationships, sexual health and parenthood education.
- 2.2 The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 places Local Authorities under a duty to secure suitable 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. This is seen in the context of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which sets out internationally agreed principles and minimum standards for child welfare and education, against which current legislation can be assessed and future progress monitored. The Children's Rights Strategy for Fife wholeheartedly supports the principles enshrined in the convention.
- 2.3 The aim is to make the development of the personality and talents of the child or young person central to the direction of school education.
- 2.4 This provision puts the Local Authority under a statutory duty to look beyond general provision to the development of the individual child.
- 2.5 The Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000 also introduces a right for pupils at school to have the opportunity to make their views known when the school is preparing its Improvement Plan, which sets out the improvement priorities for the school.
- 2.6 Ministers are able 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 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 relationships, sexual health and parenthood 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). Children and young people also have rights enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- 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 relationships, sexual health and parenthood 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.

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### **3 Definition and scope**

- 3.1 Relationships, sexual health and parenthood 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 Relationships, sexual health and parenthood education are viewed as one element of Health and Wellbeing, set within the wider context of health promotion and the health-promoting ethos of the school.
- 3.3 Relationships, sexual health and parenthood education contribute to the physical, emotional, moral and spiritual development of all young people within the context of today's society.
- 3.4 Relationships, sexual health and parenthood education should reflect the cultural, ethnic and religious influences within the home, the school and the community.
- 3.5 Relationships, sexual health and parenthood education should be non-discriminatory and sensitive to the diverse backgrounds and needs of all young people.
- 3.6 Relationships, sexual health and parenthood 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.
- 3.7 Like other areas of the curriculum relationships, sexual health and parenthood education will enable children and young people be at the centre of their learning.

This will contribute towards young people developing within the 'four capacities', successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

## 4 Aims

- 4.1 Relationships, sexual health and parenthood 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 within health and wellbeing.

Relationships, sexual health and parenthood 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.
- 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, intimate partner 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 and support to develop skills for accessing, where appropriate, agencies and services providing support and advice to young people.

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## 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. School staff 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 No professional can guarantee the confidentiality of information if they have reason to believe the child/young person, or someone they know, is at risk.
- 5.3 If a pupil is in moral or physical danger, the staff 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 Fife Child Protection Inter-Agency Guidelines. Regardless of what agency is involved there must be a consistent approach in assessing individual cases and agreeing appropriate response.

## **6 Management, Organisation and Planning**

- 6.1 Schools must have a shared vision and a coordinated approach to relationships, sexual health and parenthood education that is supported by the whole school community.
- 6.2 Relationships, sexual health and parenthood 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 health and wellbeing and help pupils to develop the skills necessary for making informed decisions in their lifestyles and personal relationships.
- 6.4 From an early age relationships, sexual health and parenthood education needs to be integrated into the school's programme of Health and Wellbeing 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 addressed as part of the school programme on relationships, sexual health and parenthood education.

### **6.6 Pre-School Education**

- 6.6.1 The contribution of pre-school education is to develop and broaden the range of children's learning experiences to make them confident individuals, successful learners, responsible individuals and effective contributors.
- 6.6.2 In early years aspects of relationships, sexual health and parenthood will be addressed in Personal and Social Development and in Developing Knowledge and Understanding of the World.
- 6.6.3 The Curriculum for Excellence framework for children identifies the importance of children's mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing 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
  - recognise the uniqueness of their body
  - understand where living things come from
  - appreciate family & other special people that care for them.

Robust processes must be in place to enable a seamless transition from stage to stage and across sections that includes communication between nursery and primary staff about what has been covered to date.

- communication between nursery and primary staff relating to the children themselves (highlighting any issues/concerns etc. that may have arisen when doing this work)
- opportunities to view and share curriculum resources and material.

## 6.7 Primary Schools

- 6.7.1 In primary schools the planning framework for a relationships, sexual health and parenthood programme should be within Curriculum for Excellence and the ethos of a health promoting school.
- 6.7.2 There are significant links across the 6 organisers in Curriculum for Excellence: health and wellbeing experiences and outcomes. In particular, relationships, sexual health and parenthood and mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing.
- 6.7.3 In primary schools some aspects of relationships, sexual health and parenthood will be delivered through other curricular areas e.g. Expressive Arts, Religious and Moral Education and Science.
- 6.7.4 Whatever the approach adopted by primary schools there requires to be a coherent record keeping system linked to the Experience and Outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence to ensure that all aspects of the programme are covered for all children and young people.

Robust processes must be in place to enable seamless transition from primary to secondary that include:

- agreed coherent programme
- communication between primary and secondary staff about what has been covered to date
- communication between primary and secondary staff relating to the children themselves (highlighting any issues/concerns etc. that may have arisen when doing this work)
- opportunities to view and share curriculum resources and material.

## 6.8 Secondary Schools

- 6.8.1 In secondary schools the main programme of relationships, sexual health and parenthood should be within Curriculum for Excellence and the ethos of the health promoting school. Other subject departments may contribute to aspects of the programme e.g. sciences, physical education, physical activity and sport and social studies.
- 6.8.2 The Curriculum for Excellence: health and wellbeing experiences make it clear that as pupils develop and mature there is a need to revisit a range of sexual health issues. Progression through the experiences and outcomes focuses on taking increased responsibility for health and developing an appreciation of moral and ethical issues. This approach should continue beyond Level 4 within Curriculum for Excellence.
- 6.8.3 By S5/6 negotiated elements to deal with issues identified by the learners should be incorporated within the programme. Schools need to be aware of leaver destinations and ensure communication to other education establishments where appropriate.

## **6.9 Additional Support Needs**

- 6.9.1 Within special education settings relationships, sexual health and parenthood programmes should be part of Health and Wellbeing 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 Additional Support for Learning documentation.
- 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 are provided to practise skills of listening, communicating, negotiating and decision making.
- 6.11 Schools must develop relationships, sexual health and parenthood 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.
- 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. Schools need to be aware of leaver destinations and ensure communication to post school providers where appropriate.

## **6.13 Staff Development**

- 6.13.1 Teachers with a range of experiences and backgrounds teach Health and Wellbeing programmes and there is therefore be a need to provide clear direction, practical support and staff development.
- 6.13.2 Identifying teachers' needs through for example, Professional Review and Development 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 Consultations**

- 7.1 Education for relationships, sexual health and parenthood should be developed within the context of a clearly articulated partnership with parents.
- 7.2 Partnership between home and school is vital in taking forward relationships, sexual health and parenthood programmes.
- 7.3 Schools will 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.
- 7.4 For the development of relationships, sexual health and parenthood programmes schools must actively inform and consult parents in advance, ensuring that:
- procedures are in place to deal with parental/carer 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.

## **8 Teaching, Assessing and Reporting**

- 8.1 Relationships, sexual health and parenthood education will be delivered in line with all other curricular areas. This area should be assessed, recorded and reported for all pupils.

## **9 Resources**

No single resource is likely to fully meet the needs of all pupils. However there is an expectation that schools will develop a consistent approach when delivering relationships, sexual health and parenthood education i.e. Secondary Schools have access to the SHARE Resource, which includes staff training. Other examples of resources can be found in the Curriculum Design Support Materials developed to show examples of cross curricular activity and partnership working.

## 10 Involvement of External Agencies

- 10.1 It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure effective delivery of relationships, sexual health and parenthood. Other professionals may be able to offer support to school staff by working in partnership to directly complement teaching approaches used with pupils in the classroom.
- 10.2 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?
  - Are the group's staff subject to Disclosure Scotland checks or subject to a system of disclosure?
- 10.3 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 which enhances the existing programmes.
  - Other professionals 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 relationships, sexual health and parenthood programme.
  - Materials that are to be used should be shared with schools in advance.
  - Feedback should be given to the visiting agency where appropriate to help inform future presentations.
- 10.4 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 groups are not permitted to sell publications or ask for donations directly from pupils.
- 10.5 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.
- 10.6 In classroom based support as the teacher has class responsibility, the school's code of confidentiality applies.

- 10.7 With non classroom based support, eg ‘drop in sessions’, the external group code of confidentiality applies.
- 10.8 Parents/carers should be aware of when an external group’s code of confidentiality is operating.
- 10.9 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.

## **11 Evaluation**

- 11.1 Evaluation of relationships, sexual health and parenthood 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.
- 11.2 Schools should achieve continuity and consistency of approach to relationships, sexual health and parenthood 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.

## **12 Working with the Media**

- 12.1 In Health and Wellbeing Education, sensitive areas such as relationships, sexual health and parenthood education, require care when working with the media. Schools should always liaise with Fife Council Communications Unit prior to any media involvement.