

POLAM HALL SCHOOL

Policy on Sex and Relationship Education

The Law

The law regarding sex education in general can be found in the Education Act 1996 Part V, Chapter 4, Sections 403-404. The law as regards the right of the parent to withdraw their child from any or all parts of the school's programme of sex education originates from section 241 of the Education Act 1993. However, more recently, this can be found in the Education Act 1996 Part V, Chapter 4, Section 405.

The requirements of the law are also found in The Learning and Skills Act 2000 Clause 117. The key objectives of the Act in relation to sex education are:

- to make clear that local education authorities have no power in determining sex education in schools
- to place the responsibility for sex education in schools firmly on teachers and school governors
- to put in place a requirement that schools should be statutorily obliged to have regard to the guidance
- to require NHS bodies to have regard to the guidance on any material they produce for use in schools on sex education and sexual health
- to reaffirm the rights of parents to withdraw their children from sex education (other than those aspects which are taught as part of the National Curriculum)

What is sex and relationship education?

It is lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development. It is about the understanding and appreciation of family life, marriage, stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality, and sexual health. It is not about the promotion of sexual orientation or sexual activity - this would be inappropriate teaching.

It has three main elements:

Attitudes and values

- learning the importance of values, individual conscience and moral considerations
- learning the value of family life, marriage, stable and loving relationships for the nurture of children
- learning the value of respect, love and care
- exploring, considering and understanding moral dilemmas
- developing critical thinking as part of decision making

Personal and social skills

- learning to manage emotions and relationships confidently and sensitively
- developing self-respect and empathy for others
- learning to make choices based on an understanding of difference and with an absence of prejudice
- developing an appreciation of the consequences of choices made
- managing conflict
- learning how to recognise and avoid exploitation and abuse

Knowledge and understanding

- learning and understanding physical development at appropriate stages
- understanding human sexuality; reproduction, sexual health, emotions and relationships
- learning about contraception and the range of local and national health advice, contraception and support services
- learning the reasons for delaying sexual activity, and the benefits to be gained from such delay and the avoidance of unplanned pregnancy

The intention is clearly that facts should be presented in an objective and balanced manner, set within a clear moral framework in which pupils are encouraged to consider the importance of self-restraint, dignity and respect for themselves and others; and helped to recognise the physical, emotional and moral risks of casual and promiscuous sexual behaviour, and to appreciate the responsibilities of active sexuality and the responsibilities of parenthood.

Polam Hall will ensure that children are made fully aware of the law relating to sexual activity. We will distinguish between providing education generally about sexual matters, and the more specific provision of counselling and advice to individual pupils. This latter function must not trespass on the proper exercise of parental rights and responsibilities.

Polam Hall School recognizes that parents are the key figures in helping their children to cope with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up and in preparing them for the challenges and responsibilities which sexual maturity brings. The teaching should therefore be complementary and supportive to the role of parents.

This Governing Body approves of these emphases and will ensure that its sex education programme will be appropriate to the pupils' age and experience and will be presented within a moral framework. They leave the preparation of detailed schemes of work to the Head and staff. However this Governing Body wishes to record its concerns regarding the parental right to withdraw children from sex education lessons:

- it believes that a programme of sex education context is important for all children in the school as part of the broad and balanced education provided, and cannot accept that sex education should be an 'optional extra'
- the practicalities of responding to parental requests for withdrawal for all or part (or parts) of the programme will place tremendous constraints on the provision of an efficient service
- the effect upon individual children who are withdrawn 'under the gaze' of their peers is likely to be negative

We consider the sex education programme to be a very important part of preparation for life. Parents will be informed of their statutory right to withdraw their children from the sex education programme. If they wish to do so they should inform the Head in writing.

Method of Teaching

As part of the School Curriculum, in Science students are taught about reproduction in plants and animals, including human beings. This includes a description of the changes that occur at puberty and the menstrual cycle in KS3.

At KS4 the way in which hormonal control occurs, some medical uses of hormone treatment, defence mechanisms of the body and how sex is determined in humans is covered.

All other aspects of sex education are delivered through the school's personal and social education programme. Details are available in the PSHCE Handbook.

The involvement of visitors:

In addition to these lessons, a programme of visits is organized which provides further information on conception, contraception and STI's.

Monitoring

Sex and relationship education is monitored and evaluated as part of the school's ongoing self evaluation programme. Teaching staff meet to review the delivery of the programme and assess its effectiveness, making adjustments to the programme of study when appropriate.

Signed

Chair

Head

Last reviewed April 2009

Next review: April 2010

This section will not be part of the policy, but will be issued as guidance to staff.

Ground Rules and Confidentiality:

Ground rules should be laid down at the beginning of the programme of substance abuse and recapped on at the beginning of each session to help teachers create a safe environment in which they and the children do not feel too anxious or embarrassed.

Ground Rules:

No one (teacher or pupil) will have to answer a personal question

No one will be forced to take part in a discussion by contributing

Explanations will take place in a sensible and factual way

The school's policy and practice for teaching Substance Abuse will be observed (this is not a time for personal anecdotes or gossip)

Children with personal or sensitive concerns or questions can seek help by use of a question box set up in class

Possibly move to child protection policy or issue as instructions on child protection to all staff.

Confidentiality and handling sensitive issues:

There are situations in which confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

It is the school's policy that teachers cannot offer or guarantee absolute confidentiality and will act in accordance with the best interests of the child at all times. Children with concerns will always be given the opportunity to speak to a teacher.

Pupils and parents will be made aware of the school's confidentiality policy and how it works in practice.

Pupils will be informed that teachers cannot offer unconditional confidentiality

Ground rules for discussion and behaviour will also be introduced at this time and both will be referred to again in subsequent lessons.

Teachers will establish at the beginning that it is inappropriate to disclose personal information. Ground rules, which ensure pupils agree not to pressure one another to answer questions about their own experiences also apply to staff.

Pupils will be reassured that the reason for this is in their best interests and these will be maintained in all events. It will be made clear that although most information can be kept confidential, some may need to be passed on in the child's best interest. However a pupil will be informed when this has to happen and what will be done with the information and who has access to it. Pupils will be encouraged to talk to their parents or carers and be given support to do so.

If confidentiality has to be broken, the child will be told first and supported. If there is any possibility of abuse the school's child protection procedure will be followed and the pupil will be informed of sources of confidential help, for example, the school nurse, GP and child support agencies.

There may be rare occasions when disclosures from pupils may take place at an inappropriate time or place. If this happens, the teacher will talk again individually to the pupil before the end of the school day. The teacher will follow the school's confidentiality policy if they feel it would be necessary to discuss the issue raised.

In addition there may be rare occasions when a child who is sexually active or is contemplating sexual activity directly approaches a teacher. This will be viewed as a child protection issue and the designated member of staff will be informed, to deal with the situation.

In such cases the procedure for dealing with the situation is as follows:

The teacher should approach the designated member of staff who will make sensitive arrangements. He/She will decide, (in discussion with the Social Services if necessary) whether it is appropriate for the parents or carers to be informed at this stage.

The designated member of staff should address the child protection issues and ensure help is provided for the child and family.

Information about pupils will not be passed on indiscriminately at any time. Other members of staff will only be informed on a need to know basis, where the issue identified affects the daily life of the child in school.

Teachers cannot offer pupils or their parents unconditional confidentiality.

Information about behaviour likely to cause harm to the pupil or to others will be passed on to the appropriate agency.

In the case of illegal activity, action will be taken in the best interests of the pupil.

This does not necessarily involve informing the police but could mean taking advice from the school's police liaison officer.

Teachers will not be obliged to pass on information about pupils to their parents. Although where a teacher believes the pupil to be at moral or physical risk, or in breach of the law they will ensure the pupil is aware of the risks and encourage them to seek support from their parents.