



## COLSTON'S GIRLS' SCHOOL

### SEX & RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION POLICY

#### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The aim of the sex and relationship education policy is to clarify the provision of sex and relationship education to all students (including education about HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases) and the teaching of human growth and reproduction as set out in the National Curriculum. Sex and relationship education is delivered through the PSHE and citizenship framework.
- 1.2 This policy statement is designed to be complementary to, and supportive of, the role of parents in educating their children about sexuality and relationships. It recognises that the prime responsibility for bringing up children rests with parents. (In this policy statement, "parents" means all those having parental responsibility for a child.)
- 1.3 It is natural for caring adults to want to protect children and young people from information, attitudes and lifestyles which they themselves find distasteful. However, it is important to recognise the power of confusion caused by "informal" learning - from television, radio, magazines, newspapers, gossip, jokes, and various other sources.
- 1.4 Education within the curriculum can do much to dispel myths, reduce fear and anxiety, clear up misunderstanding and counteract prejudice.
- 1.5 A Department of Health publication, "The Health of the Nation", recognises that sex education is a vital element in promoting sexual well-being and in reducing the rates of unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases and control of HIV and AIDS. However, we need to recognise that some authorities, such as the Family Education Trust, believe that sex education may actually promote sexual experimentation. Account has been taken of both views in what follows.
- 1.6 It is important that our students develop understanding and attitudes based on values which prepare them to view relationships in a responsible and healthy manner.

- 1.7 Sex education will be part of the curriculum but will not be taken out of context or over-emphasised in any way. Sex education is not intended to encourage unlawful sexual activity.
- 1.8 The policy is based on the belief that sex education:
- i is an integral part of the learning process, beginning in childhood and continuing into adult life;
  - ii should be provided for all children and young people including those; with physical, learning or emotional difficulties;
  - iii should encourage consideration of values, moral issues, sexuality, personal relationships and the development of communication and decision-making skills; and
  - iv should foster self-esteem, self awareness, the skills to avoid and resist unwanted sexual experiences and a sense of moral responsibility.

## **2 Statutory Duty of Schools**

- 2.1 The Governing Body is required to have a written statement of the policy available to parents. The statement must be drawn up in consultation with the Principal. The Principal must ensure that any sex education is provided in a way that ensures students are taught about the nature of marriage and its importance for family life and for bringing up children, and that students are protected from teaching materials which are inappropriate, having regard to the age and cultural background of the students concerned.
- 2.2 Parents have the right to withdraw their children from all or part of any sex education provided, but not from teaching the biological aspects of human growth and reproduction necessary under National Curriculum Science. The views of parents need to be borne in mind when developing a sex and relationship education policy, and parents are invited to comment on the extent to which this policy reflects their wishes and the culture of the community served by the School. The final decision on content will be made by the Principal.

## **3 The School's Sex and Relationship Education Programme**

### ***Aim***

- 3.1 The School's sex and relationship education programme aims to support the personal and social development of all students, ensuring that they have the ability to accept their own and others' sexuality, to express their sexuality in positive ways and to enjoy relationships based on mutual respect and responsibility, free from any abuse.

### ***Implementation***

- 3.2 The programme will teach about relationships, love and care and the responsibilities of parenthood as well as sex. Young people need a clear understanding of the arguments for delaying sexual activity and resisting pressure. It may be necessary to link sex and relationship education with issues of peer pressure and other risk-taking behaviour, such as drugs, smoking and alcohol, and ensure that young people understand how the law applies to sexual relationships.
- 3.3 Teachers have a responsibility to ensure the safety and welfare of students and because teachers therefore act in loco parentis, parents need to be reassured that the personal beliefs and attitudes of teachers will not influence the teaching of sex and relationship education within the PSHE framework.
- 3.4 Students need to be taught to behave responsibly towards sex and relationship issues and be able to make informed decisions.

### ***Objectives***

- 3.5 The objectives of the Academies sex and relationship education programme are:
  - i to explore what students know, understand, think and feel and to identify their needs;
  - ii to encourage unembarrassed acceptance of sexuality by using appropriate words for all parts of the body and encouraging positive attitudes to all bodily functions;
  - iii to create an atmosphere where questions and discussion on sexual matters can take place without embarrassment;
  - iv to counteract misleading myths and folklore;
  - v to provide constant reassurance that change is part of the life cycle and to give help in adjusting to such change;
  - vi to enable students to accept variation in rates of growth and development (physical, emotional, social) and in ages when puberty or social activities develop;
  - vii to learn to respect each other as individuals, and to encourage boys and girls to understand and honour one another;
  - viii to recognise the value of loving and caring relationships and the place of intimacy within them;

- ix to appreciate the value of family life, the implications of parenthood and the needs of the very young;
- x to understand and respect cultural and religious influences on individual sexuality;
- xi to help children know their rights and responsibilities;
- xii to promote personal safety and self esteem so that young people are able to resist unwanted touch or advances and can communicate about such matters and seek advice;
- xiii to develop growing understanding of risk and safety and the motivation and skills to keep themselves safe;
- xiv to be aware of sources of help and to acquire the skills and confidence to use them; and
- xv to be aware of the law on sexual behaviour.

### ***Organisation***

- 3.6 In order to help students make informed choices, establish a healthy lifestyle and build up a system of values, the teaching methods used are as important as the content of the lesson. The participation of students in lessons is essential in order to encourage them to learn from others and to help them to use appropriate language in ways which are understood by others. This requires the use of a balanced range of teaching methods.

### ***Delivery of sex education***

- 3.7 Sex education will be carried out in a variety of different ways and by different specialists as well as teachers:
- i Specialist staff within the PSHE programme;
  - ii Nurse;
  - iii Police Schools Liaison Officer; and
  - iv By reference to sexuality in curriculum areas other than PSHE.
- 3.8 Certain lessons are mandatory under the National Curriculum in Science and are excluded from the right of parents to withdraw their children. Such lessons will not include material on AIDS, HIV, and other sexually transmitted diseases, or any aspect, other than biological aspects, of human sexual behaviour.
- 3.9 The programme of study for sex education will demonstrate:

- i Progression* This extends from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 with language, concepts and content increasing in depth and complexity as the students mature physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially.
- ii Relevance and differentiation* Teachers come to know the levels of development of their students; they are able to draw out existing knowledge and needs and to build on them appropriately.
- iii Integration* Sex education will be integrated into a programme of Personal, Social and Health Education and into other relevant areas of the School curriculum.

3.10 Sex education will not be isolated, taken out of context or over-emphasised in any way.

### ***The hidden curriculum***

- 3.11 A sex education programme is not just what is "taught" in the classroom. Young people learn much from the overall ethos of the School - from the attitudes of staff, from relationships, from gender and other issues. It is important that all staff, whether directly involved in the programme or not, discuss the School's approach to sex education in the broad sense. With increased understanding and support, most teachers will feel able to make some positive contribution to the "whole" curriculum.

### ***Continuity***

- 3.12 The programme and policy is co-ordinated by a senior member of staff. Continuity within the School is achieved by co-operation between local health providers within the framework of a co-ordinated progressive curriculum which begins in Year 7 and extends through to Year 11.

## **4 Pastoral Support**

- 4.1 Sexuality is an important part of living and learning but it may present some individuals with worries and tension at certain times in their lives.
- 4.2 The quality of support available for individual students worried or disturbed by some aspect(s) of their development, relationships or environment is of prime importance.
- 4.3 Good teachers have always taken a pastoral interest in the welfare and well-being of children and young people.
- 4.4 Care must be taken, however, in counselling and advice to individual students, particularly with regard to their sexual behaviour, and must

not trespass on the proper exercise of parental rights and responsibilities. It will require skilled judgement to know when to counsel and when - and how - to refer for specialist counselling and support.

## **5 Morals and Morality**

- 5.1 Morals and morality are essential dimensions of sexuality and relationships. The programme will respect individual differences - inspired by cultural, religious, ethnic and family backgrounds - and it will endeavour to promote those values of respect and dignity for human life which are common to all faiths and societies.

## **6 Relationships**

- 6.1 Relationships have an important part to play in sex education. Friendship, making relationships, valuing friendship, will be topics in the early part of the programme. Choosing a partner, assessing personal qualities, considerations before marriage, together with relationships within the family, will be considered together with roles, avoidance of stereotyping and acknowledging different attitudes and influences.

## **7 Contraception**

- 7.1 Teachers may not give personal, individual advice on contraception to those under 16 years for whom sexual intercourse is unlawful. Teachers must advise students to seek advice from parents and/or general practitioners or **[the School nurse]**.
- 7.2 Different types of contraceptive methods will be dealt with together with information about agencies offering help and advice.

## **8 Abortion**

- 8.1 It is accepted that abortion is an emotive issue and that any teaching must present a balanced view which respects a range of religious beliefs and which takes into account the law relating to abortion. It provides an opportunity to distinguish between fact and fiction (e.g. the stage at which human life commences) and values clarification (e.g. in what circumstances, if any, abortion is a positive choice).

## **9 Aspects of sexual behaviour raised outside the sex education programme**

- 9.1 The teaching of apparently unrelated topics may occasionally lead to a discussion of aspects of sexual behaviour. Provided that such a discussion is relatively limited and set within the context of the other

subject concerned, it will not necessarily form part of the School sex education programme.

- 9.2 In such cases, particularly since they may involve students whose parents have withdrawn them from sex education as such, teachers will need to balance the need to give proper attention to relevant issues with the need to respect students' and parents' views and sensibilities.
- 9.3 The Governing Body expects that teachers will draw upon their professional judgement and common sense to deal effectively with such occurrences and that they will be conversant with this policy document and act accordingly.

## **10 HIV/AIDS/Sexually Transmitted Diseases**

- 10.1 The publicity in public health campaigns and strong media attention have put AIDS into the language of even very young children.
- 10.2 Students in all age groups need to know the difference between HIV and AIDS, modes of transmission, basic hygiene and risky behaviours (for young children, for example, picking up discarded needles or any skin piercing, for older students sharing needles and specific sexual behaviour).
- 10.3 All need to learn that there are no risky groups, only risky behaviours, and that there is no danger from persons with AIDS in any normal social contact.
- 10.4 Although HIV/AIDS have received the majority of publicity in recent years, young adults need to know that there are other sexually transmitted diseases.

## **11 Homosexuality**

- 11.1 The Governing Body recognises the need to address the issue of homosexuality and the need to provide education related to the spread of HIV/AIDS which will, of necessity, include reference to homosexuals and bisexuals. Objective discussion of homosexuality may take place in the classroom.
- 11.2 The Governing Body will not permit the promotion of homosexuality.

## **12 Sexuality and physical development**

- 12.1 The awareness of self and physical changes that occur are important in sex education, including development and puberty (physical/mental and social development) and acceptance of the nature of the sexuality in others together with the pressures imposed by such groups as peers and the media.

### **13 Sensitive issues**

- 13.1 Avoiding sensitive or controversial issues does not make them go away and leaves children and young people confused and at risk. All official documentation is in favour of the discussion of topics such as contraception, abortion, homosexuality, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

### **14 Visiting speakers**

- 14.1 Visiting speakers may be used to help enhance the sex education programme. Where they are used, they will be required to conform to this policy statement. Health professionals are bound by their professional codes of conduct in a one-to-one situation with individual students but, in a classroom situation, they should follow the School's Confidentiality Policy.

### **15 Confidentiality Policy**

- 15.1 Teachers are required to adhere to the School's policy on confidentiality between themselves and students as set out within this section.
- 15.2 Students should be reassured that their best interests will be maintained. However, teachers cannot offer or guarantee absolute confidentiality. If confidentiality has to be broken, the student should be informed first and then supported, as appropriate.
- 15.3 It is only in the most exceptional circumstances that the School should be in the position of having to handle information without parental knowledge. Where younger children are involved this will be grounds for serious concern and child protection issues will need to be addressed.
- 15.4 Students should be encouraged to talk to their parents and given support to do so. If there is evidence of abuse, the School's child protection procedure should be adhered to, ensuring that students are informed of sources of confidential help, for example, the School nurse, counsellor, GP or local young person's advice service.

### **16 Monitoring, Evaluation and Review**

- 16.1 The Governing Body will review this policy at least every two years and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the School.

### **Reference**

"Sex and Relationship Education Guidance", DCSF (2000)