



RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION Proposed Changes Information Sheet

In June 2023 the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland introduced legislation regarding the teaching of elements of Relationships and Sexuality Education at **post-primary level**.

The legislation makes changes to the Learning for Life and Work Curriculum in the area of Relationships and Sexuality Education at Key Stages 3 and 4 – in post-primary schools – and requires that young people receive:
‘age-appropriate, comprehensive and scientifically accurate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights covering prevention of early pregnancy and access to abortion.’

Schools, including Boards of Governors, must have ‘regard to guidance’ issued by the Department of Education, and DE is also required to make provision for pupils, at the request of their parents/carers, to opt-out of these aspects of the RSE Curriculum.

DE has to be in a position to implement these new aspects of the curriculum by 1 January 2024.

DE continues to update its information on RSE and relevant developments on its website at [Relationship and Sexuality Education \(RSE\) | Department of Education \(education-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/Relationship-and-Sexuality-Education-RSE).

CCEA & the RSE Hub

For a number of years now CCEA has hosted an RSE Hub on its website which can be found at [Relationships and Sexuality Education \(RSE\) | CCEA](https://www.ccea.org.uk/Relationships-and-Sexuality-Education-RSE). The Hub contains links to a progression framework and a number of resources related to each area of learning. There is no compulsion on any school or teacher to use these resources, the CCEA RSE Hub clearly states that *“teachers should... review resources before using them to check that they’re appropriate for their pupils and in line with their school’s ethos and RSE policy”*.

CCEA has been commissioned by DE to develop guidance on the new aspects of the curriculum covering prevention of early pregnancy and access to abortion. TRC representatives are part of a stakeholder group which CCEA is keeping informed of developments.

Chair: Dr Andrew Brown

Secretary: Dr Peter Hamill
Board of Education NI
Church of Ireland
Floor 2, 18-20 Hill Street
Belfast
BT1 2LA
Tel: 028 90828860
Email: edunorth@rcbcoi.org



RSE policy within schools

It remains the case that the RSE policy of a school should be agreed by the Board of Governors, in line with a school's ethos which, within controlled schools, is a non-denominational Christian ethos. There should also be consultation with parents, and the RSE policy should be made available on the school's website. None of these provisions have been changed by the new legislation.

For more information on school ethos please visit www.csscni.org.uk/ethos.

Consultation

DE have opened a period of consultation (Friday, 1 September to Friday, 24 November) on the proposed opt-out provision which will allow parents/carers to withdraw their pupil from aspects of the RSE curriculum. Details can be found at [Relationships and Sexuality Education \(RSE\) Consultation | Department of Education \(education-ni.gov.uk\)](http://Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Consultation | Department of Education (education-ni.gov.uk)))

As yet there has been no sign of a consultation on the guidance being developed by CCEA on prevention of early pregnancy and access to abortion. The latter consultation may also take the opportunity ask for views on the recent [NI Human Rights Commission report on RSE](#) and the [Education and Training Inspectorate report on the Preventative Curriculum](#). The consultation on the guidance should indicate the full extent of the changes proposed by DE and provide an opportunity to offer feedback on those changes.

In the meantime, TRC will continue to engage with CCEA, DE and relevant elected representatives on these matters.

For more information please Dr Peter Hamill, Secretary to TRC as per details below.

Chair: Dr Andrew Brown

Secretary: Dr Peter Hamill
Board of Education NI
Church of Ireland
Floor 2, 18-20 Hill Street
Belfast
BT1 2LA
Tel: 028 90828860
Email: edunorth@rcbcoi.org