

# SEXUAL HEALTH & RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION



Why? When?  
Where? How?  
What?

**A Leaflet for Parents and Carers**

This leaflet may be copied, unaltered, by organisations and individuals to whom it has been circulated by the Church of Scotland Church and Society Council.

Parents and carers have a key role to play in the education of their children. In the spring of 2000 the Scottish Executive issued a *Guide for Parents and Carers* on Sex Education in Scottish Schools. All parents with children at school should have received one of these Guides.

**The Guide explains that parents should be involved in discussing the programme of Sex Education to be taught with their children. National advice to schools sets out ways of how parents should be consulted and given advance information on the planned programme and the teaching materials to be used.**

There has been a lot of controversy recently about materials that are available for teachers to use. Some parents may well feel that these materials are unsuitable for their children but WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE OF UNSUITABLE MATERIAL ACTUALLY BEING USED WITH CHILDREN IN SCOTTISH SCHOOLS. The list of materials in the Health Education Guidelines is not part of a recommended programme. It is for Head teachers, teachers and parents to discuss what is appropriate for a school sexual health & relationships education programme.

The purpose of this leaflet is to help parents understand what is to be taught in a programme of sexual health & relationships education from a Christian perspective.

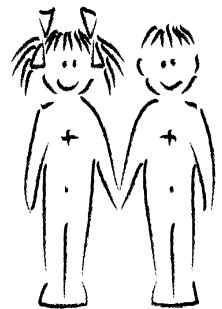
## WHERE?

### Where will Sex Education be taught?

Elements of sex education will be found in many areas of the curriculum such as:

- Personal and Social Education
- Health Education
- Guidance
- Religious and Moral Education
- Biology/Science

From this list we can see that many teachers may be involved in a pupil's sex education.



# WHY?

## Why sexual health & relationships education in schools at all?

- Sexual health & relationships education is an important part of children's preparations for adult life.
- From quite a young age pupils today are exposed to all kinds of publicity through TV, magazines and advertising which highlight sexual attractiveness and sexual activity as if these were the main aims in growing up.
- Much of this publicity underplays the importance of stable family life and relationships.
- There is a need to foster self esteem and a sense of responsibility, including respect for self and others and aspects of personal health and keeping safe.
- In spite of the so-called maturity of young people there is still a great deal of ignorance about sexual activity and parenting.
- Little or nothing is said in the media about the importance of values and beliefs.
- Many parents find it difficult to discuss sex and relationships with their children.

# WHEN?

It is important that sexual health & relationships education programmes should be well matched to a pupil's needs and level of maturity. Experience of life, physical development and level of maturity will vary from pupil to pupil. This presents a challenge particularly to the primary school teacher who may be teaching a wide variety of stages of development. Therefore a good programme will also revisit major stages of development, e.g. puberty issues are often taught annually from P6 onwards.

# HOW?

Parents can expect teachers to deal with the issues of sexual health and relationships education with sensitivity, due regard and care for the young people they teach and the wishes of their parents. They make selective use of classroom materials but also take time to create a positive atmosphere where the issues can be discussed and pupils can ask questions. Remember, many teachers are also parents!

# WHAT?

## What will be taught and what are key aims of sex education?

- The purpose of sex education is to provide knowledge and understanding of the nature of sexuality and the processes of reproduction **within the context of relationships based on love and respect.**
- Pupils should be encouraged to appreciate the value of stable family life, the responsibility of having children and the importance of family relationships.
- Pupils should learn to appreciate the value placed on marriage by religious groups and others in Scottish society.
- Pupils should also develop skills necessary for a healthy and safe approach to life.

# WHAT CAN YOU DO?

You can help your children in this area as in every other part of the curriculum.

- Ask your children what they are they are doing at school. Listen to your children and talk with them.
- Read the magazines aimed at young people so you are aware of the messages and pressures on them.
- Attend any meeting called to discuss the sex education of your child
- Ask how allowance will be made for the different family backgrounds from which the children come and how teachers will ensure sensitivity to these issues.
- Ask that what will be taught is suitable for your children's age and maturity.
- If you are in any doubt about the suitability of lesson material ask to see it and have it explained to you.
- Ask if there is a moral dimension to what is being taught.
- Ask that Christian views of relationships and marriage are included in what is being taught.
- Appreciate the challenge teachers face in dealing with this subject. Do what you can to support them and co-operate with them!