



**Note: This electronic version was re-typed from the original in March, 2007**

**To: Boards of Management! Authorities of Second-Level Schools**

**M20/96**

## **RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION**

### **1. BACKGROUND**

The White Paper on Education "Charting our Education Future" (Chapter 13) sets out the role of schools in promoting the social, personal and health education of students; One of the positive interventions outlined is;

*"the provision of a relationships and sexuality education programme beginning at the early stages of primary education and continued as appropriate to all levels of students, which would involve close co-operation with parents, support and complement the work of the home and in keeping with the ethos of the school."*

[Circular M4/95](#) was issued to all second level schools in January 1995 setting out the parameters of the programme and the basis for future development. Following the issue of the Circular, three Working Groups were established to facilitate and support work on the arrangements for the introduction of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) into schools. These Groups were:

- an Implementation Group, representative of the Department of Education, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and the Partners in Education, which was established to identify and develop the necessary supports for the implementation of RSE, including guidelines for training programmes. The Group has reported to the Minister.
- an Interdepartmental Group, representative of the Departments of Education and Health, which was established to identify existing initiatives which could assist in the further development of RSE. This Group has completed its work.
- an NCCA Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Committee.

## **2. CURRICULUM AND GUIDELINES FOR RSE**

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has developed interim curriculum and guidelines for RSE. Draft guidelines were issued in June 1995. These guidelines have been revised in the light of responses received and comments made on the draft.

The interim curriculum and revised guidelines will be circulated at the information seminars for Principals and Vice-Principals - See Para 4. Following the information seminars, the interim curriculum and guidelines will be disseminated to all schools as part of the process of introducing RSE into schools.

## **3. IMPLEMENTATION IN SCHOOLS**

[Circular M4/95](#) indicated that it was necessary for schools to commence a process of developing a school-policy with a view to including RSE, and wider aspects of Social, Personal and Health Education in their curricula in the school year 1995/96, if not already being done.

Many schools have made considerable progress in developing policies and in including RSE in their curricula. Progress in implementing the programmes varies in accordance with local circumstances. Following an appropriate process of consultation and policy development, including review, within the individual schools it is intended that all schools will have an agreed school policy and a suitable RSE Programme in place during the school year 1996/97.

## **4. INFORMATION SEMINARS FOR PRINCIPALS**

To facilitate the introduction of Relationships and Sexuality Education into schools, information seminars for Principals and/or Vice Principals will commence before the end of the present school year. Details of these seminars will be communicated to schools by the Training Support Service in cooperation with the Education Centre Network.

## **5. POSITION OF RSE WITHIN THE CURRICULUM**

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment has initiated the development of a programme of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) which will ultimately encompass relationships and sexuality education. The SPHE programme will include elements of good practice already operating in many second-level schools.

On the introduction of the SPHE programme, which will involve one class period per week, the RSE programme will become an element of SPHE. It is intended that RSE will be delivered during 6 class periods per year. School policy will determine the context of the RSE programme and delivery will involve a co-ordinated approach, including both core class periods and cross curricular work.

## **6. TRAINING AND PROGRAMME SUPPORT**

The overall training programme, which will be provided during the 1996/7 school year will include:

- training for teachers
- information/training for parents
- assistance with school policy formulation.

Details of the training programme will be advised to schools in due course.

The Training Support Service is based in Drumcondra Education Centre, Dublin 9 and works in cooperation with the Education Centre Network. The Co-ordinator is **Ms. Nora Brennan**. The Drumcondra Education Centre can be contacted by telephone at (01 )8367624 and by FAX at (01) 8571128.

## **7. COLLECTION OF INFORMATION ON RELATED PROGRAMMES**

A questionnaire requesting information on the following programmes which may be provided in your school is being prepared:

- the Substance Abuse Prevention Programme (SAPP),
- Social, Personal and Health Education and
- Relationships and Sexuality Education.

This information is required in order to assist in effective planning for Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). Your cooperation and assistance in completing the questionnaire which will be sent to you separately would be very much appreciated.

## **8. COPIES OF CIRCULAR**

Additional copies of this Circular are -enclosed. School authorities are requested to provide a copy of this Circular to the parents' and teachers' representatives on the Board of Management, where such exists, and to parents' association/National Parents Council representatives or other appropriate representatives of the parents/teachers for transmission to individual parents and teachers.

Con Haugh,  
Principal.  
21 May 1996.