

Relationships and Sexuality Education - Oral Briefing from EA

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Submitted to DALO on 6 September 2024 Ruth.Galwey@education-ni.gov.uk

1. Department of Education (DE) Policy requires each grant-aided school to have in place a policy on how it will address the delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) within its curricular provision. The Department advises that this policy should be developed through a process which includes consultation with parents and pupils. Each school's RSE Policy must be considered and formally approved by its Board of Governors and reviewed on a regular basis.
2. EA has a range of duties in relation to the provision of training and advice for school governors. In fulfilling these duties, EA works in close collaboration with the Department's School Governance Team to make available information for all school governors regarding their responsibilities, including those relating to the Curriculum. The Department of Education's Governor Guide, published in online format on their website (see [The Governor Guide | Department of Education \(education-ni.gov.uk\)](#)) includes information on the Northern Ireland Curriculum and also on policies required by schools, under legislation or policy.

EA also makes available a wide-ranging Governor training programme, to support governors in all schools to fulfil their responsibilities. This training programme is currently provided through an on-line portal which is managed by EA. It includes a module which provides an overview of the changes in RSE provision and policy for post primary schools resulting from The Relationships and Sexuality Education (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations 2023.

3. As the managing authority for all Controlled schools, EA recognises that the controlled sector includes a wide and diverse family of schools, across a range of communities, with a range of perspectives on school ethos. EA also recognises that decisions on a wide range of aspects of school provision are delegated, under legislation, to the Boards of Governors of individual schools. Our partner body, the Controlled Schools Support Council (CSSC) has developed particular expertise in supporting individual controlled schools to reflect on and self-evaluate their ethos.

Advice and guidance materials, to support teachers in the delivery of all aspects of the Curriculum, including RSE, are provided by the CCEA, through its website: <https://ccea.org.uk/> This website includes a dedicated RSE Hub area.

EA School Improvement officers provide guidance to school principals on a wide range of issues, including curricular provision and in this regard will 'signpost' principals and teachers to the extensive resources and support materials available from CCEA.

4. Whilst the EA's predecessor bodies, the Education and Library Boards, provided a Curriculum Advisory and Support Service, which included specialist support teams for a range of curricular areas of learning, this service was not included in the re-structuring process associated with the establishment of EA. Instead, a School Development Service (SDS) was put in place, with a significantly smaller staffing complement and a broader focus on supporting school improvement. EA's School Development Service does not

currently include any specialist curriculum support teams, focussed on providing Teacher Professional Learning in specific elements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. However, EA has a track record in designing and delivering Professional Learning and Development programmes to support the raising of standards and provision in specific elements of the curriculum, in circumstances where ear-marked funding is made available to EA.

Examples include the provision of system-wide programmes to support the delivery of Literacy and Numeracy, to develop and embed Shared Education, to support the introduction at Key Stage 3 of CPR awareness and some sector specific professional learning for practitioners in Irish Medium settings. In these examples, the provision of additional ear-marked funding has enabled the EA to develop, lead and project manage the delivery of highly regarded and positively evaluated programmes, through teams which include seconded expert practitioners from schools and partnership working with relevant partner bodies.