

## **2.6 SEX EDUCATION POLICY**

### **1. Basic Information**

Date: Policy drafted between September 1994 and September 1995  
Reviewed April 1998

Process: A working party of governors and staff met in May after initial work had been done by the Deputy Head (Guidance), the Senior Tutor and the Head of Science. The draft was introduced to staff to ensure that all relevant procedures were understood on an INSET day in June. The Governors presented the policy to parents in September before adopting it as a full Governing Body.

### **2. Background**

Moulton School is a fully comprehensive maintained co-educational school for children aged 11-18. Pupils are drawn mainly from surrounding villages but approximately ten per cent of the pupils live in the Borough. There is a very small proportion of children from ethnic and religious minorities and a small proportion of children with special educational needs.

### **3. Aims of our Sex Education Policy and Programme:**

Moulton School believes that sex education is an educational entitlement of all pupils and an integral part of each person's emergence into adulthood.

We aim:

- to encourage personal responsibility in all forms of behaviour;
- to encourage respect and consideration for others;
- to encourage self-esteem;
- to provide support and information for our pupils and their parents.

#### **Objectives:**

- to promote within our pupils the value of family life, and to help them understand the implications and responsibilities of parenthood;
- to promote understanding of, and respect for, the varied cultural and religious influences on individual sexuality;
- to make pupils aware of the value of delaying their first full sexual experience, as this should be something special, reflecting a deep, mutual commitment;
- to provide reliable and up-to-date information in an attempt to promote a healthy and responsible lifestyle;

- to create a programme of progressive learning which caters for pupils' needs and is sensitive to individuals and groups;
- to generate an atmosphere where questions and discussion on sexual matters can take place without embarrassment;
- to reduce anxiety among pupils by counteracting misleading myth and folklore and false assumptions of "normal" behaviour and appearance;
- to provide reassurance that change is part of the life-cycle and that rates of individual development vary;
- to help our pupils to affirm their rights, to be able to resist unwanted touch or advances and to communicate about such matters;
- to develop awareness of sexual identity, to challenge sexism and prejudice in society and to promote equal opportunities;
- to make our pupils aware of sources of help and guidance within the community and to help them acquire the skills and confidence to use them;
- to inform our pupils of the legal situation with respect to sexual matters;
- to enable our pupils to appreciate the contribution that being sexually active within a mature and stable relationship can make to fulfilment in life.

#### **4. Content**

Sex Education provides knowledge, and encourages the acquisition of skills and attitudes which will allow pupils to manage their lives in a responsible and healthy way.

##### a) Knowledge and information

- Year 7:** Changes in our bodies: puberty/menstruation  
 Relationships: Good and Bad; Personal Safety  
 Gender issues  
 Families and celebrations to do with birth and puberty
- Year 8:** Sexual reproduction and contraception  
 Sexual stereotyping  
 HIV/AIDS  
 Dating/Changes in Relationships/Loving

- Year 9:** Sexual relationships and personal decisions  
Contraception  
Pregnancy and childbirth in the context of a loving and supportive relationship  
HIV/AIDS  
Sexually Transmitted Diseases
- Year 10:** Assertiveness and self-confidence  
Relationships  
HIV/AIDS  
Loving and caring for others and parenting  
Sources of help (e.g. Relate)
- Year 11:** Parenting Skills  
Marriage and Commitment  
Separation and divorce  
Sexual lifestyles (including homosexuality, celibacy)  
Contraception  
Sexual exploitation and harassment (including rape)  
Embryo technology  
Maintaining good health  
Abortion

b) Values and beliefs

As well as knowledge and information pupils will be encouraged to consider the importance of the following values, which are derived from the school's value system:

- respect and valuing of themselves and others;
- understanding and sensitivity towards the needs and views of others;
- responsibility for their own actions;
- responsibility to the school, their family and the wider community.

c) Skills and abilities

Pupils will be helped to develop the following skills:

- communication in small group situations and in whole class ones;
- assertiveness;
- decision-making;
- recognising and using opportunities to develop a healthy lifestyle.

## 5. Organisation

a) Sex Education is jointly co-ordinated by the Senior Guidance Tutor and Head of Science who are responsible for the overall planning, implementation and review of the programme.

b) Delivery is through

- **planned** aspects within Science and PSE (Personal and Social Education);
- inevitably at times ethical issues relating to Sex Education may arise from apparently unrelated topics in all National Curriculum subjects. Within this category, as long as discussion takes place within the context of the subject, it will **not** be deemed to be part of the sex education programme and, therefore, not subject to the parental right of withdrawal.

c) Teaching approaches

A variety of approaches is used:

- to give pupils relevant information;
- to enable moral issues to be explored through discussion;
- to enable pupils to acquire appropriate skills.

Where outside speakers are involved, they will be made aware of the school's Sex Education Policy and they will work within its parameters.

d) Pupil groupings

Pupils are taught, in the main, in mixed ability and mixed gender groups

e) Resources

- Materials - A wide range of teaching resources is available to teachers.
- Staff - With regard to sex education, it is important that staff feel comfortable with the subject matter. Staff guidelines will be drawn up to support staff and some in-service training will be provided. All staff are asked to teach within the school's value framework (outlined in 3 and 4 above).

f) Time available

Sex education forms some part of the curriculum in every year group.

## 6. Specific Issues

The following issues may occur during the teaching of sex education. Staff, parents and pupils need to understand the school's procedures.

a) Confidentiality and advice

Pupils will be made aware that some information cannot be held confidential, and made to understand that if certain disclosures are made certain actions will follow. At the same time pupils will be offered sensitive and appropriate support. The following procedures will be adhered to by all adults:

- (i) Disclosure or suspicion of possible abuse - the school's child protection procedures will be invoked (see relevant policy)
- (ii) Disclosure of pregnancy or sexual relationship

It is hoped that the following procedure will ensure that pupils who are in difficulty or have a concern know that they can talk to an adult in the school and that they will be supported.

- the school will always encourage pupils to talk with their parent(s).
- pupils will be asked whether they can tell their parent(s) and whether they want help in doing so. If this takes place, subsequent responsibility then lies with the parent(s). It will need to be checked.
- if pupils refuse to tell their parent(s) the adult will refer them to a health professional (either the school nurse or their GP). The Deputy Head (Guidance) will be involved at this stage.
- the Deputy Head (Guidance) will inform the Head of the situation and will then consult with the health professional about informing the parent(s).

(b) Family life

The value of family life is an important aspect which will be approached largely through a consideration of the qualities and relationships between the group of people, with an emphasis on stability, respect, caring and support.

(c) As part of the sex education programme, issues of contraception, HIV/AIDS, sexuality and abortion are addressed. Facts are presented in an objective and balanced way, with pupils being encouraged to consider their attitudes and values within the framework set out in paragraph 4. They will be made aware of the difference between fact, opinion and religious belief.

(d) Parental partnership

Under the Education Act (1996) parents have the right to withdraw their children from all or part of the sex education programme. Parents wishing to exercise that right are asked to fill in the proforma and return it to the Deputy Head (Guidance). Parents are encouraged to make an appointment with the Deputy Head to discuss the issues but are under no obligation to do so. Once a child has been withdrawn s/he cannot take part in any sex education lessons without written parental approval.

(e) Complaints procedure

Any complaints about the sex education curriculum should be made to the head who will report to the governors via the link governor (see below).

## 8. Monitoring and review

- a) Sex education will be monitored by the Deputy Head (Guidance), the Senior Guidance Tutor and the Head of Science.
- b) An annual report will be made to governors and a summary included in their annual report to parents.
- c) A nominated governor will be a link between the school and the governing body.
- d) Reviews of this policy will be made at appropriate stages the first being July 1997.

#### **9. Dissemination of the policy**

A summary of this policy is in the school prospectus. The full policy is available to parents on request. The full programmes of study can be viewed at school by prior arrangement.

#### **10. Other policies which have relevance to sex education are:**

- Equal opportunities
- Child Protection
- Anti-Bullying
- Spiritual and Moral Development
- Behaviour Policy

## **Guidelines for Staff on Sex Education and Related Matters**

Sex Education inevitably covers some controversial and sensitive areas about which the parents and community as a whole will have differing viewpoints and perspectives. It is, therefore, important for teachers that there are clear guidelines on how to respond to particular situations so that all those involved in teaching Sex Education are operating with consistency and within the parameters approved and endorsed by the Governing Body. These guidelines will hopefully give teachers confidence by anticipating some potential situations, offering advice on how to cope with them and emphasising procedures in particular situations which will safeguard them professionally. The guidelines cover the following areas:

- (1) Advice to individual pupils and confidentiality.
- (2) Handling Questions
- (3) Homosexuality as a topic
- (4) The teacher's own views and opinions
- (5) Terminology

### **1. Advice to individual pupils and confidentiality**

Circular 5/94 on Sex Education states:

“It is important to distinguish between, on the one hand, the school's function of providing education generally about sexual matters...and, on the other, counselling and advice to individual pupils on these issues, particularly if this relates to their own sexual behaviour. Good teachers have always taken a pastoral interest in the welfare and well-being of their pupils. But this function should never trespass on the proper exercise of parental rights and responsibilities.

Particular care must be exercised in relation to contraceptive advice to pupils under 16 for whom sexual intercourse is unlawful. The general rule must be that giving an individual pupil advice on such matters without parental knowledge or consent would be an inappropriate exercise of a teacher's professional responsibilities.”

This is very clear and unexceptionable. Reality, however, tends to come in shades of grey rather than black and white: whereas teachers are most unlikely to be asked for contraceptive advice, they sometimes are aware of the fact that two underaged pupils are having sexual intercourse and indeed are sometimes approached in a time of crisis (eg suspected pregnancy or burst condom). Equally, some pupils find relations at home very strained or difficult and find it easier (and more supportive) to talk to a teacher about their personal situation than their parent(s).

The procedures outlined below aim to balance the needs of pupils for sensitive and appropriate support with the professional interests and wellbeing of staff; they try, in other words, to be sensitive to both the pupil and the staff dimension. If a pupil approaches you with a personal problem or worry, it is important that you make clear to him/her that some information cannot remain confidential and that if certain disclosures are made, certain actions will follow. At the same time it is important that the pupil feels appropriately and sensitively supported. Please can we all follow the procedures below:

- (i) Disclosure or suspicion of possible abuse: the school's child protection procedures will be invoked (see Staff Handbook)
- (ii) Disclosure of pregnancy or sexual intercourse: It is hoped that the following procedure will ensure that pupils who are in difficulty know they can talk to an adult in the school and that they will be supported.
  - the school will always encourage pupils to talk with their parents. We can offer to be present at that meeting if that is seen as helpful by the pupil. If the pupil undertakes to tell the parent himself/herself, subsequent responsibility then lies with the parent(s). **We need to check sensitively that the proposed communication has actually taken place (ie we need to ensure that the parents are informed).**
  - \* if pupils refuse to tell their parent(s), the adult confided in should refer them to a health professional (this will probably be the school nurse but could be the pupil's GP). The Deputy Head (Guidance) will probably need to be involved at this point.
  - the adult should report the incident to the Deputy Head (Guidance) (if s/he is not aware already) who will inform the head teacher and will then consult with the health professional about informing the parent(s).

In the majority of the above cases, the Educational Welfare Officer will also be informed.

We hope that the procedures above enable staff to act in the best interests of their charges whilst at the same time they afford them due professional safeguards. The fact that as part of our Sex Education provision, pupils will be informed of local health services and support may well mean fewer will need to approach teachers for individual advice. It is important that collectively we act in a consistent way and our hope is that these procedures help to promote this.

## 2. Handling Questions

In a lot of topics within Sex Education, inevitably, explicit and sensitive questions will be asked. There is no definitive ruling as to what constitutes an appropriate question or an appropriate response but we hope this guidance will prove helpful.

## **A Balancing Act**

PSE should provide pupils with an opportunity to clarify any uncertainties or pose any questions they have with respect to a specific topic. PSE is trying to meet the needs of pupils and, therefore, needs to respond to genuine questions which are raised. This is one very strong reason for using the form tutor for PSE as s/he has hopefully developed a strong relationship with his/her form.

However, the form tutor needs to feel comfortable with the questions raised and just as importantly perhaps needs time to consider what the most appropriate response to a particular question might be. We need also to guard against the “set-up” question which is asked just to “test” the tutor and we don’t want a situation where the agenda is mainly being set by the most “ knowledgeable members in the class posing particularly explicit questions.

So a balancing act has to be struck which is responsive to pupils’ questions but which allows the teacher some discretion over which questions are dealt with. We need also to have regard to likely parental viewpoints and perspectives. Hopefully the strategies below will help us to maintain this delicate balancing act.

1. Encourage questions on the specific area that has been the subject of the lesson.
2. Build in some time in your lessons for written questions which you then collect in. Get pupils to put their names on the sheet but make clear you will deal with the questions anonymously. Also make clear that you will not be able to deal with ALL the questions but you will deal with the ones that are asked by several members of the class. This method has the following advantages:
  - Pupils can ask questions without embarrassment and free from possible peer response/pressure;
  - You as teacher get an overview of what uncertainties the class as a whole has and what areas would benefit from further discussion and exploration;
  - You as teacher are more in charge of the agenda and can prepare in advance what to say (and indeed can seek guidance/further information from colleagues);
  - Not all questions need to be covered.

3. With controversial questions, give the minimum information necessary to answer the question. Not of course a one word answer but problems can arise if too detailed an explanation is attempted.
4. Do not hesitate to defer a question or to say something like, "I'll consider how I can best answer that question for next week's session". That gives you time to consult others if necessary and/or to consider how most appropriately to respond to the question.
5. Questions raised should be relevant to the actual topic under discussion: so relevance is a criterion as to whether to answer a particular question or not.
6. Our view is that answering a particularly sensitive question raised by a pupil by seeing him/her individually at the end of the lesson (or some other time) is **NOT** a good idea. We feel this could place you in a vulnerable position professionally and it might have repercussions on the pupil from his/her peers. In the light of this, please

**either** answer the question in the whole class situation at that time or later

**or** do NOT answer the question at all

If, however, a particular question gives you cause for concern over an individual pupil's circumstances, please liaise with his/her Head of House to decide what the most appropriate way forward might be.

This guidance clearly does not meet all eventualities and at the end of the day we all need to rely on our professional judgement and intuition as to what constitutes an appropriate (say, in respect to age) question and an appropriate response. Our hope is that this guidance will provide a supportive framework for your work on Sex Education.

### **3. Homosexuality as a topic**

Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 made it an offence to "intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality". The key word here is "promote" and there is a world of difference between discussing a topic and actively "promoting" it and you as teachers should not be discouraged from discussing homosexuality generally as one of a range of lifestyles nor specifically in relation to HIV and AIDS. Discussing or explaining a practice or form of behaviour is neither promoting it nor advocating it.

If we as teachers are to be responsible for helping young people know themselves, all forms of sexuality should be openly, properly and sensitively considered. Discussing homosexuality can be a delicate area. Health Education

from 5-16 (DES 1986) states: "This is difficult territory for teachers to traverse and needs to be dealt with objectively and sensitively".

Questions of gay and lesbian sexuality are likely to be raised at any time during discussions about HIV and AIDS. They need to be responded to (as appropriate to a particular age group). The consequences of not discussing this area of sexuality are that:

- (i) young people will be inhibited from thinking and acting sensibly about their own and others' developing sexuality;
- (ii) fallacies and prejudices about sexual behaviour will continue to grow;
- (iii) the spread of HIV will be that much harder to prevent.

Whilst homosexuality will be discussed in the context of HIV and AIDS, it will also be examined and considered in a topic (in Year 11) on Sexual lifestyles and options.

#### **4. The Teacher's Own Views and Opinions**

A lot of the issues which are subsumed under Sex Education are ones on which individuals hold strong views: abortion, sex with a number of different partners, homosexuality for example. The discussion of these issues should be objective and should attempt to explore all sides of the argument honestly. Some account of the law applying to sexual relationships involving children under 16, to homosexuality and to abortion should be given. Clearly individual teachers have views of their own about these matters and often pupils will want to know, and seek to find out, where the teachers stand. Given that pupils are apt to place great weight upon what teachers say in these matters, teachers have to set out their own views with the utmost care while pointing out that other people, including the pupils' own parents, might sincerely and properly hold quite different views.

#### **5. Terminology**

Each subject area uses language specific to that subject. Pupils have to learn and understand each language and use it appropriately. Teaching sensitive or controversial issues also involves the use of special language and vocabulary. However, there is a difference: such issues also carry with them a colloquial language.

It is our view that the appropriate subject-specific vocabulary and terms should be taught, agreed and used by both teachers and pupils. Most pupils have expectations of how teachers should talk and the language they should use: they want the teacher to act like a teacher. When teachers use pupils' colloquial language, they can make an unwelcome move into a different world and an

inappropriate role. Most young people need their teacher to behave consistently within their role so that they can take up their own role as pupils.

In addition, our pupils need to know the correct subject-specific language for different situations and it is part of our responsibility to teach this. If we are consistent in this, we all reinforce the work of each other.

The Sex Education Working Party

October 1995

# **MOULTON SCHOOL**



## **Sex Education Policy**

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