

SHIMNA INTEGRATED COLLEGE

SEX EDUCATION POLICY

1 Sex education should:

contribute to the overall pastoral programme and subject curriculum;

address the current interest and concerns of students;

contribute to students' preparation for their future;

provide students with opportunities to reflect on what they know and understand about their developing sexuality;

provide students with opportunities to reflect on how opinions are formed, and how judgements and decisions are arrived at;

increase students' awareness of the complex of family, peer, cultural, social, spiritual and denominational influences which form our consciousness;

provide information and make students aware of sources of information on matters of sexuality.

2 Aims of the Sex Education Policy:

to provide accurate information;

to challenge misinformation;

to provide contexts for the development of social skills and personal judgement;

to provide a forum for the exploration of values and attitudes;

to prepare students to live safely, whatever sexual choices they may make, and whatever sexual circumstances they may find themselves in;

to challenge intolerance and prejudice in matters of sexuality;

to empower students in protecting themselves from attack and abuse;

to encourage in students self-esteem, self-awareness and empathy with others in order to make autonomous choices;

to enable students to articulate for themselves the pressures and influences on choice,

such as personal faith, denominational factors, family values, desire for independence, health risks, the law, peer pressure, plans for the future;

to explore and defuse the kinds of language students may use or encounter with regard to sexuality, such as scientific language, slang, family euphemisms, abusive language;

to make students aware of sources of help on matters of relationships and sexuality, such as help within school, at home, within the local community, professional help, voluntary organisations, publications;

to convey to students that any sexual concern whatever can be addressed in some context or another, that help is available within and beyond the school;

to offer a variety of contexts for addressing aspects of sexuality, such as mixed-sex groups, single-sex groups, whole class discussion, small group talk, one to one;

to respect the fact that students will be at differing stages of maturity and curiosity, and to protect the peace of mind of all students.

3 Organisation of Sex Education

Sex education will form part of both the science curriculum and the pastoral care programme. Aspects of sex education, particularly those matters touching on values, attitudes and language, impinge across the curriculum.

In year 8, sex education within the pastoral care programme will take the form of four sessions of one hour, spread over four weeks, and taught to the four classes in rotation with the drugs education unit and a unit on nutrition.

Sex education will be taught in mixed-sex groups, but provision will be made for a single sex session within pastoral care to ensure that every student finds a context in which she or he feels comfortable in raising matters of concern.

Outside speakers will be invited to contribute to the programme. In year 9 and year 11, the Tampax representative will be invited to speak to the girls about menstruation and all forms of sanitary protection. Menstruation will be covered with the boys in an alternative session organised by the college.

4 Withdrawal from the Sex Education Programme

The very nature of an integrated college means that throughout the sex education programme staff and students will be aware that the various faith communities differ in their teaching with regard to aspects of sexuality. Coverage of topics will be comprehensive and inclusive, and students will be actively encouraged to explore the values of their family and faith, and to respect the attitudes and beliefs of others, including those they do not share. It will be a priority for teachers to ensure that no

individual or small group is made to feel isolated or odd, nor encouraged to do other than to think for themselves within their personal family and faith context.

"All cultures and religious groups will be respected equally and the students will be aware of the ideas, beliefs and practices of major world religions and humanist philosophies" (Shimna College prospectus)

The different values evident in society will be articulated and respected, both those which promote "no risk" options and those which promote "safer sex" options". By developing both our policy and programme in the context of an integrated ethos, we hope that all parents will be happy to consent to their children participating in all aspects of the programme. The elements of the programme delivered through the science curriculum are a statutory requirement. Parents will be informed of the content and approach of the whole programme, and if it transpires that the views of an individual parent cannot be accommodated without compromising the entitlement of other parents and other students, that parent has the right to withdraw her or his child from the elements of the programme delivered through pastoral care.

5 Evaluation of the Sex Education Programme

Governors and the Parents' Council will be informed and consulted about the content and approach of the programme.

The programme will be developed year by year and evaluated each year by teachers and students, taking into account comments from governors and the parents' council.

The Board of Governors agrees with, and fully supports the contents and implementation of this policy.