



HealthFirst Sex and Relationship Education Policy

Introduction

Effective Sex and Relationship Education is essential to enable young people to make responsible and well informed decisions about their lives. Research shows that good, comprehensive Sex and Relationship Education does not make young people more likely to enter into sexual activity. In fact, it can make them realise the benefits of delaying sexual activity.

This policy outlines our approach at HealthFirst to Sex and Relationship Education in Independent International Schools in Switzerland. It acts to inform teachers and other staff members, as well as parents and guardians, about how we work to ensure that good quality Sex and Relationship Education is delivered to meet the needs of the children and young people taking part. It covers mixed gender Sex and Relationship Education provision to students from final year Primary and throughout Secondary level. Because of the nature of International Schools, we acknowledge that this policy needs to take into consideration students from a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

This policy has been developed after consulting the latest 'Sex and Relationship Education Guidance' document from the Department for Education and Employment (now the Department of Education), England, drawn up in 2000 and also the National Healthy Schools Standard (England) for Sex and Relationship Education, drawn up in 2001. HealthFirst will also ensure that any Sex and Relationship Education sessions that we deliver fit within the boundaries of a School's own Sex and Relationship Education Policy.

HealthFirst was founded by two British-trained doctors, Dr Penny Fraser and Dr Michelle Wright, in 2010 after they realised an unmet need for Anglophone health information and advice for Expats living in Switzerland. You can find more information about HealthFirst by visiting our website, www.healthfirst.ch

What is Sex and Relationship Education?

Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) is lifelong learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, relationships, sex, human sexuality and sexual health. It should equip children and young people with the information, skills and values to have safe, fulfilling and enjoyable relationships and to take responsibility for their sexual health and well-being. It involves acquiring information, developing skills and forming positive beliefs, values and attitudes.

Principles and values of HealthFirst Sex and Relationship Education

In addition to the above, HealthFirst believes that SRE should:

- ✓ Be an integral part of the lifelong learning process, beginning in early childhood and ending in adult life.
- ✓ Be an entitlement for all young people.
- ✓ Encourage every student to contribute to make our community.
- ✓ Support each individual as they grow and learn.

- ✓ Be set within the wider school context and support family commitment and love, respect and affection, knowledge and openness. (Note: Family is a broad concept; not just one model, e.g. nuclear family. It includes a variety of different types of family structure, and acceptance of different approaches.)
- ✓ Encourage students and teachers to share and respect each other's views. The important values are love, respect and care for each other.
- ✓ Generate an atmosphere where questions and discussion on sexual matters can take place without any stigma or embarrassment.
- ✓ Recognise that parents are the key people in teaching their children about sex, relationships and growing up. We aim to work in partnership with school staff members, parents and students, consulting them about the content of the programmes.
- ✓ Recognise that the wider community has much to offer. We aim to work in partnership with healthcare professionals, social workers, peer educators and other mentors or advisers as needed.

There are three main elements to SRE delivered by HealthFirst:

1. *Attitudes and Values*

- ✓ Learning the importance of values, individual conscience and moral choices.
- ✓ Learning the value of family life and stable and loving relationships for the nurture of children.
- ✓ Learning the value of respect, love and care.
- ✓ Exploring, considering and understanding moral dilemmas.
- ✓ Developing critical thinking and decision-making.
- ✓ Challenging myths, misconceptions and false assumptions about normal behaviour.

2. *Personal and Social Skills*

- ✓ Learning to manage emotions and relationships confidently and sensitively.
- ✓ Developing self-respect and empathy for others.
- ✓ Learning to make choices with an absence of prejudice.
- ✓ Developing an appreciation of the consequences of choices made.
- ✓ Managing conflict.
- ✓ Learning how to recognise and avoid exploitation and abuse.

3. *Knowledge and Understanding*

- ✓ Learning and understanding physical development at appropriate stages.
- ✓ Understanding human sexuality, reproduction, sexual health, emotions and relationships.
- ✓ Learning about contraception and the range of local and national sexual health advice, contraception and support services.
- ✓ Learning the reasons for delaying sexual activity and the benefits to be gained from such a delay.
- ✓ The avoidance of unplanned pregnancy.

Aims of HealthFirst Sex and Relationship Education

The aim of HealthFirst's SRE is to provide balanced, factual information about human reproduction, together with consideration of the broader emotional, ethical, cultural and moral dimensions of sexual health. SRE delivered by HealthFirst aims to prepare students for an adult life in which they can:

- ✓ Develop positive values and a moral framework that will guide their decisions, judgements and behaviour.

- ✓ Have the confidence and self-esteem to value themselves and others and have respect for individual conscience and the skills to judge what kind of relationship they want.
- ✓ Understand the consequences of their actions and behave responsibly within sexual and pastoral relationships.
- ✓ Avoid being exploited or exploiting others or being pressurised into unwanted or unprotected sex or risk taking behaviour.
- ✓ Communicate effectively by developing appropriate terminology for sex and relationship issues.
- ✓ Develop awareness of their sexuality and understand human sexuality; challenge sexism and prejudice, and promote equality and diversity.
- ✓ Understand the arguments for delaying sexual activity.
- ✓ Understand the reasons for having protected sex.
- ✓ Have sufficient information and skills to protect themselves and, where they have one, their partner from uninvited/unwanted conceptions and sexually transmitted infections including HIV.
- ✓ Be aware of sources of help and acquire the skills and confidence to access confidential health advice, support and treatment if necessary.
- ✓ Know how the law applies to sexual relationships.

Content of HealthFirst Sex and Relationship Education sessions

The content of HealthFirst SRE sessions can be tailored to school and pupil needs and will always be age-appropriate. Time available for sessions may affect the topics covered. HealthFirst suggests that at the very minimum, we deliver two sessions of 1 hour 15 minutes per session to each group of students. A more detailed scheme of work is agreed with each school before session delivery.

Amongst others, HealthFirst uses Family Planning Association (UK) age-appropriate resources when delivering SRE. The materials used are available for schools and parents/carers to review before session delivery as requested. They have been checked by HealthFirst for stereotyping, bias and prejudice.

Organisation of HealthFirst Sex and Relationship Education sessions

HealthFirst's team includes doctors, nurses and midwives with specialist training and/or a special interest in Sex and Relationship Education delivery in schools.

Planning and content of the SRE sessions is overseen by Dr Michelle Wright, a British-trained General Practitioner with a Certificate of Practical Competence in Delivering Sex and Relationship Education in the Classroom from Staffordshire University, England.

Sessions will be delivered to either mixed or single sex groups of similar age and maturity. Active learning methods which involve student's full participation are used.

The aim is that these HealthFirst sessions are not delivered in isolation but form part of on-going Sex and Relationship Education within the school as part of the curriculum during Personal, Social and Health Education and in accordance with the school's Sex and Relationship Education Policy.

At the beginning of any session, ground rules are established for the group with the HealthFirst doctor, nurse or midwife acting as facilitator. One of the rules will include prohibiting inappropriate personal information being requested or disclosed within the group. We aim to answer any questions from the students honestly, within the ground rules that have been established. If it is felt that answering a specific question would involve information inappropriate for the development of the rest of the students, the question may be dealt with individually at another time.

Views of HealthFirst on inclusion and Sex and Relationship Education

HealthFirst intends our policy to be sensitive to the needs of different ethnic backgrounds and cultural groups. For example, for some young people, it may not be culturally appropriate for them to be taught about particular topics in mixed groups. We will respond to school and parental requests and concerns and try to take appropriate measures.

We also aim to deal sensitively and honestly with issues of sexual orientation, answering any appropriate questions and offering support as necessary. We believe that young people, whatever their developing sexuality, need to feel that Sex and Relationship Education is relevant to them. There is no direct promotion of any particular sexual orientation.

We will also aim to offer provision of training to meet the particular needs of any students with special needs, taking specialist advice where appropriate.

Right of withdrawal of students from Sex and Relationship Education

HealthFirst respects the fact that some parents prefer to take responsibility for this element of their child's education. Parents/carers/guardians should have the right to withdraw their child from all, or part, of the Sex and Relationship Education sessions except those parts included in the Statutory School Curriculum.

We ask that parents/carers/guardians who wish to exercise this right are invited to the School to explore any concerns that they may have and to discuss the impact that withdrawal may have on the child. HealthFirst would also be available for consultation in such cases as needed.

Confidentiality, disclosures and child protection

As a general rule, in SRE sessions, HealthFirst will maintain the confidentiality of a student under the age of 16. However, HealthFirst cannot and will not offer unconditional confidentiality. If we believe that a student is at risk or in danger, we will talk to that student and also the named Child Protection Coordinator within the school. We ask that the school informs HealthFirst of who this person is and how to contact them before sessions start. The student concerned will be informed that their confidentiality is being breached and given the reasons why. This information will be made clear to all students at the start of any SRE sessions.

Monitoring and evaluation of HealthFirst Sex and Relationship Education

HealthFirst will continuously monitor and evaluate our SRE sessions by actively seeking feedback from students (using verbal feedback and/or written evaluation forms) and school staff members (through verbal feedback about how the sessions were received). We will ensure that we act on any feedback and modify our sessions as needed.

HealthFirst will also ensure that our team participate in regular Continuous Professional Development. We will liaise with other professionals in the local area so that we remain up-to-date with regards to any changes to local support services.

Dissemination of the HealthFirst Sex and Relationship Education Policy

This policy is available on our HealthFirst website (www.healthfirst.ch) and will also be disseminated to all schools enquiring about our Sex and Relationship Education sessions.

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