

## Looking at Myself and What I Bring to the Classroom

Teaching involves a complex combination of developing knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and behaviours. Being self-aware of what we bring to the classroom and ways in which ‘we teach who we are’<sup>1</sup> is particularly important in the context of teaching SPHE/RSE.

Self-awareness means reflecting on how your own experiences, attitudes, values and beliefs (and possible biases) have shaped your understanding of relationships and sexuality and considering how they might affect your approach to teaching SPHE/RSE and your responses to students’ different views, experiences and opinions.

Given that everyone is socialised in the society, family and community in which they grow up, it is no surprise that students and teachers may bring different values and attitudes, influenced by their upbringing, education, religious beliefs and experiences. Becoming more self-aware about the origin of your own beliefs and attitudes is an important first step in being able to facilitate open and non-judgemental dialogue within the classroom. This is needed so that students can be open and honest and a classroom environment is created where everyone feels a sense of belonging and their identities are respected.

Becoming more self-aware and comfortable with the subject matter will make all the difference when engaging with the students. Researching topics in advance, engaging with the resources on this toolkit, attending training, when possible, and planning collaboratively with other teachers will help you to feel more comfortable and confident.

### Other relevant topics

Teacher as facilitator

What makes a safe SPHE/RSE classroom?

What makes an inclusive SPHE/RSE classroom?

Dealing with challenging conversations

Dealing with disclosure about sexual abuse

### For Reflection

- Has my own experience of learning in RSE (both at home and at school) been a positive and useful preparation, for example
  - What was helpful about what I learned when I was taught about RSE?
  - What was unhelpful and what was missing?
  - What messages did I learn and how are they different to the vision for RSE that is now underpinning the curriculum?
- Reflecting on my own identity – sexual, gender, and any other aspects that might be relevant such as, religious, ethnic, ability –how might these impact on how I respond to classroom questions and discussion?
- What are my beliefs and opinions about gender roles, sexuality, sexual behaviour?
- What might help me in managing my own experiences/opinions/assumptions and allow me to approach topics in an open and inclusive way?
- How can I show a genuine respect and understanding for the diversity of views and values that may emerge while affirming core values of equality, respect and human rights and responsibilities?
- What are the topics I feel most comfortable teaching and what are the topics I feel least comfortable teaching? How can I deal with this? For example, would talking to a colleague be helpful or carefully reading through the resources in this toolkit?
- Am I able to express any concerns / fears I have about educating on the sensitive sexual content relating to RSE, and how best could I prepare and support myself?
- What qualities do I have that will help me to be engaged most effectively with the students?

<sup>1</sup>Palmer, P.J (1997). *The heart of the teacher*. p.15