



Newbridge Educate Together National School

Green Road, The Curragh, Co. Kildare

Rolla: 20177E

Relationships & Sexuality Education Policy

Please note that some explanatory tables and notes will not be included in this web version: the complete RSE policy will be available in the office from September 2011.

This policy is set out in accordance with the Department of Education and Science requirement for National Schools to provide a broad Social, Personal & Health Education (SPHE) programme, of which Relationships & Sexuality Education (RSE) is an integral part.

The policy document was drafted by an RSE Policy Committee (please see Appendix A for committee members). Comments and suggestions on the draft from the wider parent/guardian and staff community was encouraged during the spring term 2011 and the policy was revised and ratified in the summer term 2011. The Policy will be reviewed in September 2013.

What is RSE?

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

RSE is the part of the SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) curriculum that provides children with structured opportunities to develop the knowledge, attitudes, values, beliefs and practical skills necessary to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships as children and, subsequently, as adults.

RSE is a spiral programme from junior infants to sixth class, building-on and returning to similar topics each year to suit the age of the children.

It is school policy to teach the nine RSE themes each year, as detailed overleaf and in more detail in *Resource Materials for RSE* (inspection

copy will be available from the school office and the school's Parent Association secretary.)

The teaching approaches used will include: classroom discussion, group-work, games, art activities, using stories and poems, class round/circle time, quiet time, a visitor to the classroom, video, educational drama and debate.

For more detail see 'Resource Materials for RSE' (inspection copy will be available from the school office and the PA secretary) or visit www.ecdrumcondra.ie/programmes to view the 'Going Forward Together' information booklet.

Relationship to the Ethos of this School

SPHE permeates all aspects of school life, and its development and implementation are significantly influenced by our multidenominational, child-centred, democratically run and co-educational ethos.

Why do we need RSE?

Many children get information and misinformation about relationships and sexuality from television "soaps", in the playground, from older friends- in many settings and in many ways that parents cannot control and may not be too happy about. Furthermore, children may be picking up messages from television, videos and films such as "aggression works", "it's okay to be dishonest if you're not caught", "I can do exactly what I want, now!".

There is a need to help children and young people to listen, to distinguish between differing points of view and to express themselves in an appropriate way. An Advisory Group established by the Minister for Education in 1994 to advise on the introduction of RSE into schools quoted the following examples from research and common observation:

- .. children receive informal and unsupervised information about relationships and sexuality
- .. such information may be inadequate and inappropriate
- .. young people are already exposed to a variety of sexual practices and attitudes through the media, particularly television, film and magazines
- .. children are maturing physically at even earlier ages
- .. the roles of women and men in society are changing

“ the nature of family life is changing in a way that places many pressures on children and young people.

For these reasons, and because education is about developing skills for life as well as skills for learning, the Advisory Group concluded that there was a need for a soundly based programme of RSE in schools.

Parents/guardians as the primary educators of their children

Informal education for RSE begins from the moment the child is born. Everything a parent does as they interact with the child gives messages about human relationships in the broadest sense. For example, how the parent/guardian smiles at, talks to, cuddles and bathes the baby; how they dress and toilet-train the toddler; how they talk to the child about his or her body and how it works; how they encourage and answer questions; how family members get on with one another - all these colour children's attitudes towards themselves, towards others and towards the wider world.

Newbridge Educate Together NS supports and compliments the rights and responsibilities of parents/guardians in its approach to the teaching of RSE:

“ this policy document is provided to parents/guardians when their child joins the school. It lets them know what RSE is about and where they can find further information.

“ this document provides an outline of the RSE lessons and when they are taught, enabling parents/guardians to prepare their children in advance for a particular topic, if they so wish.

“ the class teachers provide copies of specific 'Home-School Links' letters to parents/guardians in advance of the teaching of the lessons listed on page 5 .

“ the school makes inspection copies of RSE lesson materials available to parents/guardians through the main office and the PTA secretary. Parents/guardians are encouraged to engage with their children on the content of all of the RSE lessons.

.. the school informs parents about RSE Information Evenings, (hosted annually by the Kildare Education Centre, Friary Road, Kildare Town.)

.. the school honours the right of parents/guardians to withdraw their child from specific RSE lessons. It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the principal in writing of this decision. Such a decision must be confirmed in writing on an annual basis.

The Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum

This school delivers the SPHE curriculum in accordance with Department of Education and Skills guidelines.

The SPHE curriculum is structured in such a way as to treat the social, personal and health dimensions of a child's life in an integrated manner. It provides for the development of a broad range of values, attitudes, skills and understanding relevant to the child's health and well-being, to other people and to the society in which s/he lives. This foundation will inform the child's actions, behaviour and decisions in the many situations that s/he may encounter and have to deal with as part of everyday life and living.

The 3 strands of the SPHE curriculum are:

- Myself
- Myself and Others
- Myself and the Wider World.

The content outlined in the SPHE curriculum is implemented in this school through a combination of formal and informal approaches: formally through discrete SPHE time designated on school timetables (including Stay Safe, RSE, and (from 2009) Walk Tall lessons) and informally through the everyday happenings in the school.

Possible sensitive issues

Many aspects of RSE are common to other school programmes. For example, 'the family' might be central to oral language work in English or Gaeilge, or a life-story project in history.

The RSE programme also includes a number of possible sensitive issues, listed below. It is school policy to deal with these issues through structured lessons, as naturally as possible and without undue emphasis. Listing the issues here, along with the classes in which they are first taught, enables parents to prepare their children in advance for a particular topic, if they so wish (see section on parents/guardians as primary educators.)

Lesson Title / Theme	Class	Topic or Language
Caring for New Life	Junior Infants	Language: baby in womb for 9 months, breast-feeding.
My Body	Senior Infants	Language used: penis, vagina.
How My Body Works	First Class	Language: urine passes through the penis in boys and the urethra in girls.
The Wonder of New Life	Second Class	Language: baby leaves its mother's womb through the vagina.
Preparing for New Life	Third Class	Language: umbilical cord, navel.
My Family	Third Class	Language: gay, lesbian, heterosexual, homosexual.
The Wonder of New Life	Fourth Class	Topic: the developing foetus.
Growing and Changing	Fourth Class	Topics: physical/emotional changes in puberty. Menstruation (taught to fourth class girls only.)
My Body Grows and Changes	Fifth Class	Topics: puberty (revised,) menstruation (taught to boys and girls,) reproduction.
The Wonder of New	Fifth Class	Topic: reproduction.

Relationships and New Life	Sixth Class	Topics: sexual intercourse in the context of a committed, loving relationship; reproduction.
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Topics such as sexually transmitted diseases, contraception, masturbation and abortion and are not covered in the primary school RSE programme.

This school's RSE policy acknowledges different relationship types, as follows:

When preparing for and delivering the RSE Themes *This is My Family* (Junior and Senior Infants,) *My Family* (First-Fifth Classes) and *Families* (Sixth Class) the teachers will take the different family patterns represented within the classroom into account.

The family situations that particular children *may* choose to share with their class will be included in the lesson activities as naturally as possible and without undue emphasis.

Some children use the word '*gay*' from a young age. The use of the word '*gay*' in school will be addressed by staff, as follows.

Infants - Second class: Redirect the child in a natural way, without undue emphasis. Refer the child with questions regarding the term to his/her parents.

Third - Sixth class: The staff member may offer a brief interpretation of the term, as follows: 'Sometimes two men or two women make a life together. They love and care for one another.' This interpretation would be presented as naturally as possible and without undue emphasis. The vocabulary '*gay*,' '*lesbian*,' '*heterosexual*,' and '*homosexual*,' may also be used. Refer the child with further questions regarding homosexuality to his/her parents. Use of the term '*gay*' as a slur (or in any inappropriate context) will be challenged by staff. We promote a school environment that is safe, effective, positive and respectful - Ref: *Code of Behaviour* and *Positive Language Policy*

Answering questions

This policy document guides the school staff on how to respond to children's questions regarding RSE lessons:

.. for some topics, an age appropriate 'contract' between teacher and class should be devised, where it is agreed that personal questions would not be asked or answered.

.. where a child seeks information that is beyond the content of this school's RSE programme and/or not considered to be age appropriate for the general body of pupils, the teacher should not answer the question, but refer the child to his/her parents.

.. staff should not invalidate questions, but use limits. Examples: 'I will do my best to answer your questions, but I may not be able to answer all of them.' 'Would you be able to ask your parent/guardian about that?' 'That's something you'll learn about as you get older/you'll learn about in fifth class.'

'We agreed in our contract for this lesson that we wouldn't ask anyone personal questions.'

.. for older children a 'question box' can be used as part of a structured RSE lesson. Teachers can follow-up on the written questions at a later date, thus allowing time to prepare suitable answers, consult with colleagues, etc.

Co-education

This is a co-educational school. We will teach boys and girls together, except for the following lessons:

Fourth class girls and boys will be taught the lesson on physical changes during puberty separately, giving each group the same information and lesson. [Exception: only the girls will receive information on menstruation.]

Fifth and sixth class boys and girls will be taught the lessons on puberty and reproduction separately, giving each group exactly the same information and lesson (including menstruation.) The boys and girls will then be brought back together for discussion and follow-up lesson.

The 2010-2011 school year

The RSE programme will be taught in our school every year. Parents/guardians and teachers of children in the older classes will need to cooperate in ensuring that any 'catch-up' on information regarding unfamiliar topics or language goes well. The teachers will give additional time to introducing particular lessons (checking prior knowledge, introducing vocabulary, etc.)

Please see Appendix B for 'Further Information'

Appendix A

Committee members:

Eimear Carey: BOM/ Principal

Gavin Kennedy: BOM

Eibhlin Newell: Teacher

Aoife Flynn: Teacher

Isobel Fletcher: Parent

Dr. Bernard Healy: Parent

Appendix B

Further information on RSE

Resource Materials for RSE visit website: www.ecdrumcondra.com

A range of resources available:

- 'Going Forward Together: An introduction to RSE for parents.'
- RSE teacher's manuals

Kildare Education Centre, Friary Road, Kildare Town: The centre runs courses and information sessions for parents and teachers on an annual basis.

http://www.ecdrumcondra.com/images/stories/rse_documents/padmin_rse_jsclass.pdf

http://www.ecdrumcondra.com/images/stories/rse_documents/padmin_rse_12class.pdf

http://www.ecdrumcondra.com/images/stories/rse_documents/padmin_rse_34class.pdf

http://www.ecdrumcondra.com/images/stories/rse_documents/padmin_rse_56class.pdf

http://www.ecdrumcondra.com/images/stories/rse_documents/parent_booklet_going_forward_together.pdf

Resources for parents

Parents may find the following books useful. They are available on short-term loan from the school office. (Please review the material carefully and ensure it would be useful in your home situation.)

What's happening to me? (boys) Usborne Books.

What's happening to me? (girls) Usborne Books.

Let's Talk About Sex, Walker Books.

Where Willy Went: The Big Story of a Little Sperm, Red Fox Publishing.

Mummy Laid an Egg, Red Fox Publishing.

Hair in Funny Places, Red Fox Publishing.

What's Inside Your Tummy Mummy? Red Fox Publishing.

Busy Bodies: A book about puberty for you and your parents, Health Service Executive.

Some frequently asked questions (see www.ecdrumcondra.ie/programmes for the 'Going Forward Together' booklet:)

Will RSE help children to make responsible choices?

Yes. The choices and decisions we make in our lives are influenced by the values we hold. We receive these values from our cultural and/or religious traditions but also from our family, school and community. The methods used to teach RSE create opportunities for children and young people to discuss attitudes, beliefs and values about many issues and to develop the skills to make informed and responsible choices and decisions.

Will RSE lead to a loss of innocence in children?

No. However, we should distinguish between innocence and ignorance. Lack of correct and appropriate information can leave your child vulnerable, confused and anxious. On the other hand, providing information, combined with opportunities for discussion and decision-making within a moral framework, can be very helpful and valuable.