



Newbridge Educate Together

National School

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Relationships & Sexuality Education Policy

Please note that some explanatory tables and notes will not be included with this web version, rather the complete Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy will be available in the office.

This policy is set out in accordance with the Department of Education and Skill's requirement for National Schools to provide a broad Social, Personal and 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). Comments and suggestions on the draft from the wider school community was encouraged during the Spring term of 2011. The policy was revised and ratified in the Summer term of 2011. It was reviewed and updated in the Autumn term of 2016.

What is RSE?

RSE is an integral part of the SPHE curriculum which provides children with a structured approach to allow the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs and practical skills necessary to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships as children and subsequently; as adults.

RSE is a spiral programme spanning from Junior Infants to Sixth Class which builds on and returns to similar topics each year, appropriate to the particular age of the children. It is school policy to teach the nine RSE themes each year, as detailed in this policy and in the resource materials for RSE (inspection copy will be available from the school office).

Teaching approaches will include: Classroom discussion, group work, art activities, stories, poems, circle time, quiet time, visitors to the classroom, videos, educational drama and debate as described in the 'Resource materials for RSE' available from the school office or at www.ecdrumcondra.ie/programmes to view the "Going Forward Together" information booklet.

Relationship to the Ethos of Newbridge Educate Together NS:

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

Why do we need RSE?

Many children obtain information and misinformation about relationships and sexuality from television, the cinema, social media, the playground, from older friends etc. in many settings and in many ways that parents cannot control and may be very happy about. Furthermore children may be picking up messages such as "Aggression works", "It's okay to be dishonest, if you're not caught", " I can do exactly what I want now!" from movies, television and the internet. There is a distinct 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 of Education in 1994 to advise in 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 from a variety of sources
- 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 in 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 for RSE in schools.

Parents/Guardians as the Primary Educators for 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 information 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 complements 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 allows for information on what RSE comprises of 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 child in advance of a particular topic, if they so wish.
- The class teachers will provide copies of specific "home-school" links in letters home to parents/guardians in advance of the teaching of the topics outlined in this document.
- The school makes inspection copies of RSE lesson materials available to parents/guardians through the main office.
- 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 rights 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 decisions must be confirmed in writing on an annual basis.

The Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Curriculum:

Newbridge Educate Together NS delivers the SPHE curriculum in accordance with the 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 he or she lives. This foundation will inform the child's actions, behaviour and decisions in the many situations that he or she may encounter and have to deal with as part of everyday life and living.

The three strands of the SPHE curriculum are:

1. Myself
2. Myself and others
3. 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 Walk Tall lessons) and informally through the everyday happenings in the school day.

Possible Sensitive Issues:

Many aspects of RSE are common to other school programmes. For example; "The Family" might be central to Oral Language in Literacy 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 they are first taught enables parents to prepare their children in advance for a particular topic, if

they so wish (please refer to the section on Parents/guardians as Primary Educators)

Lesson Title/Theme	Class	Topic or Language
Caring for New Life	Junior Infants	baby in womb for 9 months, breast-feeding.
My Body	Senior Infants	Penis, vagina,
How my Body works	First Class	Urine passes through the penis in boys and the urethra in girls
The wonder of new life	Second class	Baby leaves its mother's womb through the vagina
Preparing for new life	Third Class	Umbilical cord, navel
My Family	Third Class	Gay, lesbian, heterosexual, homosexual
The wonder of new life	Fourth Class	The developing foetus
Growing and Changing	Fourth Class	Physical/emotional changes in puberty. Menstruation (taught to fourth class girls only)
My body grows and changes	Fifth Class	Puberty (revised) menstruation (taught to boys and girls) Reproduction
The wonder of new life	Fifth Class	Reproduction
Relationships and new life	Sixth Class	Sexual intercourse in the context of a committed, loving relationship, Reproduction

Topics such as Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Contraception, Masturbation and Abortion are not covered in the Primary School RSE Programme

Newbridge Educate Together NS's RSE Policy acknowledges different relationship types and all family circumstances 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 all different family patterns (two parent families, single parent families, same sex families, adoptive parent families, foster parent families etc.) that are represented in our classrooms into account at all times.

All family situations will be included in the lessons as naturally as possible to provide children with the viewpoint that families may have different structures and that is absolutely fine.

The use of the word "gay" will also be addressed by staff in as natural a way as possible, ensuring that normalisation of the term occurs.

From Infants to Second class

The teacher should be cognisant of the fact that some children may have same sex parents and as such must ensure that they promote and embrace equality. The term "gay" can be explained as "sometimes two men or two women make a life together. They love and care for one another, just like a man and a woman do" and the teacher should ensure that their approach is one of normalisation and inclusion.

From Third-Sixth Class

The vocabulary "lesbian", "heterosexual", "homosexual" can be introduced.

Use of the word "gay" as a slur or in any inappropriate context will be challenged by staff immediately. We promote a school environment which 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 to be considered to be age appropriate for the general body of pupils; the teacher should not answer the question; rather refer the child to his or her parents.
- Staff should not invalidate questions but instead use limits. For example: "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 that you'll learn about as you get older/when you're 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, with the exception of the following lessons:

Fourth Class:

Boys and girls will be taught the lesson on physical changes during puberty separately, giving each group the same information and lesson, however only the girls will receive information on menstruation.

Fifth and Sixth Class:

Boys and girls will be taught the lessons on puberty and reproduction together (including menstruation).

The School Year:

The RSE programme will be taught in our school annually. Parents/guardians and teachers of children in older classes will need to co-operate and co-ordinate to ensure that any "catch-up" information regarding unfamiliar topics or language takes place. The teachers will give additional time to introducing particular lessons, checking prior knowledge, introducing vocabulary etc. Please see Appendix B for additional information on RSE.

Appendices

Appendix A:

Committee Members:

Eimear Carey: BOM/Principal

Fiona Flynn: BOM

Fiona Clancy: Teacher

Marie Kavanagh: Teacher

Dr Bernard Healy: Parent

Aiveen O'Shea: Parent

Appendix B:

Further Information on RSE

Resource materials for RSE: please visit the 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.

A resource for teachers with lesson plans on different family structures from infants to sixth: www.glen.ie/attachments/Different_Families_Picture_book_lessons.pptx

Different families same love lesson plans for teachers:

<https://www.into.ie/lgbt/EducationalResources/DifferentFamiliesSameLoveLessonIdeas.pdf>

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

<http://www.glen.ie>

Parents may find the following useful. They are available on short term loan from the school office. Please review all material carefully and ensure that 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.
- 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.
- And Tango makes three by Justin Richardson
- Who's in a family by Robert Skutch
- Mommy, Mama and Me by Lesléa Newman
- Daddy, Papa and Me by Lesléa Newman
- My Princess Boy by Cheryl Kilodavis
- Mr Sea horse by Eric Carle
- King and King and Family by Linda De Haan and Stern Nijland
- Mom and Mum are getting married! By Ken Setterington

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.

Reviewed at a Board of Management meeting on _____

Signed: _____