



Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy



Introduction

The framework for Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) was initially established by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DENI) in a Guidance Circular 1987/45.

The Education (Curriculum Minimum Content) Order 2007 further sets out the legislative basis. The 2007 Order describes the revised curriculum as a balanced and broadly based curriculum which:

- Promotes the spiritual, moral cultural, intellectual, and physical development of pupils at the school and thereby of society; and
- Prepares such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of adult life.

This RSE policy takes account of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Article 3 “The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.”

The RSE curriculum should be delivered sensitively and appropriately to the age/understanding of all pupils.

By and large, the aim of education is to contribute towards the development of all aspects of an individual, including the creative, cultural, aesthetic, emotional, intellectual, moral, physical, political, social and spiritual development for personal and family life, for working life, for living in the community and for leisure. Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is clearly a part of this general aim. (RSE Guidance for Primary Schools)

The general principles which underpin our work are those set out in Department of Education guidance and the following Circulars.

Circular 2001/15: Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Circular 2001/15a and 2001/15b - 2 Guidance for Primary Schools - Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Circular 2010/01: Guidance on Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Circular 2013/16: Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy in Schools

Circular 2015/22 states that RSE is included on a statutory basis within the NI Curriculum, particularly through Health Education and Personal Development and Mutual Understanding and other spheres of influence. ***Circular 2015/22: Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Guidance RSE Education Guidance – An Update for Primary Schools***

DE Circular 2013/16 states: ‘The Department requires each school to have in place its own written policy on how it will address the delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education.’ The circular also states that Relationships and Sexuality Education ‘should be taught in harmony with the ethos of the school and reflect the moral and religious principles held by parents and school management authorities.’

The importance of a moral framework is emphasised in the DfEE Circular No 5/1994 Education Act 1993: Sex Education in Schools:

“Sex education . . .

must not be value-free; it should also be tailored not only to the age but also to the understanding of pupils. School’s programmes of sex education should therefore aim to present facts in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner, set within a clear framework of values and an awareness of the law on sexual behaviour. Pupils should accordingly be encouraged to appreciate the value of stable family life, marriage and the responsibilities of parenthood. They should be helped to consider the importance of self-restraint, dignity, respect for themselves and others, acceptance of responsibility, sensitivity towards the needs and views of others, loyalty and fidelity. And they should be enabled to recognise the physical, emotional and moral implications, and risks, of certain types of behaviour, and to accept that both sexes must behave responsibly in sexual matters”. Teachers are reminded: “to acknowledge that many children come from backgrounds that do not reflect such values and experiences. Sensitivity is therefore needed to avoid causing hurt and offence to them and their families, and to allow such children a sense of worth”.

(Paragraph 8)

These circulars are available on the Department’s website: www.deni.gov.uk. Guidance and resources on RSE are also provided on the NI Curriculum website at www.nicurriculum.org.uk

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is included in the School Development Plan under Pastoral Care.

The provision of RSE is an equal opportunities issue. All pupils have a right to an education, which prepares them for transitioning into adult life. Effective RSE plays an integral part.

This Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy was drawn up in line with Department of Education N.I. requirements and through consultation with staff, parents/carers and governors. It will be ratified by the Board of Governors of Newbuildings Primary School after all stakeholders have been consulted. This policy will be updated annually or as appropriate in light of new guidance/legislation. The final policy will be available on the school website under the heading of Parents and sub-heading – ‘Policies’. Our RSE co-ordinator is Mrs. J. Robb.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Board of Governors examines and ratifies the school’s RSE policy.

The Acting Principals and Senior Leadership Team co-ordinate the school’s approach to RSE and consults with the Board of Governors, staff, pupils, parents/carers and health professionals.

The Teaching Staff provide a link and have a partnership with parents/carers and deliver the school's RSE programme within the context of the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

School Ethos

Our school ethos is based on principles where tolerance and respect are paramount. 'We at Newbuildings Primary School and Ballyore Community Nursery, working in partnership with the whole school community, will support every child to feel welcomed, safe, nurtured and actively involved in their learning journey to achieve their educational, social, and emotional potential.'

This RSE policy reflects the ethos of our school.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is:

"a lifelong process which encompasses the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills, and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about personal and social relationships and gender issues." The learning process begins informally with our parents (or those holding parental responsibility) long before any formal education takes place in school.

Sexuality includes all aspects of the human person that relate to being male or female and is subject to change and development throughout life. Sexuality is an integral part of the human personality and has biological, cultural, psychological, social and spiritual aspects. It concerns the capacity to give and receive love; procreation and generally, the ability to form relationships with others. It is a hugely complex element of human life and the development of personal relationships.

Teaching RSE will provide opportunities to enable pupils to:

- form values and establish behaviour within a moral, spiritual and social framework;
- examine and explore various relationships in their personal life;
- learn how to develop and enjoy personal relationships and friendships which are based on responsibility and mutual respect;
- build foundations for developing personal relationships;
- choose positive, responsible choices about themselves and others, impacting on the way they live their lives.

Aims

The aims of RSE are to:

- enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of all pupils;
- help all pupils develop healthy and respectful friendships/relationships;
- foster an understanding of, and a health attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, social and spiritual framework;
- promote responsible behaviour and the ability to make informed decisions;
- help pupils come to value family life;
- appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood;
- generate an appreciation of the value of human life and birth.

Learning Objectives

The RSE curriculum will enable pupils to:

- acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self;
- develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth;
- develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well-being of others; to understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and in other contexts.

In wider contexts

- develop an awareness of differing family patterns;
- develop strategies to make decisions, solve problems and implement actions in various personal, social and health contexts;
- become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change, understanding that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity;
- develop personal skills which will help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships;
- develop basic coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse;
- acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction;
- acquire and use an appropriate range of vocabulary to discuss feelings, growth and development;
- develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision-making.

Skills

The RSE curriculum should enable pupils to develop the skills necessary to form and maintain relationships and to make informed choices and decisions regarding health and well-being. Pupils should be helped to develop skills to critically evaluate the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values. They need opportunities to develop:

- **practical skills** for everyday living; for supporting others; for future parenting;
- **communication skills** – learning to listen, listening to the points of view of others; putting personal views forward clearly and respectfully; giving and receiving feedback; handling and resolving conflict peacefully; being assertive;
- **decision-making and problem-solving skills** for sensible choices made in the light of relevant information; making moral judgements about what to do in actual situations and putting these judgements into practice; acting responsibly and with initiative as an individual or as a member of a variety of groups;
- **inter-personal skills** for managing relationships confidently and effectively; for developing as an effective group member or leader.

Morals and Values

Relationships and Sexuality Education will enable pupils to clarify what they believe and why they believe it. It should develop a respect for and interest in the beliefs of others. Pupils will be provided with opportunities to explore values and attitudes and to consider how they and others are affected by them.

Pupils should be taught RSE within a framework which models and encourages the following values:

- a respect for self;
- a respect for others;
- non-exploitation in relationships;
- commitment, trust and bonding within relationships;
- honesty with self and others;
- a development of critical self-awareness for themselves and others;
- an exploration of the rights, duties and responsibilities involved in relationships; (rights of the child)
- self-discipline.

Special Educational Needs

It is particularly important for teaching staff to be aware that physical development may outstrip emotional maturity in the case of pupils with Special Needs and to accommodate this disparity in class lessons and experiences.

Relationships Between Home, School and Community

The effectiveness of this RSE policy and its implementation is dependent on a collaborative process involving staff members, parents/careers, Governors and other educational health professionals. Each of the partners has a distinctive contribution to make. Keeping parents/carers informed about the school's provision for health education is a vital element of RSE. Parents/carers are invited to consider issues such as the readiness of children for aspects of the RSE programme, the appropriateness of resources, the content proposed and the handling of sensitive topics.

Links to other Policies

This policy complements and supports a range of other school policies including -

- Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Use of Reasonable Force/Safe Handling Policy
- First Aid and the Administration of Medicines Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Use of Mobile Phones/Cameras Policy
- ICT and access to the internet Policy
- Intimate Care Policy
- PDMU Policy

Our RSE programme will provide structured and progressive opportunities for pupils to learn about:

- themselves as unique human beings;
- their social, emotional, physical and spiritual growth;
- their friendships and relationships with others; and
- the various changes that occur as they progress towards adolescence, particularly the emotional and physical changes which occur at puberty.

Delivering the RSE Programme

The teaching programme outline (See **Appendix 1**) illustrates the range of topics covered through the delivery of the Northern Ireland Curriculum in Newbuildings Primary School. Many of the aspects included are also part of a variety of learning areas such as Health Education, PDMU, RE, World Around Us, PE and Drama. All teachers will deliver the RSE programme. The RSE programme will be delivered in mixed gender classes unless the class teacher feels that it is more appropriate for the subject focus be delivered to a single gender group e.g. specific P7 RSE lesson(s).

Withdrawal from RSE

Since RSE is a statutory requirement, it should be inclusive. As a school we actively promote the implementation of RSE.

DENI Circular 2015/22 clearly stipulates the right to withdraw from RE and children can be withdrawn from class by parents/carers/guardians over the area of RSE, particularly if taught through RE.

*Ni Curriculum Guidance Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance
An Update for Primary Schools*

Teaching staff at Newbuildings Primary School will provide support for pupils who are removed from part of or all the relationships and Sexuality Education programme.

Parents

An overview of the content of our RSE programme will be communicated to Parents annually. Parents will be consulted when sensitive issues are to be addressed.

Use of Visitors

Where appropriate, we may use the skills and expertise of outside agencies and professionals e.g. NSPCC. www.nspcc.org.uk, Women's Aid and School Nursing Service. Where this occurs, the school will be satisfied that contributions from informed outsiders are an integral part of the whole programme and in harmony with the aims and ethos of the school.

Staff Training

Training needs will be considered and accessed using CCEA Resources - <https://ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/relationships-and-sexuality-education-rse>

The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland's (SBNI), Education Authority (EA), Public Health Agency and/or other appropriate health agencies. Where outside Agencies are used for training purposes, their remit will be clear and will reflect the ethos of the school.

Monitoring, Evaluating and Reviewing the RSE Policy

Newbuildings Primary School staff are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this policy. Specifically, important to the RSE Programme are -

- pupil feedback
- staff review and feedback
- parental feedback
- further DENI guidance and legislative changes

The policy is approved by the Board of Governors.

Signed: Mrs R. Walsh

(Acting Principal)

Mr P. Mackey

(Chairperson of the Board of Governors)

March 2024

(Date)

Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1

STRAND 1 – Personal Understanding and Health

Myself

- Me: how I grow, feed, move and use my senses; caring for myself e.g. hygiene, sleep, exercise.
- Naming parts of the body (basic) – developing an agreed language for our bodies.
- Being myself – I am unique, my self-esteem, self-confidence, independence, respect and caring for myself.
- Similarities and differences between myself and others e.g. uniqueness, fingerprints, gender issues, different rates of growth.
- An introduction to the stages of human development – changes as we grow, e.g. Baby, child, teenager, adult, mother/father, grandparents.
- Recognising moods, feelings and concerns, together with an appropriate manner of expressing them e.g. what do I do if I feel sad or angry?
- Personal likes and dislikes.

My Relationships

- My family, special people in my life – what they do for me and what I do for them.
- Friendships, getting on with each other e.g. communicating, playing together, listening, co-operating and sharing.
- Ageing – how do we know that things are alive, dead, young and old.
- Loss and mourning – death of a person or a pet.
- Respect and caring for family members and friends e.g. caring for a new baby.
- Bullies and what to do about them.
- Personal safety – simple skills and practices to maintain personal safety.
- The difference between good and bad touches.
- Realise that adults and older children are not always friends; the potential danger of relationships with strangers or acquaintances.
- Strategies which pupils might use to protect themselves from potentially dangerous situations.

Strand 2: Mutual Understanding in the Local and Wider Community

My Community/Environment

- Awareness of different types of families and the roles of individuals within families.
- Keeping safe, e.g. dangerous places, dangerous situations, the adults who will help you, how to get help from others.
- Rules at home, at school and the community.
- Respect and caring for people in the community, e.g. elderly people.

Key Stage 2

STRAND 1 – Personal Understanding and Health

Myself

- My body, how it works and how to keep it healthy.
- The physical, social and emotional changes that occur during puberty (girls and boys).
- Myself and my peers – different rates of growth and physical development, maturity.
- Valuing and respecting myself, identifying personal strengths and weaknesses.
- Feeling, e.g. things that make me happy, sad, excited, embarrassed, angry, scared;
- expressing our feelings, showing love and affection.
- Gender roles.
- Making choices – the influences on me and the consequences of actions on self and others.
- Distinguishing between right and wrong.
- Secrets – knowing the difference between good and bad secrets, what to do about bad secrets.

My Relationships

Identify the positive traits of friendship and their corresponding values.

- Differences and similarities in people; the need to respect other people's views, emotions and feelings.
- Families and how they behave – what family members expect of each other.
- The meaning of friendship and loyalty; making and maintaining friendships and social relationships, e.g. identifying and understanding pressures and influences, taking account of other people's point of view.
- Handling difficult situations, e.g. teasing, bullying, death of a family member. The meaning of relationships within families, between friends and in the community.
- Behaviour – what constitutes appropriate and non-appropriate physical contact.

- Identifying dangers and risks within relationships.
- Being assertive in defending individual rights and beliefs.
 - People who can help pupils when they have anxieties, concerns or questions.

Strand 2: Mutual Understanding in the Local and Wider Community

My Community/Environment

- Appreciation of the family in relation to the school and the wider community.
- Cultural differences in families and family relationships.
- Helping agencies which can support families and individuals in different circumstances.
- Messages and images about health, gender roles and sexuality from the media, family and peers.

Teaching Resources

- The selection of teaching resources will be:
- consistent with the school's RSE policy and the aims and objectives of the RSE programme;
- consistent with the school's morals and values framework;
- appropriate to pupils' age, level of understanding and maturity; factually correct and respectful of its audience;
- likely to appeal to pupils in terms of appropriate language level, images, attitudes and values, maturity, contexts and situations, and the knowledge required;
- complementary to the existing programmes which the school offers;
- encouraging consideration of a range of issues attitudes and beliefs pertinent to the topics covered.