

Newtownwhite Educate Together NS

Ballysakeery,

Ballina,

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Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy Newtownwhite ETNS Introductory Statement

This policy is an approved approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within Social Personal Health Education both formally and informally. The original policy was formulated in 2007 by a subcommittee of the board of management, consisting of parents, teachers and representatives from the PTA. All members of the committee attended a training session at St. Patrick's College and /or an information meeting organised at the school by the PTA. The policy was reviewed by the Principal and staff at staff meetings during the school year 2012/13, in November 2018 and again in February 2020. Policy shared with all staff on January 15th 2025. Feedback requested before the BOM meeting due to take place January 21st 2025. Policy communicated with all families on January 30th 2025 and posted to our website.

School Philosophy

As per our mission statement, Newtownwhite Educate Together National School (NTWETNS) is a place where we are respected and treat others with respect, a place where we feel happy and safe and a place where self-confidence and self-esteem can flourish. We recognise that SPHE is intrinsic to the teaching and learning that occurs both formally and informally in school and in the classroom. Through our SPHE programme and subsequently through RSE, we wish to assist children to develop feelings of self-worth and self-confidence while encouraging their ability to relate to others in a positive way. The curriculum also encourages children to be aware of their rights as an individual while at the same time accepting responsibility for their actions as members of the school and the wider community. Our school values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. Our ethos means that we value respect and openness through the lived experience of the children and school community. Parents have the primary role in the

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social, personal and health education of their children so their involvement will be encouraged as much as possible. SPHE and RSE are key components in supporting our school and children to develop into healthy young adults.

Definition of RSE

Relationships and Sexuality Education is an integral part of SPHE and must be taught in this context. It provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality and relationships through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework. In particular, it addresses the meaning of human sexuality, relationships, growth and development, relevant to personal and social skills.

Relationship of RSE to SPHE

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) provides opportunities for pupils to learn basic personal and social skills which foster integrity, self-confidence and self-esteem while nurturing sensitivity to the feelings and rights of others.

SPHE:

- Is a lifelong process and consequently RSE is a continual process throughout primary school and is not confined to once off inputs or lessons.
- Is a shared responsibility between family, school, health professionals and the community. RSE education should include an input from all, and collaboration can be fostered through the teaching and delivery of materials.
- Is a generic approach. It is not so much about the specific content of RSE but rather the relationship with a child's skills, attitudes, values and understanding relevant to a range of social, personal and health issues.

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- Is based on the needs of the child, therefore RSE education should prioritise the needs of the child and his/her environment, with appropriate adaptations made within the curriculum to suit individual requirements and individual school situations
- Is spiral in nature. RSE is revisited at different stages throughout the child's time in school. This will provide opportunities to consolidate and build on previous learning. This allows for issues and topics to be explored and treated in a manner appropriate to the children's needs, abilities and levels of maturity
- Engages children to be involved in activity-based learning. RSE should provide a range of learning opportunities that include working together, learning about one's own feelings and those of others, developing a sense of empathy and experiencing and supporting healthy relationships.

Through SPHE and RSE, members of the school community should be enabled to enhance their self esteem and wellbeing through:

- A sense of identity
- A sense of purpose
- A sense of belonging
- A sense of security
- A sense of competence.

In an ever-changing world, RSE encourages children through consistent messages that are taught in line with SPHE. The school has a responsibility to ensure that its curriculum is free of bias and that issues of inequality in any form are addressed and dealt with (SPHE Teacher guidelines, p25). In learning about cultures and traditions of others, children can develop a sense of respect for difference and appreciate the contribution that such has to offer. It will encourage children to be inclusive with each other, challenge prejudice and learn how to live in an intercultural society.

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Aims of our RSE Programme

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and wellbeing of the child
- To help the child to develop healthy friendships and relationships
- To foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework
- To enable the child to acquire an understanding of, and respect for human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction
- To develop and promote in the child a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life
- To enable the child to be comfortable with the sexuality of oneself and others while growing and developing.

We support the aims on which RSE is modelled. We encourage good behaviour, open communication, understanding of differences, and respect for self and others. We recognise that both pupils and staff have rights and responsibilities in our school. A sense of responsibility is fostered, and attention is paid to the wellbeing of all of the members of the school community.

Broad Objectives

When due account is taken of abilities and varying circumstances, the RSE education curriculum should enable the child to (in conjunction with the SPHE curriculum)

- Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self
- Develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and wellbeing of others
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-worth
- Understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and wider contexts

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- Develop an awareness of differing family patterns
- Come to value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood
- 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 and understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity
- Develop personal skills which help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships
- Develop coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse
- Acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction
- Acquire the use of appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development
- Develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making.

Policies which support SPHE/RSE

- Child Protection Policy
- Substance Use Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy (under review)

Management and Organisation of RSE in our School

RSE forms part of the national curriculum for SPHE by NCCA and will be taught from infants to 6th Class. RSE will be covered under the following strands and strand units of the SPHE curriculum:

- Myself
- Growing and changing
- Taking care of my body

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The RSE programme is divided into two main parts:

1) The general programme which contains content covered through SPHE strands and strand units and compliment the aims and objectives of RSE:

- Friendship
- Self-identity
- Family
- Self-esteem
- Growing up

2) The second section will deal with any sensitive / specific content. These are outlined in Appendix 1.

Some aspects of RSE will be taught through a number of time-tabled core periods, with the remainder being taught in a cross-curricular manner. Teachers will have to identify the appropriate links with other subject areas to ensure that children receive a broad-based approach to RSE.

Sensitive lessons will be taught school-wide during the second term of each year. These lessons are summarised in Appendix 1. We teach all content to boys and girls together; we believe that this promotes understanding and empathy.

Each teacher will confirm that these lessons have been taught by completing a checklist.

These will be stored centrally by the principal. If for any reason a class teacher is unable to teach the sensitive lessons, the Principal will make alternative arrangements for these lessons to be taught.

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Parental Involvement

Parents will be informed in advance of lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme, with a letter relevant to what will be taught at their child's class level. The letter will be issued in advance, giving parents an opportunity to meet with relevant teachers if they so wish, to discuss or clarify what is covered and to prepare their children. This also gives parents an opportunity to become involved, to inform themselves of the programme content and to prepare children for the information they will acquire around the sensitive areas and discuss areas covered in RSE/SPHE.

Copies of the Busy Bodies booklet will be available to parents of Fifth and Sixth Class children.

Parents are welcome to view the curriculum and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns at any time during the year. The school acknowledges that parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children about growing and changing. Following discussion with the principal and class teacher, if a parent wishes to withdraw their child from the sensitive lessons it should be given in writing stating their reasons for doing so and this will be centrally filed. If a child has been withdrawn from the sensitive RSE lessons, the school takes no responsibility for what the child may hear following on from the teaching of the lessons. e.g. what they may hear in the yard.

Approaches & Methodologies

When implementing the programme, staff at Newtownwhite Educate Together NS will endeavour to display respect for and sensitivity towards the different cultural and family backgrounds experienced by the children. The curriculum will be taught in an age-appropriate manner at all times. The curriculum will be taught from Junior Infants to 6th class. It will be taught through a spiral curriculum (key topics will be revisited in a developmental manner at regular intervals). The materials taught will reflect the needs of the children.

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The RSE curriculum will be taught through a selection of the following methodologies:

- stories and poems
- classroom discussion
- group work
- games
- art activities
- reflection
- circle time
- guest speaker (e.g. to deliver an anti-bullying workshop. The class teacher will stay in the room at all times in accordance with Circular 22/2010).

Differentiation

Teachers use assessment and professional judgement to differentiate the programme and content to suit the needs of the class. Some techniques used:

- ensuring that objectives are realistic for the students

- ensuring that the learning task is compatible with prior learning
- providing opportunities for interacting and working with other students in small groups and spending more time on tasks
- organising the learning task into small stages and ensuring that the language used is pitched at the student's level of understanding
- understanding of the activity using task analysis, outlining the steps to be learned/completed in any given task, posing key questions to guide students through the different stages/processes, and to assist in self-direction and correction
- having short and varied tasks creating a learning environment through the use of concrete, and where possible everyday materials, and by displaying word lists and laminated charts with pictures.

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Sometimes the stage of development in a class can vary widely and strategies to differentiate in class can support gradual and appropriate teaching. Examples:

- group work and discussion
- higher and lower order questioning in groups
- moderated whole class discussions through use of a Question Box.

Pupils with Additional Needs

Adaptations to the way in which the content is delivered may be made for children with Additional Needs. Consultation with parents/ guardians in advance and anticipation of the children's needs will be central to ensuring learning is meaningful.

- Children may be pre-taught language or concepts in anticipation of whole class work
- Children may work in smaller groups or 1:1 on adapted and suitable material
- Any different or specific objectives related to the pupils own learning needs may be detailed in their SSP in consultation with parents/guardians.

Language

SPHE curriculum provides a context in which children are given opportunities to develop and enhance their language skills and to increase their vocabulary related to SPHE. Children should become aware of the power and influence of language. When used positively, language can build up, affirm and show respect to another human being but if used in a negative manner can hurt, diminish and demean. Children need to recognise and become sensitive to the ways in which they themselves use language in their relationship and their everyday interactions. The acquisition of appropriate language in RSE is crucially important to enable children to speak confidently about themselves and their relationships. Acquiring the appropriate vocabulary related to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, feeling etc. gives the child the means by which these issues are discussed

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in an age appropriate way. The RSE programme will encourage the use of the formal terms for body parts from the earliest age so that these terms are given status and acceptability. Language reflects values, attitudes, beliefs, prejudices and principles. It not only helps to express a culture but influences and shapes that culture as well. It is essential that children are enabled to use language in a precise and appropriate manner.

Questions

We use some simple principles when fostering discussion and questioning

- No personal questions of the teacher
- The Question Box will be availed of by children in older classes
- The teacher will be mindful of their reaction to any questions
- Questions do not have to be answered straight away

During RSE lessons, teachers will aim not to invalidate any questions, but must use limits.

Teachers will only answer questions which come within the scope of the agreed programme for each class level.

Sample responses:

- I'll do my best to answer your questions but I may not be able to answer all of them
- That's something you'll learn about as you get older
- Is that something you could talk to your parents / guardians / family about?
- We agreed in our contract that we wouldn't ask anyone personal questions
- Somebody asked a question and the language they used was slang language, what they meant to ask was....

For older children a 'question box' will 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. Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents themselves if they feel that a question is very inappropriate or needs to be communicated with home because of other reasons. If issues arise which might be seen to contravene Children First Guidelines, the teacher will notify the Designated Liaison Person in the school.

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Assessment

Assessment in RSE is important to enable the teacher to pitch the lessons correctly to their respective class group. The teacher may use

- Observation and questions to assess the children's engagement and interest
- Use of teacher-designed tasks such as worksheets, quizzes or games
- Use of reflection or learning log.

Confidentiality

The school follows Children First Guidelines 2011 and The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2011. If a child is withdrawn from the teaching of sensitive issues, we cannot guarantee that the other children will not tell or inform him/her about what happened.

Resources

Each class teacher has a copy of the appropriate Relationships and Sexuality Education Resource Materials manual. Other resources that support the broader aims of RSE include:

- Stay Safe programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Anatomical Dolls and Story books
- Busy Bodies DVD and Booklet
- Picture books across the 9 grounds of equality
- INTO Different Families, Same Love Poster
- RESPECT guidelines.
- Learn Together Ethical Education curriculum
- SALT programme
- Weaving Well-being programme

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Provision of Ongoing Support

Opportunities provided by Mayo Education Centre will be brought to the attention of staff members. Teachers will be encouraged to attend CPD in RSE. Staff meetings will be utilised as a platform for discussion and development of RSE materials. Support from a PDST Advisor may be sought.

Review

- The policy will be reviewed after every two years. The policy may also be reviewed at an earlier time should a need arise.
- It will be circulated to all teachers and available to families on the school website

This plan was ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting on 29th January 2025.

Signed: _____

Date: 29/01/25

For and behalf of Board of Management

Signed: _____

Date: 29/01/25

(Principal)

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Appendix 1: Newtownwhite Educate Together National School RSE Sensitive Lesson Overview

<u>Class</u>	<u>Sensitive Curricular Objectives</u>	<u>Language</u>	<u>Sensitive Lessons</u>	<u>Overview of Lessons</u>
<u>Junior Infants</u>	<p>Growing and changing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become aware of new life and birth in the word • Develop an awareness of human birth <p>Taking care of my body</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name parts of the male and female body using anatomical terms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Womb, breastfeeding • Plus language from Senior Infants as it arises incidentally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk Tall Unit 1 Lesson 4: A New Baby • RSE Theme 7: New Life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Signs of spring <input type="checkbox"/> Baby grows in womb <input type="checkbox"/> Care new baby needs

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<p><u>Senior Infants</u></p>	<p>Growing and changing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become aware of new life and birth in the world • Develop an awareness of human birth <p>Taking care of my body</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name parts of the male and female body using anatomical terms 	<p>Womb, breastfeeding, penis, testicles, vagina, vulva, anus, bottom</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> RSE Theme 6: Caring for New Life <input type="checkbox"/> RSE Theme 7: My Body <input type="checkbox"/> Walk Tall Unit 4 Lesson 2: Our Amazing Bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Revision of Junior Infant content <input type="checkbox"/> Learn body parts through lesson about keeping clean/ bathing a doll <input type="checkbox"/> Optional visit from parent and baby (Roots of Empathy linkage)
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<p><u>First Class</u></p>	<p>Growing and changing Begin to understand that reproduction, birth, growth and death are all part of new life cycles</p> <p>Taking care of my body Name the parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions</p>	<p>Penis, urethra, anus</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> RSE Theme 7: How My Body Works</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Walk Tall Unit 2 Lesson 1: All Shiny and New</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Caring for babies and pets, What happens when people and animals get old● Digestion of food
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<p><u>Second Class</u></p>	<p>Taking care of my body Name the parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions</p>	<p>penis, vagina, vulva, urethra</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Walk Tall Unit 2 Lesson 1: Our Amazing Bodies</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Quiz and discussion about body parts</p>
<p><u>Third Class</u></p>	<p>Growing and changing •Identify the care that needs to be taken while waiting for a baby to be born •Develop an appreciation of the wonder of a new-born baby</p>	<p>vagina, vulva, umbilical cord, breasts, womb</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> RSE Theme 6: Preparing for New Life</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Baby growing in womb <input type="checkbox"/> Optional visit from parent and baby</p>

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<p><u>Fourth Class</u></p>	<p>Growing and changing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Understand the physical changes taking place in both the male & female body •Realise that changes do not occur at the same time but nonetheless are predictable and natural and that being different is normal <p>Taking care of my body</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Recognise and discuss how feelings and emotions are affected by the physical changes that take place during puberty •Discuss the stages and sequence of development of human baby from conception to birth & birth within the context of a loving committed relationship 	<p>Revise above. Plus: puberty, pubic hair, menstruation, period, facial hair, hormones</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> RSE Theme 6:The Wonder of New Life Option 1</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> RSE Theme 8: Growing and</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Changing</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Supplement with Walk</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Tall Unit 7 (p.148)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Puberty</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Growth of baby</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> in womb</p>
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	<p>Taking care of my body</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Identify and discuss the physical changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty and understand that these take place at different rates for everyone •Understand the reproductive system of both male & female adults 	<p>Bodies</p> <p>https://www.healthpromotion.ie/hpfiles/docs/HPM00478.pdf</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> RSE Theme 7: The Wonder of New Life</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Supplement with Busy Bodies DVD</p>	
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<p><u>Sixth Class</u></p>	<p>Growing and changing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a loving committed relationship <p>Taking care of my body</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Identify and discuss the physical changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty and understand that these take place at different rates for everyone •Understand the reproductive system of both male and female adults 	<p>Revise above</p> <p>RSE Theme 7:</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Relationships and New Life</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Supplement with Busy Bodies DVD</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Puberty</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Conception</p>
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