

Relationship & Sexuality Education Policy

November 2023

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

This policy takes account of The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006. In line with paragraphs 9 (1), (2), (3) and (4), we will not discriminate against any pupil and will ensure equality of access for all. The best interests of the children will inform our actions and decision making, at all times, and we respect the rights of children as outlined in UNCRC, articles 2, 3, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 23, 28 and 29.

This policy contributes to the key characteristics of ESAGS (Every School a Good School) - child-centred provision, commitment to promoting equality of opportunity, concern for individual pupils, respect for diversity, seeking and listening to pupils' views, promotion of a healthy life-style and our commitment to ensuring good relationships with and communication between, the school, parents and community.

In line with TTI (Together Towards Improvement) indicators, school leadership encourages pupil and parental involvement, has incorporated RSE into the pastoral care element of the SDP (School Development Plan), respects diversity and encourages understanding, meets statutory requirements in relation to equality, diversity and inclusivity, has in place, appropriate policies and procedures to meet legislative requirements, actively promotes equality of opportunity and good relations for pupils and staff, ensures that provision is open and accessible to all pupils. Teachers promote strategies to help children manage their own emotions and interact effectively with others, and all staff are committed to helping children meet their full potential, regardless of gender, social, ethnic, linguistic and educational background.

Our teaching of RSE through PDMU (Personal Development and Mutual Understanding), contributes to Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education in that lessons provide opportunities for children to respond positively to difference and diversity.

Developing healthy and positive attitudes towards Relationships and Sexuality Education, in a secure and supportive environment, is an essential part of an education which adequately prepares our pupils for adult life, as outlined in our school's mission statement and ethos.

Mission Statement

Naíscoil & Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir is an Irish Medium Nursery and Primary School which caters for children regardless of religious beliefs or backgrounds. Everyone in Naíscoil & Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir is committed to our mission statement - to provide high quality education at the heart of the community. We all work together to ensure that our learners are happy and secure at school. Bilingualism is promoted at all times and Irish is the main language used in the school. It is our continual aim to provide our learners with a broad based education in a safe environment, and learners are encouraged to become independent and active students. Success is promoted at all levels, and the continual development of new skills is encouraged. A sense of well-being and belonging is promoted, and there is an emphasis on the importance of celebrating our culture, as well as the culture of others. High standards of respect, self-discipline, commitment and sensitivity are sought and the attainment of the highest personal, academic and social goals is pursued. The safety, welfare and development of everyone in our school community is of paramount importance to all teaching and non-teaching staff.

Pastoral Care in our school is of particular importance and we strive to ensure that every member of the school community is properly cared for at all times through the implementation of the relevant policies.

Moral and Values Framework

Naíscoil & Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir values all of its pupils equally. We recognise the diversity of family life. We will promote the institution of the family, focussing on 'all the people who love and look after us'. We take in to account the many different family backgrounds in our school.

Our RSE programme supports our school ethos in ensuring the development of each child's esteem and the provision of a supportive environment for each child to discuss their feelings and concerns.

Introduction

The Northern Ireland Curriculum aims to empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives. Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is firmly grounded in Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) where the central focus is on the emotional development of the child, health and safety, relationships with others and the development of moral thinking, values and actions.

Aims

We aim to:

- Enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of each child
- Help each child learn to value themselves as individuals
- Help each child learn to respect themselves and each other
- Help each child to develop healthy and respectful friendships and relationships
- Help each child learn about changes that occur as they grow
- Promote responsible behaviour and the ability to make informed decisions
- Help each child learn about keeping themselves safe and what to do if they feel unsafe
- Equip children to keep themselves safe in the digital world

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
- Understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and 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 and understand 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 some 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 vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development
- Develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making

Skills

The RSE curriculum will 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 will also be helped to develop skills to critically evaluate the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values. They will have opportunities to develop;

Practical skills: For everyday living; for supporting others; for future parenting.

Communication skills: Learning to listen, listening to others' points of view; putting one's own view forward clearly and appropriately; 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 group.

Interpersonal skills: For managing relationships confidently and effectively; for developing as an effective group member or leader.

Involvement of Parents/Carers

Many parents/carers are keen that their children are well prepared to handle situations around relationships and sexuality. The home exerts a major influence on all aspects of a young person's life and especially so in the domain of relationships and sexuality. The effectiveness of this RSE policy and programme is dependent on a collaborative process involving teachers, parents, governors and other educational and health professionals. Each of the partners has distinctive contributions to make.

There is no statutory parental right to withdraw a child from classes in RSE. However, the school will consider any parental concerns expressed and attempt to deal with any issues or concerns. We will identify the specific issues and lessons which are problematic and explain the implications for the pupils in terms of the parts of the statutory programmes of study which will be missed. The social and emotional effects of exclusion should be considered as well as the likelihood that pupils will discuss the content of the RSE lesson outside the classroom. As always, we respect the parents' role as 'first educators' of their children. In the event of issues arising, the school will work with parents to try to arrive at a mutually acceptable resolution.

When RSE workshops, to specifically deal with puberty, conception and pregnancy, are planned for P6 & P.7 pupils, they will be delivered by class teachers. In addition, a consent letter will be sent out to P6 & P.7 parents prior to workshops taking place in class.

The role of Senior Management

The Principal and Vice-Principal have a key role to play in:

- Developing and implementing the RSE policy and programme
- Ensuring there has been adequate consultation and all views have been taken on board
- Keeping the policy under review

The role of Governors

The governors foster and support the development of an RSE policy and programme by:

- collaborating with teachers and parents
- facilitate the consultative process whereby the school community can respond and contribute
- examine and approve the completed policy and programme
- review the policy every 2 years

At all times, the governors seek to accommodate and be sensitive to the religious and cultural beliefs of both teachers and parents, while fulfilling their responsibility to ensure the availability of adequate RSE for all children.

The role of Teachers

Classroom teachers have a significant and diverse role to play in the planning and implementation of RSE. At all times, the role must be considered to be complementary to that of parents, taking cognisance of the individual needs, age, maturity, stage of development and family background of the child.

Involving Pupils

Pupils are consulted about their learning and their views sought through discussion and/or questionnaires. We are committed to adapting our RSE programme to meet the changing needs of our pupils. We believe that pupils are more likely to enjoy and benefit from a programme that has taken their comments on board and aims to meet their expressed needs.

Equal Opportunities

The school will seek to ensure that the RSE programme is relevant and accessible to pupils, regardless of age, culture, disability, gender, religion or social class. It is particularly important for teaching staff to be aware of the fact that physical development may outstrip emotional maturity in the case of pupils with SEN and to accommodate this disparity in class lessons and experiences.

Confidentiality and Child Protection

Staff cannot give a guarantee of confidentiality to pupils around issues relating to Child Protection. If details are revealed that would lead staff to suspect that abuse is involved, the teacher must follow the child protection procedures outlined in that policy.

Dealing with Sensitive Issues and Answering Pupils' questions

There are many issues of a sensitive nature which are topical in today's society and covered at great length through the media. It is important for pupils to have the correct, age-appropriate information on such issues, to prepare them for the complex range of issues facing them in society today. If pupils raise issues considered to be inappropriate or beyond the maturity level of the majority of the pupils, staff may or may not answer in class. If the teacher feels the question was a genuine one, he/she may suggest that the pupil ask his/her parents, or if this is an inappropriate option, the teacher may decide to answer the question in a sensitive manner. If the question asked raises child protection issues, this will be referred to the designated teacher for Child Protection.

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Curriculum organisation

Our curriculum offers opportunities to develop a RSE programme in a holistic and cross-curricular way. Issues are integrated within specific topics, discussed in subject-related contexts, addressed through health education, pastoral work and at assemblies, as well as during visits from the school nurse, dentist and other agencies. The content of the RSE programme is delivered in a connected way through PDMU, WAU, RE, Literacy, PE and the Arts.

Our RSE policy is linked to the following policies – Teaching and Learning, AFL, Pastoral Care, Confidentiality, Child Protection, Intimate Care, Anti-bullying, Positive Behaviour, Acceptable use of Internet and Email, SEN/Inclusion, Safe handling/reasonable force, Health and Safety, Healthy Breaks, Healthy Eating, First Aid, Drugs/Alcohol and Health Education.

Delivering the Programme

We aim to create an atmosphere in the classroom which allows all pupils to feel comfortable to express opinions and feelings, to explore issues which may be sensitive and personal, in a safe and secure manner, e.g. through Circle Time. A range of teaching approaches will be used to ensure all pupils may access the RSE curriculum (see Teaching and Learning Policy)

Programme Topics - Foundation Stage (P.1 & 2)

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, skills and understanding in developing the following;

Theme 1 – Self Awareness

- Themselves and their personal attributes exploring who they are, what they can do and what makes them special.

Theme 2 – Feelings and Emotions

- Their own and others' feelings and emotions beginning to recognise how they feel, knowing what to do if they feel sad, lonely, afraid or angry and when it is important to tell others about their feelings, realising what makes their friends feel happy or sad and recognising how other people feel when they are happy, sad, angry or lonely.

Theme 3 – Learning to Learn

- Their dispositions and attitudes to learning, learning to focus attention, concentrate and remember and being encouraged to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Theme 4 – Health, Growth and Change

- The importance of keeping healthy being aware of how to care for their body to keep it healthy, recognising and practising basic hygiene skills and realising that growth and change are part of life and unique to each individual.

Theme 4A – Safety

- How to keep safe in familiar and unfamiliar environments exploring appropriate personal safety strategies, identifying safe/ unsafe situations, road safety, understanding that substances can be dangerous and knowing safety rules that apply to medicines.

Theme 5 – Relationships

- Their relationships with family and friends finding out about own family, talking about what families do together, identifying friends, knowing how to treat others and beginning to recognise how they relate to adults and other children.

Theme 6 – Rules, Rights and Responsibilities

- Their responsibilities for self and others realising why classroom and school rules are necessary and developing a sense of what is fair.

Theme 7 – Managing Conflict

- How to respond appropriately in conflict situations beginning to take responsibility for what they say and do.

Theme 8 – Similarities and Differences

- Beginning to recognise the similarities and differences in families and the wider community, understanding that everyone is of equal worth and that it is acceptable to be different and celebrating special occasions.

Theme 9 – Learning to live as Members of the Community

- Beginning to understand the interdependent nature of their class and themselves as participant members and raising awareness of their attitudes to others in the school community.

Programme Topics – Key Stage 1 (P.3 & 4)

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, skills and understanding in developing;

Theme 1 – Self Awareness

- Their self-esteem and self-confidence

Feeling positive about themselves and developing an understanding of their self-esteem and confidence, becoming aware of their strengths, abilities, qualities, achievements and personal preferences/goals.

Theme 2 – Feelings and Emotions

- Their own and others' feelings and emotions and how their actions affect others

beginning to recognise, name and manage their feelings and emotions and realise that they are a natural, important and healthy part of being human, beginning to recognise and manage the effects of strong feelings such as anger, sadness or loss.

Theme 3 – **Learning to Learn**

- Positive attitudes to learning and achievement

Acknowledging that everyone makes mistakes, that attempts can fail or have disappointing outcomes but that this is a natural and helpful part of learning, encouraging children to 'have a go', recognising how they can develop and improve their learning.

Theme 4 – **Health, Growth and Change**

- Strategies and skills for keeping healthy

Recognising and valuing the benefits of exercise, rest, healthy eating and hygiene, having respect for their own and others' bodies, being aware of the stages of human growth, understanding the benefits of medicines and dangers of drugs and that if not used properly, all products can be harmful.

Theme 4A – **Safety**

- Strategies and skills for keeping safe

Know what to do and whom to seek help from if feeling unsafe, being aware of different forms of bullying and beginning to develop strategies to resist unwanted behaviour, rules of road safety and safe road travel, potential dangers in the home and environment (eg Farm), protection in extremes of weather, simple strategies to protect themselves from potentially dangerous situations.

Theme 5 – **Relationships**

- Initiating mutually satisfying relationships

Consider the variety of roles in families, be aware of their contribution to home and school life and the responsibilities this brings, know how to be a good friend.

Theme 6 – **Rules, Rights and Responsibilities**

- Responsibility and respect, honesty and fairness

Identify members of school community and their roles/responsibilities, identify people, jobs and workplaces in the community, be aware of how the school community interacts, begin to understand why and how rules are made in class, playground and school, understand that rules are essential in an ordered community and realise that money can buy goods and services and is earned through work.

Theme 7 – **Managing Conflict**

- Constructive approaches to conflict

Identify ways in which conflict may arise at home/school and explore ways in which it could be lessened, avoided or resolved.

Theme 8 – **Similarities and Differences**

- Similarities and differences between people

Appreciate ways we are similar and different e.g. age, culture, gender, hobbies, religion, abilities, be aware of own cultural heritage/traditions, recognise and value the culture and traditions of another group in our community, be aware of the diversity of people around the world.

Theme 9 – **Learning to live as Members of the Community**

- Themselves as members of a community

Recognise the interdependence of members of the school community, be aware of how the school community interacts, how they listen, and respond to each other and how they treat each other, be aware of what influences views, feelings and behaviour at home and in school, understand how we can all contribute to making our environment better.

Programme Topics – Key Stage 2 (P.5, 6 & 7)

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, skills and understanding in developing the following;

Theme 1 – **Self Awareness**

- Their self-esteem, self-confidence and how they develop as individuals

Develop self-awareness, self-respect and self-esteem, know how to confidently express own views and opinions, identify current strengths and weaknesses, face problems, trying to resolve and learn from them, recognise responsibilities change as they become older, explore what influences their views, feelings and behaviours, develop strategies to resist unwanted peer pressure and behaviour.

Theme 2 – **Feelings and Emotions**

- Their management of a range of feelings and emotions and the feelings/emotions of others

Examine and explore their own and others' feelings and emotions, know how to recognise, express and manage feelings in a positive and safe way, recognise that feelings may change at times of change and loss.

Theme 3 – **Learning to Learn**

- Effective learning strategies

Reflect upon their progress and set goals for improvement, know the ways in which they learn best, identify and practise effective learning strategies, be aware of different learning styles and be able to identify how they learn best.

Theme 4 – **Health, Growth and Change**

- How to sustain their health, growth and well-being

Understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, recognise what shapes positive mental health, know about the harmful effects of tobacco, alcohol, solvents and other illicit and illegal substances, understand that bacteria and viruses affect health and that risks can decrease when basic routines are followed.

The topic of puberty is for P6 & P.7: know how the body grows and develops, be aware of the physical and emotional changes that take place during puberty; know how babies are conceived, grow and are born, be aware of the skills of parenting and the importance of good parenting (P7 only).

Theme 4A – **Safety**

- Coping safely and efficiently with their environment

Recognise, discuss and understand the nature of bullying and the harm that can result, become aware of the potential danger of relationships with strangers or acquaintances including good and bad touches, become aware of appropriate road use, how to apply the Green Cross Code, appropriate passenger skills, develop a pro-active and responsible approach to safety including Internet Safety and Farm Safety, know where, when and how to seek help and be aware of basic emergency procedures and first aid.

Theme 5 – **Relationships**

- Initiating and sustaining mutually satisfying relationships

Examine and explore the different types of families that exist, recognise the benefits of families and friends, consider the challenges and issues that can arise at home and school and how they can be avoided, lessened or resolved.

Theme 6 – **Rules, Rights and Responsibilities**

- Human rights and social responsibility

Explore and examine the rules within families and friendship groups, understand the need for rules to ensure harmony, identify groups and their roles within the community, examine the effects of anti-social behaviour, appreciate how and why rules and laws are created and implemented.

Theme 7 – **Managing Conflict**

- Causes of conflict and appropriate responses

Examine the ways in which conflict can be caused by words, gestures, symbols or action.

Theme 8 – **Similarities and Differences**

- Valuing and celebrating cultural differences and diversity

Examine and explore the different types of families that exist, know about aspects of our cultural heritage including the diversity of cultures that contribute to N Ireland, recognise the similarities and differences between cultures in NI and the wider world e.g food, clothes, symbols, celebrations, acknowledge that people differ in what they believe is right or wrong, recognise that people have different beliefs that shape the way they live, develop an awareness of the experiences, lives and cultures of people in the wider world, recognise how injustice and inequality affect people's lives.

Theme 9 – **Learning to live as Members of the Community**

- Playing an active and meaningful part in the life of the community and be concerned about the wider environment

Recognise the importance of democratic decision-making and active participation at home and in the classroom, appreciate the interdependence of people within the community, know about the range of jobs carried out by different people, develop an understanding of their role and responsibility as consumers in society, explore how the media presents information.

Resources

Living. Learning. Together (CEA)
 EA/CCEA resource materials on emotional health and well-being
 NSPCC Keeping Safe
 Worry box (in each classroom)
 Bosca Barróg (in each classroom)
 3 sensory rooms within the school
 Regular Yoga/Mindfulness practice

Programmes/External Providers which support delivery of RSE

Helping Hands
 Alpha Project (Rang 6)
 BBHF Resilience programme
 DSSCD
 Healthy Me
 Healthy Kids
 Action for Children
 Yes project (Rang 6)
 Pink Ladies Cancer Support Group
 Internet Safety Day
 LTYC transition programme (Rang 7)
 Mental Health Week
 Action Mental Health (Rang 6)
 Anti-Bullying Week
 School Council
 Cancer Focus/Action Cancer
 NSPCC
 Dairy Council
 Extended Schools
 School visits – School Nurse, Dentist, Fire Brigade

Using outside agencies

When education and/or health professionals from statutory or voluntary organisations are invited into the school, the activities which the agency or individual undertake will complement the on-going programmes within the school. Care will be taken to ascertain that they have read and are willing to comply with the school policy. All health or educational visitors discussing issues related to RSE will be provided with a copy of this policy. A member of school staff will always be present when an individual or representative from an agency is taking a class.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The following information will be collated by the Principal and Vice-Principal and used to adapt the programme for the future;

- Pupil Feedback

- Parental Feedback
- Staff Review and Feedback
- Departmental Guidance
- Legislative changes

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years (but if new information or changes necessitate an earlier review, this will be facilitated).

The contents of this policy will be made available to all members of the BOG, all staff and all parents. The contact person for Comments/Feedback on this policy is the Principal.