

Woodstock Educate Together National School Relationship and Sexual Education Policy

What is Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)? RSE guides/leads the child in an informative and dignified manner to an understanding of his/her sexuality, the process of growth, change and human reproduction. It fosters healthy relationships and promotes respect for self and others. It equips the child with the language to express himself/herself in an appropriate and respectful manner.

RSE is an active, collaborative and positive process, using appropriate methodologies, whereby the child acquires a knowledge and understanding of:

1. Self, friendships and relationships.
2. The moral, spiritual and social framework of human sexuality.
3. A respect for love, sexual intercourse and reproduction.
4. A sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life.

RSE must be taught in our school, in line with the Primary School Curriculum, through the Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme. All staff members acknowledge the importance of the need for a whole-school approach to the teaching of RSE. Relationship of RSE within the overall curriculum. RSE will be taught under the umbrella of Social, Personal and Health Education, (SPHE)

- Sexual education pertains specifically to the strand Myself, strand unit Growing and Changing – as I grow I change, birth and new Life.
- Relationships education pertains to the strand Myself and Others.

There will also be links between RSE and other curriculum areas such as Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (S.E.S.E.) and the Learn Together Programme.

The RSE programme of Woodstock Educate Together National School is developed in the context of the core values that inform the ethos of the school: child-centred, co- educational, equality-based and democratically run. Honesty, respect, justice, integrity, trust and responsibility should emanate from a basic sense of social, ethical and moral standards. Woodstock ETNS wishes to encourage children to base relationships with others on friendship and understanding, and to be sensitive to difference and variety among people, including developing sensitivity to people's various strengths and vulnerabilities. The ethos of the school provides a supportive climate to help children understand themselves, communicate with others, make decisions, deal with conflict, and develop a positive self-concept. The working partnership of parent/guardians and teacher, and the inclusive nature of the ethos of our school, enables our children to develop the aspects of their personality that will help to make them a rounded, balanced person. RSE is an integral part of S.P.H.E. It also shares content with language, the arts, physical education, the Ethical Education curriculum (Learn Together Programme) and with Social Environmental and Scientific Education (S.E.S.E.). Many of the personal and social skills which we hope to develop in RSE. e.g. safety, communication, understanding cause and effect are explored in subject areas like the Ethical Education programme, English, History, Geography and Science. Giving children opportunities, through music, dance and the arts, to role-play feelings and situations, can develop their personal and social skills. An integrative approach is very significant for RSE. The RSE. lessons will be integrated into various subject areas as outlined above, thus ensuring that the pupils encounter RSE. in a holistic manner rather than in isolation. This is made through some aspects of SPHE (Social Personal and Health Education) that is already provided through the informal activities of the school. Provision is also made for S.P.H.E. in the discrete timetable.

Formal activities vary and include the use of the following programmes:

- Walk Tall
- The Stay Safe Programme
- RSE Books
- Making the Link and Beyond
- Lift Off
- Learn Together Programme (Ethical Education) Resources also include library books and videos for pupils, staff and parents. (Please see Appendix 3 for list of resources related to RSE)

Aims

The Aims of RSE are:-

- To enhance the personal development, self acceptance and well-being 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 his/her own sexuality and that of others while growing and developing.

Content Objectives

When due account is taken of intrinsic abilities and varying circumstances the Relationship and Sexuality Education curriculum, should enable the child to:-

- Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self.
 - Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self acceptance 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.
 - 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 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.

Guidelines for the management and organisation of RSE

Genuine, open, respectful attitude by teacher, in a warm, caring and supportive classroom - • Respect for self and others will be central at all times.

- Language to communicate confidently about themselves, their relationships and their sexuality will be developed.
- Positive, healthy attitudes will be fostered.
- Information will be clear and unambiguous. While topics around growing and changing, conception and birth will be explicitly taught in 5th/6th there will be a need to discuss sanitary bins from 4th class onwards (**3rd/4th class in 2024 multi-grade**). Parents will be notified of this and have the opportunity to opt their child out of this conversation but the school cannot guarantee that the opted out child will not become aware of the details of the conversation afterwards from another child.
- A spiral approach to content will be used - - discussion - drama activities - co-operative games - pictures, photos, visual images - viewing and discussing videos - story and poetry

- Teacher input will be complementary to the role of parents/ guardians. Where possible the classroom teacher will be responsible for the teaching of the RSE programme.
- Parents/ Guardians will be informed when the RSE lessons take place in the school.
- The teacher will only teach the specified curriculum content for each class.

If children raise issues not covered in the curriculum, teachers will defer/postpone discussion on such issues to allow for consultation with the Principal Teacher. The school will use its discretion as to when the issue will be dealt with or not at all. In all instances, the child will be encouraged to talk to his/her parents/guardians.

- All teaching aids and resources will be viewed by teachers prior to classroom use. All such resources will be available to parents/guardians to view.
- All visitors/speakers/presenters from outside the school will be approved by the Board of Management. They will be made aware of the school RSE policy and will only speak within its parameters. A teacher will be present at all times during such talks/presentations.

The school ethos of inclusion of all children must prevail at all times.

If a parent/guardian has any queries or difficulties regarding the teaching of sensitive issues, they should refer to the Principal or the Deputy Principal for clarification. Guidelines for when/if children are withdrawn from the RSE. programme: The child may be withdrawn from school and supervised by their parent/guardian pending the completion of the RSE lesson (approx 30/40 minutes). The child will then return to class for the continuation of his/her school day. If a child is withdrawn from the class for the teaching of sensitive issues, the school cannot guarantee that the other children will not inform them about the content discussed. The teacher may also need to make incidental reference to the issue at another time while that child is present. Although we aim to set specific times for the teachings of RSE, parents/guardians must be aware that these times can change at short notice. The school will notify parents as soon as possible of these time changes.

Role of the Parents/Guardians

Parents/guardians will be provided with an outline of the lessons/sensitive issues before they are taught, so that they can prepare the child before they are dealt with in school, if they so wish.

- A parent's/guardian's right to withdraw a pupil from the sensitive lessons of the RSE programme will be honoured, on the understanding that the parent is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education.

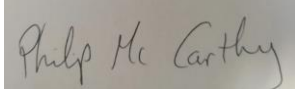
Special Educational Needs Provision

The RSE programme will be adapted and implemented in cooperation with teachers, parents and the child, where relevant, to ensure that key messages are taught to and understood by all pupils. Provision for ongoing support, development and review.

- The RSE programme will reflect this policy document.

- The BOM and school will encourage staff to avail of in-service development in RSE and will endeavour to provide up-to-date school resources.

Signed:  Date: 09/10/24

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