



Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

May 2022

CONTEXT

The Northern Ireland curriculum aims to empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives. In achieving this, the Department of Education recognises the importance of delivering

'appropriate age-related relationship and sexuality education (RSE) within a clear values framework as a means of developing the child as a whole. RSE is an integral part of the revised curriculum in both primary and post primary schools and must be delivered in a sensitive manner which is appropriate to the age and understanding of pupils and the ethos of the school.' (DE circular 2013/16)

Inclusivity

Account must also be taken of the Equality Commission guidance on eliminating sexual orientation discrimination (Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006).

'All pupils have the right to learn in a safe and secure environment, to be treated with respect and dignity and not be treated any less favourably on grounds of their actual or perceived sexual orientation.'

Teaching of RSE, like all other areas of the curriculum, should be inclusive of all differences regardless of race, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, culture, gender and sexual orientation.

INTRODUCTION

At Milltown Primary School we aim to offer a curriculum that is balanced and broadly based and which promotes the intellectual, social, emotional, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual development of the pupils. We believe that the safety, welfare and personal development of everyone in the school community are of paramount importance. We have high expectations that all children will achieve to the very best of their ability thus enabling them to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives. We seek to develop the pupils as individuals who recognise and value difference; as contributors to society; and as contributors to the economy & environment, to prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. We seek to do this in a caring and happy environment based on a strong Christian ethos.

In Milltown Primary School, Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) will be;

'taught in harmony with the ethos of the school and reflect the moral and religious principles held by parents and school management authorities'
(DE Circular 2013/16).

The policy is subject to consultation and ratified by the school's Board of Governors.

DEFINITIONS

The school accepts the following Department of Education definitions as set out in DE Circular 2001/15a:

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.'

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 dimensions.'

It concerns the ability to show affection, the capacity to give and receive love; procreation and, in a more general way, the aptitude for forming relationships with others. It is a complex dimension of human life and relationships.

It is recognised that the RSE learning process begins informally with parents (or those holding parental responsibility) long before any formal education takes place at school and, at all times, the role of the school must be considered to be complementary to that of parents/carers.

AIMS

The aims of RSE are to:

- enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child;
- help the child develop healthy and respectful friendships and relationships;
- foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, social and spiritual framework;

- promote responsible behaviour and the ability to make informed decisions;
- help the child come to value family life and marriage;
- appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood;
- promote an appreciation of the value of human life and the wonder of birth.
- ensure that the Policy is in harmony with the Christian ethos of the school.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The RSE curriculum should enable pupils to:

- acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self;
- develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth;
- form values and establish behaviour within a moral, spiritual and social framework;
- recognise and communicate their feelings and emotions and those of others;
- 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;
- come to value family life;
- 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 as they progress towards adolescence, particularly the emotional and physical changes at puberty;
- 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;
- develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision-making.
- develop an appreciation of the value of human life and the wonder of birth;

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 also 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 other 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 variety of groups;
- inter-personal skills for managing relationships confidently and effectively; for developing as an effective group member or leader.

MORALS AND VALUES

RSE should enable pupils to clarify what they believe and why they believe it and develop a respect for and interest in the beliefs of others. Pupils need opportunities to explore values and attitudes and to consider how they affect them, and others.

Children 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;
- mutuality in 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;
- compassion, forgiveness, mercy and care when people do not conform to their way of life;
- self-discipline.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Board of Governors

- Fostering and supporting the development of the RSE policy;
- Accommodating and being sensitive to the religious and cultural values and beliefs of both teachers and parents, while fulfilling their responsibility to ensure the availability of adequate RSE for all children;
- Ratifying the RSE Policy;
- Supporting the Principal and staff in the implementation of the RSE programme.

Principal

- Taking the lead in the development of the school's RSE policy;
- Promoting a planned, structured and coherent approach to RSE throughout the school;
- Ensuring that the Board of Governors is kept fully informed about RSE issues.

Safeguarding Team

- Ensuring that the RSE Policy is in line with Safeguarding procedures;
- Ensuring that safeguarding systems are in place;
- Promoting a safeguarding ethos within the school.

Class Teachers

- Planning and delivery of a curriculum that fulfils the aims of the RSE Policy at a level appropriate to the individual needs, age, maturity, stage of development and family background of the children taught.
- Being sensitive to the personal circumstances and backgrounds of their pupils;
- Consulting with parents regarding sensitive topics (such as teaching about puberty);
- Auditing schemes of work to identify opportunities for the integration of RSE through topics and across areas of learning

All Members of School Staff

Promotion of the caring supportive ethos of the school and ensuring that every child is valued and respected.

Parents

We seek to promote a positive partnership with parents and recognise that the home exerts a major influence on all aspects of a child's life, particularly in the area of relationships and sexuality education. Parents are consulted:

- at the development of the policy,
- when sensitive areas, such as puberty, are going to be taught so that they are informed about the content of the programme and given the opportunity discuss any issues /difficulties they may have;
- if/when, in connection with their child, sensitive issues/questions arise.

A parent should contact the Principal if they wish to request that their child is excused from participating in some or all of the RSE lessons. In this circumstance, the school will:

- discuss the nature of the concerns;
- identify the specific issues and lessons which are problematic; and
- explain the implications for the pupil in terms of the parts of the statutory programmes of study which will be missed.

The social and emotional effects of exclusion should also be considered, as the likelihood is that pupils will discuss the content of RSE lessons outside the classroom.

Parents of girls are advised to inform the school at the onset of menstruation so that support arrangements can be put in place.

This partnership between parents and school enables pupils to be supported at home in the area of RSE.

Pupils

Throughout the delivery of the programme, pupils will be consulted to determine what they know, what they need to know and any fears and worries they may have. This will further the promotion of trust, respect and good relationships with pupils. It will also ensure that their needs are being met as new issues that arise can be addressed.

CURRICULUM ORGANISATION

At Milltown Primary School Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is grounded in Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) where the central focus is on:

- the emotional development of children;
- health and safety;
- relationships with others; and
- the development of moral thinking, values and actions.

It will be appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils to ensure that it is relevant and accessible to all pupils regardless of age, culture, disability, gender, religion or social class.

For an outline of the RSE programme for Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2 see Appendix 1.

CROSS-CURRICULAR LINKS

The primary curriculum offers opportunities to develop an RSE programme in a holistic and cross-curricular way. Issues can be integrated within specific topics, discussed in subject-related contexts, addressed through health education, pastoral work and at assembly time as well as during visits from another agency. It is important, therefore, to consider the links that exist between RSE and the other curricular areas, such as:

Area of Curriculum	Links to RSE
Literacy	Developing vocabulary to discuss emotions and feelings, role play, reading and writing relevant stories/novels
Numeracy	Data handling (related to growth e.g. height)
WAU	Myself topic, naming body parts, stages of human growth, healthy living, respect for other cultures and ways of life
PE	Health and safety, team/group work
The Arts	Expressing feelings, emotions and actions through drama, art and music, working together

Religious Education	Respect, friendship, morality, values and attitudes that influence behaviour
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Assemblies

Whole school assemblies address moral, spiritual and social issues through presentations and stories, including Bible stories. Children are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour, respect for others, responsibilities and choices about themselves and others and the way they live their lives. An appreciation of the value of human life is promoted. Christian values underpin the principles.

Safeguarding Program

Children are made aware of key safeguarding personnel through assemblies, posters and lessons. Guest speakers, such as PSNI, Childline and NSPCC, are invited into school to contribute to the school's programme.

Methodology/ Active Learning Strategies

Teachers will endeavour to promote a classroom environment which is supportive, where self-esteem is fostered and where pupils feel valued and affirmed. Mutual respect will also be promoted. Classroom rules will be established to encourage respect of each other's opinion.

Teaching methods will involve pupils being active in the process of their own learning to develop personal and social skills and clarify attitudes and values within a moral framework.

INVOLVEMENT OF OUTSIDE AGENCIES

Outside agencies/individuals assist in delivery of aspects of the RSE programme e.g. School nurse, PSNI, NSPCC, Love for Life etc. In this case we will ensure that:

- provision is in line with our school's RSE and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policies and respects the ethos of the school;
- the provider is made aware of the issues around confidentiality; and

Parents/carers are made aware of the visit and type of activities that will take place around sensitive issues.

Love for Life

The 'Love for Life' team, when available, is used to support the delivery of the RSE program to P7 pupils. The pupils learn how the body grows and develops, and know how babies are conceived, grow, and are born. It also enables them to be better able to manage the emotional and physical changes at puberty. Pupils are provided with appropriate factual information and have opportunities to discuss their feelings and concerns. Girls and boys are taught separately for parts of the program. Parents are informed about when these talks will take place, the content to be covered and the

activities that pupils will undertake. Attendance at the 'Love for Life' workshop is by parental consent.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF PUPILS

To ensure that the learning experiences are effective, positive and relevant to all pupils, the RSE programme will be developmental, accessible and be appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils. It will meet the needs of both genders and be a positive experience for all participants.

SENSITIVE ISSUES / PUPILS' QUESTIONS

Sensitive issues may arise. There will be occasions when teachers will have to use their own discretion and professional judgement about how to deal with particular issues or answer questions raised by pupils. It is important that the type of advice and the manner in which it is given is supportive of the role of the parent/carer.

- The teachers in a pro-active way should address any issues in an age-appropriate manner;
- The teacher may need to decide whether it is appropriate to deal with the question in a whole-class forum, or if it may be more appropriate to respond on an individual basis, or at another time;
- The teacher may wish to discuss the questions the children have asked with the parents/carers to see how they would like the matter to be handled;
- Teacher colleagues, the EA or the social services may be approached for advice;
- Teachers should encourage pupils to discuss any issues and concerns they might have with their parent/carer if this is appropriate;
- It is important that if pupils cannot talk or do not wish to talk to their parent/carer, they have access to support from sympathetic teachers at school.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

To ensure that the learning experiences are effective, positive and relevant to all pupils, the programme will be developmental and delivered in a sensitive manner, which is appropriate to the age and understanding of the pupils. As is the case in all areas of Teaching and Learning, adjustments will be made as necessary to support children who have Special Educational Needs.

CONFIDENTIALITY IN THE CLASSROOM

The right to privacy must be respected at all times by both the teacher and all other pupils in the class. A key rule to agree in advance of any discussion is that no one will be expected to ask or answer any personal questions. A child does not have the right to expect that incidents in the classroom or in the wider context of the school will not be reported, as appropriate, to his or her parents/carers and/or the principal.

- *Teachers cannot promise confidentiality.*

- Pupils and parents should be aware that confidentiality cannot be maintained if:
 - abuse is suspected;
 - a pupil makes a disclosure of a safeguarding nature.

If teachers have a concern they should be guided by the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy based on DE Circular 2017/04.

Staff Development

Staff members will take advantage of appropriate training opportunities as they arise.

Resources

A range of resources will be used including the following:

- Living Learning Together (CCEA)
- Books, worksheets, charts, ICT etc;
- shared experiences.

Teachers must be satisfied that the resources used reflect the aims and objectives of the RSE program and the school's Christian ethos; are appropriate for the age of the children; inclusive and sensitive to pupils' needs and experiences; are factually accurate and up-to-date; and make clear distinctions between fact and opinion.

LINKS TO OTHER SCHOOL POLICIES

Work in RSE ties in with a range of other school policies, including:

Positive Behaviour Policy
 Anti-bullying Policy
 E-Safety/Acceptable use of the Internet
 Safeguarding and Child Protection
 Pastoral Care Policy
 Staff Code of Conduct
 Drugs Education Policy
 SEN Policy

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Pastoral Care Co-ordinator is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the policy.

Monitoring and Evaluation will be carried out by:

- Teachers being able to identify RSE related topics through schemes of work;
- Pupils having the opportunity to provide feedback about the content of the programme of RSE delivered by the school so that it can be responsive to their needs;
- Staff report to the co-coordinator on the effectiveness of the programme and amend where necessary;

- Principal reporting to Board of Governors.

A hard copy of the RSE policy will be available from the school office on request.

POLICY REVIEW

The Relationships and Sexuality Policy will be kept under review and updated in the event of receipt of any further guidance or legislation, or in light of events which may have implications for the policy. Consultation will be carried out with parents, staff, pupils and Governors.

Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme

The content of our programme for Relationships and Sexuality Education is outlined below, showing the key areas in each theme.

THEME: SELF AWARENESS

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

Foundation Stage	<p>Strand 1</p> <p><u>themselves and their personal attributes.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore who they are. • Recognise what they can do. • Identify their favourite things. • Recognise what makes them special
Key Stage 1	<p>Strands 1 and 2</p> <p><u>their self-esteem and self-confidence.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel positive about themselves, and develop an understanding of their self-esteem and confidence. • Become aware of their strengths, abilities, qualities, achievements, personal preferences and goals.
Key Stage 2	<p>Strands 1 and 2</p> <p><u>their self-esteem, self-confidence and how they develop as individuals.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop self-awareness, self-respect and self-esteem. • Know how to confidently express their own views and opinions in unfamiliar circumstances. • Identify current strengths and weaknesses. • Face problems, trying to resolve and learn from them. • Recognise how responsibilities change as they become older and more independent. • Explore and examine what influences their views, feelings and behaviour. • Develop strategies to resist unwanted peer/sibling pressure and behaviour.

THEME: FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

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

Foundation Stage	<p>Strand 1</p> <p><u>their own and others' feelings and emotions.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to recognise how they feel. • Develop ways of expressing how they feel. • Know what to do if they feel sad, lonely, afraid or angry and when it is important to tell others about their feelings. • Realise what makes their friends feel happy or sad. • Recognise how other people feel when they are happy, sad, angry or lonely.
Key Stage 1	<p>Strand 1</p> <p><u>their own and other's feelings and emotions and how their actions affect others.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to recognise, name and manage their feelings and emotions and realise that they are a natural, important and healthy part of being human. • Begin to recognise and manage the effects of strong feelings such as anger, sadness or loss.

Key Stage 2	Strand 1 <u>their management of a range of feelings and emotions and the feelings and emotions of others.</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
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THEME: HEALTH, GROWTH & CHANGE

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

Foundation Stage	Strand 1 <u>the importance of keeping healthy.</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of how to care for their body in order to keep it healthy and well. • Recognise and practise basic hygiene skills. • Realise that growth and change are part of the process of life and are unique to each individual.
Key Stage 1	Strand 1 <u>strategies and skills for keeping healthy.</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise and value the options for a healthy lifestyle including the benefits of exercise, rest, healthy eating and hygiene. • Have respect for their bodies and those of others. • Be aware of the stages of human growth and development. • Recognise how responsibilities and relationships change as people grow and develop. • Understand that medicines are given to make you feel better, but that some drugs are dangerous. • Understand that if not used properly, all products can be harmful. • Be aware that some diseases are infectious and some can be controlled.
Key Stage 2	Strand 1 <u>how to sustain their health, growth and well-being.</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, including physical activity, healthy eating, rest and hygiene. • Recognise what shapes positive mental health. • Know about the harmful effects tobacco, alcohol, solvents and other illicit and illegal substances can have on themselves and others. • Understand that bacteria and viruses affect health and that risks can decrease when basic routines are followed. • 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 for parenting and the importance of good parenting. • Recognise how responsibilities change as they become older and more independent.

THEME: SAFETY

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

Foundation Stage	<p>Strand 1</p> <p><u>how to keep safe in familiar and unfamiliar environments.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore appropriate personal safety strategies. • Identify situations that are safe and those where personal safety may be at risk. • Begin to realise the importance of road safety. • Understand that many substances can be dangerous. • Know the safety rules that apply when taking medicines.
Key Stage 1	<p>Strand 1</p> <p><u>strategies and skills for keeping safe.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know what to do or whom to seek help from when feeling unsafe. • Be aware of different forms of bullying and develop personal strategies to resist unwanted behaviour. • Explore the rules for and ways of keeping safe on the roads, cooperating with adults involved in road safety. • Explore how to travel safely in cars and buses. • Know about the potential dangers and threats in the home and environment. • Develop simple safety rules and strategies to protect themselves from potentially dangerous situations. • Identify ways of protecting against extremes of weather, for example being safe in the sun and in freezing conditions.
Key Stage 2	<p>Strand 1</p> <p><u>copng safely and efficiently with their environment.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop strategies to resist unwanted peer/sibling pressure and behaviour. • 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 ^[L1]_[SEP]Green Cross Code; how conspicuity ^[L1]_[SEP]reduces road ^[L1]_[SEP]collisions; passenger skills ^[L1]_[SEP]including boarding and disembarking from cars and home to school transport; and how bicycles are best maintained and ridden. • Develop a pro-active and responsible approach to safety. • Know where, when and how to seek help. • Be aware of basic emergency procedures and first aid.

THEME: RELATIONSHIPS

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

Foundation Stage	<p>Strand 2</p> <p><u>their relationships with family and friends.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out about their own family. • Talk about what families do together. • Begin to recognise how they relate to adults and other children. • Identify who their friends are. • Explore what they do together. • Know how to treat others.
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Key Stage 1	<p>Strand 2</p> <p><u>and initiating mutually satisfying relationships.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine the variety of roles in families and the contribution made by each member. • Be aware of their contribution to home and school life and the responsibilities this can bring. • Know how to be a good friend. • Understand that they can take on some responsibility in^[SEP] their family and friendship groups.
Key Stage 2	<p>Strand 2</p> <p><u>initiating and sustaining mutually satisfying relationships.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine and explore the different types of families that exist. • Recognise the benefits of friends and families. • Find out about sources of help^[SEP] and support for individuals, families and groups. • Explore and examine what influences their views, feelings and behaviour. • Consider the challenges and issues that can arise: at home; at school; and^[SEP] between friends; ^[SEP] and how they can be avoided, lessened or resolved.

THEME: SIMILARITIES & DIFFERENCES

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

Foundation Stage	<p>Strand 2</p> <p><u>similarities and differences.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to recognise the similarities and differences in families and the wider community. • Understand that everyone is of equal worth and that it is acceptable to be different. • Celebrate special occasions.
Key Stage 1	<p>Strand 2</p> <p><u>similarities and differences between people.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciate ways^[SEP] we are similar^[SEP] and different, for example age, culture, disability, gender, hobbies, race, religion, sporting interests, abilities and work. • Be aware of their own cultural heritage, its traditions and its celebrations. • Recognise and value the culture and traditions of another group in the community. • Discuss the causes of conflict in their community and how they feel about it. • Be aware of the diversity of people around the world.

Key Stage 2	<p>Strand 2</p> <p><u>valuing and celebrating cultural differences and diversity.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine and explore the different types of families that exist, the roles within them, and the different responsibilities. • Know about aspects of their cultural heritage, including the diversity of cultures that contribute to Northern Ireland. • Recognise the similarities and differences between cultures in Northern Ireland, for example food, clothes, symbols and 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. • Recognise the similarities and differences between different cultures ^[SEP]of the wider world, for example food, clothes, symbols and celebrations. • Understand that differences and similarities between people arise from a number of factors, including cultural, ethnic, racial and religious diversity, gender and disability.
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