

# Newtown School RSE Policy

## Our School and its Philosophy

Newtown School was founded in 1798 by the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and welcomes students of all religious persuasions and none. It is a co-educational, academically non-selective boarding school and day school. Our enrolment currently stands at 399 students.

Quaker education is not only concerned with examination results but with experiences that are not measurable, the discovery of true self, nurturing confidence, independence, and respect.

We share a way of life based on the belief that ‘there is that of God in everyone’. Our aim is to create a community of tolerance and understanding with a balance between discipline, especially self-discipline, freedom, and exploration.

## Relationship and Sexuality Policy in Newtown School

This policy encompasses every aspect of teaching and learning in relation to Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE). Discussion on this aspect of the curriculum occurs also in other classes as well as in SPHE and RSE, and it is important that all teachers, as well as management, parents, students, and guest speakers/facilitators, are familiar with the RSE policy.

## Definition of Relationship and Sexuality Education

Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a developmental process of cultivating knowledge, understanding, healthy attitudes, beliefs and values about sexuality and relationships. It is a vital part of general educational provision, seeking to promote the overall development of the individual which includes the integration of sexuality into personal understanding, growth and development.

## Relationship and Sexuality within Social Personal and Health Education

Access to sexual and health education is an important right for students under the terms of the article 11.2 of the European Social Charter. This article states that “health education be provided throughout the entire period of schooling” and that the sexual and reproductive health education is “objective, based on contemporary scientific evidence and does not involve censoring, withholding or intentionally misrepresenting information for example about contraception or different means for maintaining sexual and reproductive health” Best Practice Guidelines for RSE Circular 0043/2018 state that the qualified classroom teacher is the best placed professional to work sensitively and consistently with students and that he/she can have a powerful impact on influencing students’ attitudes, values and behaviours in all aspects of Health Education. The SPHE / RSE programme should be heavily underpinned by the Junior Cycle Key Skills and Wellbeing Indicators and should not be merely information based. Our approach focuses on the learner as central to the process. In RSE, students

develop skills in creative and critical thinking, communication, teamwork, research, and leadership.

While all the key skills and statements of learning of Junior Cycle are covered to some extent in SPHE and RSE, “staying well” is the main key skill which is evident. The Wellbeing Guidelines identify six indicators; active, responsible, connected, resilient, respected, and aware.



These indicators are central to student wellbeing and are identified in the RSE programme. In the SPHE classroom, the teacher seeks to use active, relevant, challenging, and enjoyable teaching methodologies. SPHE modules aim to assist the student in the development of a healthy attitude to sexuality in oneself and one’s development of a healthy attitude to oneself and one’s relationship with others. SPHE deals with many issues such as self-esteem, assertiveness, communication and decision-making skills - all of which contribute to an effective RSE programme.

### **The Aims of our Relationship and Sexuality Programme (RSE):**

- To help students understand and develop friendships and relationships
- To promote an understanding of self
- To promote a healthy understanding of sexuality
- To develop an awareness of consent
- To promote a positive attitude to one’s own sexuality and in one’s relationship with others
- To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction
- To enable students to develop attitudes and values toward their sexuality in the context of a moral, spiritual and social framework in keeping with the ethos of the school
- To provide opportunities for students to learn about relationships and sexuality in a way that helps them think and act in a moral, caring, and responsible way. It is acknowledged that in a course of limited duration these aims are aspirational:

However, the RSE teacher endeavours to develop these aims over time. The learning is founded on an ongoing relationship based on trust, understanding and mutual respect, in line with the Quaker ethos.

### **Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of Relationships and Sexuality Education in our School**

The Principal will make arrangements regarding the teaching of the RSE programme and the deployment of staff. The SPHE teacher will follow the Guidelines and lesson plans drawn up by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and will be supported by ongoing CPD as required.

- One hour per week is allocated to SPHE in first year, one hour in second year and third year.
- Within the SPHE programme, six timetabled periods will be assigned to RSE. Circular 0043/2018 states that schools have an obligation to implement RSE at Junior and Senior Cycle even in the absence of a timetabled SPHE class at Senior Cycle
- An in-depth RSE module of 6 hours duration is included in the Transition Year Programme.
- Senior Level: RSE will be an integral part of the Senior Cycle Programme delivered as a module of 6 hours duration.
- RSE teachers will be aware of all relevant documentation and best practice guidelines, such as “Being LGBT in school” and department circulars

### **Informing Parents/Guardians/Carers**

Parents/Guardians/Carers will be informed about the modules in the SPHE programme and a letter with the details of the Relationships and Sexuality Modules is sent to all parents/guardians and carers.

While all partners in the school community - teaching staff, parents and management are agreed on the programme, we recognise the right of any parent /guardian/ carer wishing to withdraw their son/daughter. If the parent/guardian wishes to withdraw their son/daughter from RSE, then this request must be made in writing and the student shall be facilitated. See Appendix 1

### **Management of Information /Classroom Confidentiality**

All personnel have been informed of their legal obligations under the Children First Legislation 2015. All staff have completed up to date e-learning Tusla training and a Child Safe Guarding statement is in place. Teachers reiterate in every RSE lesson that absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Students are made aware that any information or incident where a student may have been or is at risk of any type of abuse or in breach of the law, the teacher must report this to the Designated Liaison Person (as per the Child Protection Legislation 2015).

If there is any concern that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected, this must be brought without delay to the attention of the DLP. Mandated personnel have a legal obligation to report to the DLP and Tusla. All registered teachers are mandated persons. All school personnel also have a legal obligation to report a concern to the DLP. Teachers must indicate clearly to pupils when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential. The supports of the school should continue to be made available to the student

In the case that a teacher receives an allegation or has a suspicion of abuse (as defined in Children First: national Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children), the teacher should in the first instance report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP).

A written record of the report should be made and placed in a secure location by the Designated Liaison Person (DLP). The need for confidentiality always (as referred to in Chapter 1 Paragraph 1.2 of the child protection guidelines) should be borne in mind.

If the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation, he/she with the staff member should report the matter to Tusla immediately.

### **Offering Advice**

The school's function is to provide a general education about relationships and sexuality and not to offer individual advice, information or counselling on aspects of sexual behaviour and contraception – however, sources of professional information and advice will be identified when appropriate. Advice offered should not be directive and should be age appropriate.

### **Explicit Questions**

It is important to create a safe environment in SPHE/RSE where students are comfortable to contribute and ask questions. Teachers may not be able to answer all questions or issues raised. Appropriate limits should be outlined. In these cases, teachers should use their professional judgement and be guided by the context of the lesson and maturity in the class. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter which has been raised, they should seek advice from the Principal.

### **Guest Speakers**

While the RSE programme is best discussed openly with teachers that are known and trusted by the students, guest speakers can enhance the quality of the provision provided they are used in addition to and not instead of a planned RSE programme. The delivery of the RSE programme is the responsibility of the SPHE /RSE teacher. The teacher should provide the visitor, well in advance of the visit, with a copy of the RSE policy. The class teacher will remain in the class during the visit.

### ***Procedures to be followed in preparation for a visiting speaker:***

As per circular 0043/2018:

- The degree of explicitness of the content of the class should be discussed and agreed before the visit
- The visitor will be accompanied by the class teacher
- The teacher must consider how the visit will be prepared for and followed up on
- The visitor should be informed of the level and ability of the students
- Principal/ Deputy Principal must be informed of the date and arrangements of the visit
- The organising teacher advises parents/guardians/carers of the talk via notification on Compass

### **Sexual Activity**

While dealing with the topic of sexual activity, teachers should use their professional judgement and be guided by the age and emotional maturity of the students, the RSE Curriculum and RSE policy for the school. It is advisable that teachers give young people information on the age of consent, which, following the passage of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006 is 17 years for both males and females.

### **Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)**

Creating awareness of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) is undertaken in the RSE programme. General hygiene and STIs are addressed at Junior Cycle level but the area of STIs is addressed in further depth at Senior Cycle. While dealing with the topic of STIs, teachers should use their professional judgement and be guided by the age and emotional maturity of the students and the RSE Curriculum and RSE policy for the school.

Awareness of STIs is one of the objectives of the SPHE/RSE syllabus and is mainly addressed in the Senior Cycle.

### **Contraception**

This topic shall also be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all aspects of the issue in a non-directive way. The post-primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines state that Family Planning should be covered within the Senior Cycle RSE Programme. The teacher needs to be guided by the emotional maturity and possible necessity if this is to be taught at Junior Cycle Level.

### **LGBTQ +**

The post primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines includes the subject of sexual orientation. The Equal Status Act 2004 prohibits discrimination across nine grounds, including homosexuality. One of the advantages of exploring the subject of sexual orientation is the opportunity to challenge bullying behaviour based on sexual and gender orientation, misconceptions, assumptions, and address prejudices. Newtown School does not promote any one lifestyle as the only acceptable one in society. Newtown School promotes tolerance, acceptance, and individuality.

### **Students with Additional Educational Needs**

Students with specific needs may need more support than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up. They may also need more help in learning what sorts of behaviour are and are not acceptable, and in being warned and prepared against abuse by others. The class teacher may raise this judgement and provision should be provided. If required, teachers of RSE will work closely with the SEN co-ordinator and SET team to support the learning of students with specific learning needs.

### **Links to other School Policies:**

School policies being examined or reviewed, should be considered with reference to the school's RSE policy; while the implications of other school policies for the RSE policy also need to be considered, such as:

- Code of Behaviour -Living and Working in The School Community
- SPHE Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- School's Guidance Plan
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Critical Incident Management Policy

### **Provision of Training and Staff Development:**

The PDST offers training and support to all SPHE teachers at Junior and Senior Cycle. RSE training is made available, and it is best practice that teachers are trained in RSE prior to teaching this module. The school will endeavour to up skill and train the SPHE/RSE teachers in this important area of SPHE.

## **Classroom Resources:**

The school will purchase appropriate RSE teaching materials, which have been identified by staff as useful and which have been approved by the Principal, within the normal budgetary framework and as general resources allow.

SPHE/RSE schemes of work are located on Teams and the RSE plan is shared with management. These are reviewed during the year and annually.

## **Resources**

- Lesbian Gay and Bisexual Students in Post Primary Schools, Guidance for Principals and School Leaders. [www.jct.ie](http://www.jct.ie)

### **Junior Cycle**

- Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines
- Lockers
- Webwise.ie
- My Wellbeing Journey Books 1/2/3
- B4Udecide (HSE Website and Workbook)
- Busy Bodies Booklet and DVD
- LGBTQ+ Growing up LGBTQ+
- NCCA ([www.curriculumonline.ie](http://www.curriculumonline.ie))
- [www.jct.ie](http://www.jct.ie)

### **Senior Cycle**

- TRUST –Talking Relationships Understanding Sexuality Teaching Resource
- [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)
- [www.glen.ie](http://www.glen.ie)
- [www.HealthPromotion.ie](http://www.HealthPromotion.ie)  
[www.consenthub.ie/](http://www.consenthub.ie/)
- Being LGBT in School – Glen.ie
- Classroom teachers will use the B4Udecide website. This website uses information provided by the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Organisation.

## **LGBT Guidance for Principals and Staff**

Teachers' Union recognise the role that teachers play in addressing issues like homophobic bullying. The Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland and the Teachers' Union of Ireland have jointly with GLEN produced a resource to support teachers in addressing homophobic bullying.

### **Monitoring of Policy:**

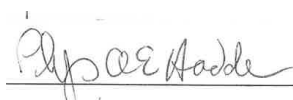
The implementation of the RSE policy will be monitored at SPHE meetings and other meetings deemed necessary by the Principal or Board of Management.

Specifically, important to the RSE policy is:

- Student feedback through the Students' Council
- Staff review and feedback
- Parental/ guardian/ carer feedback

Ratified by the Board Date: 13<sup>th</sup> March 2023

Chairperson of the BOM:



Philip Hadden – Chairperson

Principal:



Keith Lemon – Principal

**To be reviewed within two years or earlier if required**



## **Appendix 1:**

### **Withdrawals:**

Steps to be followed if a request for withdrawal from the RSE programme is made:

- The nature of the concerns is discussed with the parents in an effort to reassure them. The discussion can take place with the RSE teacher and another member of staff. The content of the RSE programme to be discussed. In this meeting it is advised that students who are withdrawn are vulnerable to misconceptions
- Consider whether the programme can be adjusted in a way to reassure parents while care is taken not to undermine the integrity of the RSE programme
- If a student is withdrawn, it is important that there is no disruption to other areas of their education
- Parents are also informed that students may subsequently receive inaccurate information from their peers.
- Parents are offered access to appropriate information and resources

## **Appendix 2**

### **Topics to be discussed in Junior Cycle Human Development and Growth**

Human Development and Growth

The Circle of Life

Communication and Respect

Feelings and Adolescence

Language to Express Feelings

Puberty, Body Awareness and Body Care

Body Image

Human Reproduction

The Miracle of New Life

Fertility, Pregnancy and Birth

Teenage Pregnancy / Implications of Sexual Activity

Human Sexuality

Relationships

Self-Respect

Peer Pressure

Awareness Regarding Equality and Difference

Awareness Regarding Injustice and Stereotyping

Respect for Sexuality and Understanding the Associated Responsibilities

Skills to Promote Personal Safety

Pornography

Coercive Control

Online Behaviour

Contraception

Consent

### **Topics to be discussed in Senior Cycle:**

Communication

Assertive Communication/Conflict

Handling

Dealing with Emotions

Human Reproduction

Human Sexuality

Responsible Parenting

Implications of Sexual Activity

Sexually Transmitted Infections

Loving Relationships

Marriage

Life Support

Accepting Sexual Orientations

Sexual Assault / Harassment

Consent

Sexual Abuse

Pornography

Coercive Control/ Domestic Abuse

Online Behaviour

Women's Health

Men's Health

LGBTQ+ Relationships

Safe Sex

Safe Sex in Relationships

Body Image