

# GAELSCOIL NEACHTAIN



## POLASAÍ AR OIDEACHAS CAIDRIMH AGUS GNÉASACHTA.

**Policy for Relationships and Sexuality  
Education.**

## **Rationale**

At Gaelscoil Neachtain we promote an atmosphere of mutual respect and co-operation which contributes to the learning process and generates a positive and supportive atmosphere within the school community where every individual feels valued and cared for.

At Gaelscoil Neachtain, we are concerned with the child's total well-being. Pastoral Care is composed of different policies and procedures which encourage each individual child to develop their full potential by catering for their spiritual, moral, emotional, intellectual, physical and social needs, in a safe and secure environment. Each child will be encouraged to develop personal, social and academic skills to prepare them for the "outside world".

We recognise that parents and other services outside the school also have a central role. We strive to work in co-operation with each of these in order to fulfil our pastoral care ethos.

## **Pastoral Care Ethos**

Gaelscoil Neachtain is committed to ensuring the physical, emotional, academic, spiritual and moral well-being of all of its pupils so that they may develop to their full potential and contribute positively to their community and to wider society. Gaelscoil Neachtain emphasises and promotes the importance of good relationships and mutual respect within a caring environment. We believe in the importance of guiding and supporting all pupils in our care as they grow and develop towards young adulthood. Gaelscoil Neachtain also recognises the need to have in place systems and structures which safeguard our pupils and encourage them to develop strategies to deal with life in the world around us today. At Gaelscoil Neachtain, Pastoral Care integrates all aspects of school life including the curriculum and will interlink with all other school policies. Pastoral Care is integral to this Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy.

## **Gaelscoil Neachtain Aims**

- To ensure that each child feels valued and that he/she feels a part of the Gaelscoil community.
- We aim to build positive relationships with the children in our care with the aim of raising pupils' social awareness, promoting positive attitudes and building their self-esteem.
- We aim to promote confidence and pride in our pupils as members of an Irish language community.
- To nurture an appreciation, respect and love for the Irish language and culture
- We aim to enable the children to initiate and develop good relations with other children, teachers and other adults
- At Gaelscoil Neachtain we are aware of the need to help our children manage their present lives, as well as to help them prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. We aim, therefore, to provide for the development of the pupil as a person as well as a learner.

- We aim to develop our pupils' 'life skills'– critical thinking, decision making, effective communication, learning from mistakes, which are necessary for their safety and health in today's society.
- We aim to guide our pupils on both personal and educational matters and we seek to build up a community of children who care about each other and show respect for themselves and others.
- We aim to promote a partnership, and close working relationship, with parents/guardians whose views and wishes as first carers will be heard and respected to enable us to support their children's learning.
- We aim to offer a framework of values and positive behaviour enabling our children to be self-reliant, motivated, self-disciplined and to make good choices in a moral context.

### **Values**

Every opportunity will be taken to praise our pupils for their contributions to the life of the Gaelscoil. Through positive daily experiences, in addition to curricular activities, we aim to communicate the following positive values and beliefs –

- Self-respect
- Honesty
- Integrity
- Tolerance
- Ownership of the Irish language
- Respect for others and their property
- Independence
- Co-operation
- Positive behaviour
- Reconciliation

### **Self-esteem.**

Gaelscoil Neachtain recognises that the most important aspect of education is the wholeness of the child. As a school we will encourage children to think positively about themselves and accept their own individuality. We believe that when a child's self-esteem will be boosted then they feel valued in all aspects of Gaelscoil life. The school will aim to promote positive self-esteem and confidence as these promote learning. This policy reflects the ethos of Gaelscoil Neachtain.

### **Sacredness of Life**

The value of human life and the uniqueness will be at the heart of RSE teaching.

## **Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)**

### **Relationships and Sexuality Education in the N.I. context**

RSE is not a new area of the curriculum. The framework for sex education was initially established by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DENI) in a *Guidance Circular 1987/45*. The main recommendation of this Circular was that each school should have a written policy on sex education which is endorsed by staff and governors and communicated to parents. It also stated *“sex education should be taught in a sensitive manner which is in harmony with the ethos of the school and in conformity with the moral and religious principles held by parents and school management authorities”*

The Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 further set out the legislative basis, requiring all grant aided schools to offer a curriculum which:

- promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, intellectual and physical development of pupils at the school and thereby of society ...and...
- prepares such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life

The general principles which underpin our work are those set out in Departmental guidance and the following Circulars:

**Circular 2001/15:** Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

**Circular 2001/15-2:** Guidance for Primary Schools - Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

**Circular 2010/01:** Guidance on Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

**Circular 2013/16:** Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy in Schools

**Circular 2015/22: Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Guidance**

We further recognise the importance of working in partnership with parents/carers in this area of personal development and acknowledge the contribution that can be made by outside agencies with skill and expertise in particular areas of the curriculum, e.g. NSPPC.

## **INTRODUCTION**

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. The learning process begins informally with our parents (or those holding parental responsibility) long before any formal education takes place at school.

RSE is included on a statutory basis within the NI curriculum through PDMU, Health Education, the World around Us and Religious Education. Health Education is taught mainly through the medium of PDMU in the Personal Understanding and Health strand as detailed later.

In RSE all pupils will be taught in an atmosphere of mutual respect. The value of a stable family life, marriage and the responsibilities of parenthood will be presented. As they mature, pupils will be encouraged to appreciate the importance of self-discipline, dignity, respect for themselves and others. Through PDMU and the World Around Us, children will learn about changes in their bodies and about the emotional and physical changes they may expect to experience over the next few years as they grow older.

Teaching at all times will be appropriate to the maturity and level of understanding of the pupils concerned. Teachers will be aware of, and take into account, the variety of existing pupil knowledge, the different attitudes and beliefs and the pupil's capacity to understand the 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 especially concerns affectivity, 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.

Teaching RSE should provide opportunities which enable pupils:

- to form values and establish behaviour within a moral, spiritual and social framework;
- to examine and explore the various relationships in their personal lives;
- to learn how to develop and enjoy personal relationships and friendships which are based on responsibility and mutual respect;
- to build the foundations for developing more personal relationships in later life;
- to make positive, responsible choices about themselves and others and the way they live their lives.

## **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.

## **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;
- 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 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 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 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, and others, are affected by them.

The importance of a moral framework is emphasised in the DfEE Circular No 5/1994 *Education Act 1993: Sex Education in Schools*: “Sex education . . . must not be value-free; it should also be tailored not only to the age but also to the understanding of pupils. School’s programmes of sex education should therefore aim to present facts in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner, set within a clear framework of values and an awareness of the law on sexual behaviour. Pupils should accordingly be encouraged to appreciate the value of stable family life, marriage and the responsibilities of parenthood. They should be helped to consider the importance of self-restraint, dignity, respect for themselves and others, acceptance of responsibility, sensitivity towards the needs and views of others, loyalty and fidelity. And they should be enabled to recognise the physical, emotional and moral implications, and risks, of certain types of behaviour, and to accept that both sexes must behave responsibly in sexual matters”. Teachers are reminded: “to acknowledge that many children come from backgrounds that do not reflect such values and experiences. Sensitivity is therefore needed to avoid causing hurt and offence to them and their families, and to allow such children a sense of worth”. (Paragraph 8)

## **OTHER RELEVANT POLICIES**

This policy complements and supports a range of other school policies including:

- Positive Behaviour/Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Use of Reasonable Force/Safe Handling
- Special Educational Needs
- First Aid and the Administration of Medicines
- Health and Safety Policy
- Use of Mobile Phones/Cameras
- ICT and access to the internet
- Intimate Care

## **Special Needs**

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 Special Needs and to accommodate this disparity in class lessons and experiences.

## **DELIVERING THE RSE PROGRAMME – CURRICULUM ORGANISATION and DELIVERY.**

The following outline teaching programme illustrates the topics covered through the delivery of the Northern Ireland Curriculum in Gaelscoil Neachtain. Many of the aspects included below are also part of the PDMU, RE, the World Around Us, PE, Drama or in reaction to specific situations. All teachers will deliver the RSE programme. Topics and themes are often repeated at regular intervals. The sequence in which ideas are presented below is not intended to imply a teaching order.

### **Curriculum to support the Relationships and Sexuality Policy.**

#### **Foundation Stage.**

##### **1a. SELF-AWARENESS**

###### **Themselves and their personal attributes.**

- Explore who they are.
- Recognise what they can do.
- Identify their favourite things.
- Recognise what makes them special.

##### **1b. FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS**

###### **Their own and others' feelings and emotions.**

- 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.

##### **2a HEALTH, GROWTH AND CHANGE**

###### **The importance of keeping healthy.**

- Be aware of how to care for their body in order to keep it healthy and well.
- Recognise and practise basic hygiene skills.
- Naming parts of the body (basic) - developing an agreed language for our bodies.
- Realise that growth and change are part of the process of life and are unique to each individual.



## **2b. SAFETY**

### **How to keep safe in familiar and unfamiliar environments.**

- 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.

## **3a. RELATIONSHIPS AND MANAGING CONFLICT.**

### **Their relationships with family and friends.**

- People that help me.
- 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.

## **3b. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES**

### **Similarities and differences.**

- 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 One.**

### **1a. SELF-AWARENESS**

#### **Their self-esteem and self-confidence.**

- 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.

## **1b. FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS**

**Their own and other's feelings and emotions and how their actions affect others.**

- 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.

## **2a HEALTH, GROWTH AND CHANGE**

**Strategies and skills for keeping healthy.**

- Naming parts of the body - developing an agreed language for our bodies.
- 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.

## **2b. SAFETY**

**Strategies and skills for keeping safe.**

- 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.

### **3a. RELATIONSHIPS AND MANAGING CONFLICT.**

#### **Initiating mutually satisfying relationships.**

- 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 their family and friendship groups.
- Loss and mourning - the death of a person or pet. (note: the situations of the pupils should be taken into account prior to introducing this topic)
- The difference between good and bad touches.

### **3b. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES**

#### **Similarities and differences between people.**

- Appreciate ways we are similar 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.
- Rules at home, at school and in the community.

## **Key Stage 2**

### **1a. 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 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.

## **1b. FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS**

**Their management of a range of feelings and emotions and the feelings and 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.

## **2a HEALTH, GROWTH AND CHANGE**

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

- 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.
- Know that AIDS is a prevalent disease throughout the world and is a major health issue for many countries.

## **2b. SAFETY**

**Strategies and skills for keeping safe. Coping safely and efficiently with their environment.**

- 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 Green Cross Code;

- how conspicuity reduces road collisions;
- passenger skills 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.

### **3a. RELATIONSHIPS AND MANAGING CONFLICT.**

#### **Initiating and sustaining mutually satisfying relationships.**

- Examine and explore the different types of families that exist.
- Recognise the benefits of friends and families.
- Find out about sources of help 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
  - between friends and how they can be avoided, lessened or resolved.

### **3b. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES**

#### **Valuing and celebrating cultural differences and diversity.**

- 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 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.

## **Confidentiality and Child Protection/Safeguarding Children**

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Where there is disclosure by a child of abuse, Child Protection/Safeguarding Children procedures will be implemented.

The classroom is an open environment and confidentiality cannot be maintained.

Therefore, staff and pupils are not encouraged to talk about their personal relationships or experiences during class discussions.

The child's 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. It is equally important that the teacher shares this right and never feels obliged to impart information about his/her own personal life.

However:

- teachers cannot promise confidentiality. 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. (Refer to our Child Protection/Safeguarding Children Policy)
- the principal or designated teacher for Child Protection/Safeguarding Children must be informed of any disclosures which might suggest that a pupil is at risk or that physical or sexual abuse is suspected. If a child confides in a member of staff and requests that the information is kept secret, the child must be told, sensitively, that the matter must be reported to the appropriate agencies. Decisions can then be taken in accordance with the procedures detailed in the school's Child Protection/Safeguarding Children Policy.
- teachers can provide general educational advice to all pupils as part of the curriculum. This general advice can be given to pupils individually or within group situations. It is important that the type of advice and the manner in which it is given is supportive of the role of the parents/carers.
- there will be occasions when teachers will have to exercise their discretion and judgement about how to deal with particular issues raised by an individual or by a group of pupils. An initial judgement will need to be made about whether or not it is appropriate to deal with the issues with the whole class. The teacher may wish to discuss the issues with the parents/carers to see how they would like the matter to be handled. Teacher colleagues or a member of the school's Leadership Team/Safeguarding Team might also provide useful guidance. It may be appropriate to respond to the issues with individual pupils or to arrange time for group discussion outside class time. In all cases, teachers should encourage pupils to discuss any issues and concerns they might have with their parents/carers;

- teachers are not medical professionals and will not give detailed personal medical advice to any pupil. Only doctors and health professionals should give medical advice to pupils;
- teachers encourage young people, where possible, to discuss their concerns with parents/carers.

### **Withdrawal from RSE**

Since RSE is a statutory requirement, it should be inclusive. As a school we actively promote the implementation of RSE and strongly discourage withdrawal. The school will, however, take account of parent/carer concerns.

### **Specific Issues**

There will be no direct teaching of issues such as homosexuality, AIDS, contraception etc. However, if these issues are raised by pupils, the teachers will address them sensitively.

### **Use of Visitors**

Where appropriate, we may use the skills and expertise of outside agencies and professionals. Where this occurs, the school will be satisfied that contributions from informed outsiders are an integral part of the whole programme and in harmony with the aims and ethos of the school.

### **Staff Training**

Training needs will be considered and will be accessed using the appropriate agencies. Where outside Agencies are used for training purposes, their remit will be clear and will reflect the ethos of the school.

Gaelscoil Neachtain staff are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this policy. Specifically important to the RSE Programme are:

- pupil feedback
- staff review and feedback
- parental feedback
- further Departmental guidance and legislative changes