

Broombridge Educate Together National School

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy (RSE)

1. Background and Aims of the RSE programme

1.1 Background

Broombridge Educate Together is a developing school under the Educate Together Patronage, opening with one Junior Infant class in September 2016. We currently have classes up to 6th class and will continue to develop until September 2025 with 16 mainstream classes and two classes for children with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This is a review of a policy that was first written in 2021 and enacted after consultation between staff, parent representatives, Principal and Board of Management. This policy was reviewed by staff and our PSA (Parents & Staff Association) in October 2024 and submitted to the Board of Management in December 2024

1.2 School Ethos

The R.S.E. Programme of Broombridge Educate Together National School is developed in the context of the core values that inform the ethos of the school: child-centered, 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.

Broombridge 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.

R.S.E. is an integral part of our Schools Wellbeing Framework and 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 R.S.E. 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 R.S.E. The R.S.E. lessons will be integrated into various subject areas as outlined above, thus ensuring that the pupils encounter R.S.E. in a holistic manner rather than in isolation.

1.3 The aims of our Relationships and Sexuality Education programme

The Aims of R.S.E 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.

1.4 Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education

R.S.E. guides/leads the child in an informative and dignified manner to an understanding of 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.

R.S.E. 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.

R.S.E. 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 R.S.E.

1.5 .Relationships and Sexuality Education within Social Personal and Health Education

R.S.E. will be taught under the umbrella of Social, Personal and Health Education, (S.P.H.E.)

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

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

1.6 Provision for Relationships and Sexuality Education

Some aspects of S.P.H.E. Social Personal and Health Education are 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:

- Weaving Wellbeing
- The Stay Safe Programme
- R.S.E. Books
- Walk Tall
- Making the Links and Beyond
- Learn Together Programme (Ethical Education)

2. Guidelines for running the RSE programme

2.1 School Guidelines

- 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.

- A spiral approach to content will be used - - discussion - drama activities - cooperative 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, rather than a substitute teacher.
- Parents/ Guardians will be informed when the RSE lessons take place by email. Class teachers will send home the "Home-School Links" page as appropriate, with each lesson ie. Some of the lessons for different classes require the "home-school links" page, and go home before the lesson is taught in school.
- The teacher will only teach the specified curriculum content for each class. If children raise topics not covered in the curriculum, teachers will defer/postpone discussion on such topics to allow for consultation with the Principal Teacher and/or the teacher with curriculum responsibility for R.S.E. 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 visitors/speakers/presenters from outside the school will be approved by the Board of Management. They will be made aware of the school R.S.E. policy and will only speak within its parameters. A teacher will be present at all times during such talks/presentations and parents/guardians will be made aware of such speakers in advance of the talk taking place

2.2 Parental Involvement

This plan was formulated by the teaching staff of Broombridge Educate Together National School, in consultation with the Board of Management and the Parent body (represented by the Parent Teacher Association), as we believe that Wellbeing (S.P.H.E. and R.S.E) is a shared responsibility and all contributions and involvement are essential to the effective implementation of the R.S.E and S.P.H.E. programmes in our school.

- In S.P.H.E. and R.S.E., parents/ guardians are acknowledged as the primary educators of their children, and the school will work in partnership with them in a supportive role.
- Parents/ guardians will be provided with the opportunity to view the S.P.H.E./ R.S.E. programme. (On School Website).
- The programme will be highlighted at class Orientation meetings at the start of Term 1 each year.
- Taking into account the independent needs and family background of the children, it is the parents/guardians responsibility to impart their own chosen values and beliefs.
- A parent's/guardian's right to withdraw a pupil from the sensitive lessons of the R.S.E. programme will be honoured, on the understanding that the parent is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education. In this case parents will complete the letter of withdrawal and send it into the school. A copy of this letter will be kept on Aladdin.

2.3 The role of the teacher

- Teachers have the right to training in the delivery of the RSE programme.
- Teachers have the right to have adequate resources to teach the programme.
- The teachers' role must be considered to be complementary to that of the parents/ carer, taking cognisance of the individual needs, stage of development and family backgrounds of the children.
- It is the teachers' responsibility to create a climate where mutual respect is promoted and practiced and the dignity of each individual is respected.
- It is the teachers' responsibility to provide the relevant information for parents (in the form of notes home) 2 weeks in advance of their child engaging with the 'sensitive issues' topics of the RSE programme.
- Teachers will only teach the topics laid down for the class and answer only those questions on the programme for that year. RSE will be taught in Junior Infants to Sixth Class. All information delivered will be informed by the content objectives of the SPHE Curriculum.
- Teachers will be responsible for the delivery of the RSE programme in their class, with the assistance of support staff, or other staff where necessary.
- Teachers are also responsible for integrating RSE into other areas of the curriculum.
- Teachers will use correct anatomical terms for body parts in everyday occasions and not just in isolated RSE lessons.
- The teachers will encourage the children to use the RSE information appropriately.
- Teachers will use their professional judgment and the RSE training guidelines in dealing with information or enquiries made by children on all topics. Children will be given opportunities to ask questions. Questions and answers are governed by the context of the SPHE programme. The teacher will answer questions in a neutral and factual manner. If a question is inappropriate to a particular stage, the teacher may explain that this will be discussed at another class level, or may refer it back to the parents.
- It is the teachers' responsibility to evaluate the programme, and to assess the progress of the pupils in their class.

2.5 Withdrawing pupils from the RSE programme:

For a child who is being withdrawn from class for the duration of a discrete SPHE lesson, the following options are available to the parents/carers to choose from:

- The child may be withdrawn from school and supervised by their parent/carer pending the completion of the R.S.E lesson (approx 30/40 minutes)
- Teachers will endeavor to teach the RSE programme at the end of the school day- 12.30-1.00 (Infant classes) and 1.30-2.00 (1st-6th Class)
- 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 R.S.E., parents/carers must be aware that these times can change at short notice. The school will notify parents as soon as possible of these time changes.

- The school ethos of inclusion must prevail at all times in this regard.
- If a parent/carer has any queries or difficulties regarding the above guidelines, they should refer to the Principal or the Deputy Principal for clarification.
- Where a parent/carer wishes to withdraw their child from the RSE programme they will complete and return a letter of withdrawal (Appendix 3) to the school, which will be stored on Aladdin for record.

2.6 Pupils with Additional Needs

The R.S.E. programme will be adapted and implemented in consultation and cooperation with teachers, parents and the child, where relevant, to ensure that key messages are taught to and understood by all pupils. Resources will be adapted and specific supports made available where needed to ensure the programme can be provided for all students at Broombridge ETNS.

3. Implementation, Ratification and Review

3.1 Training:

All teachers involved in this work do not necessarily have to be 'experts' on the issues concerned. However, they do require sensitivity to the needs of the group, an ability to deal with questions openly/honestly and a preparedness to refer to more expert advice if necessary. The school will organize training for staff to facilitate the implementation of the RSE programme

3.2 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.

3.3 Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the RSE programme:

We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this programme. Specifically important to the RSE Programme are:

- a) pupil feedback;
- b) staff review and feedback;
- c) parental feedback.

3.4 Provision for ongoing support, development and review

- The R.S.E. programme will reflect this policy document.
- The BOM and school will encourage staff to avail of in-service development in R.S.E. and will endeavor to provide up-to-date school resources.

3.5 Implementation

a) Roles and Responsibilities

The Principal, Deputy Principal and Wellbeing Co-ordinator (overseen by the BoM) are responsible for overseeing and supporting the implementation of the S.P.H.E. Programme. Class teachers are responsible for the implementation of the R.S.E Programme in their classes, including the distribution of relevant information and notes to parents/guardians.

b) *Timeframe*

This whole-school policy will be implemented from ratification by the BOM.

3.6 Review

Prior to the launch of this RSE policy, a draft policy was reviewed by staff members and by the Parent/Teacher Association. This policy will be reviewed at least every two years, with the next review due in September 2026.

3.7 Ratification and Communication

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management in _____

Signed: _____ (Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: _____

Appendix 1: Sensitive Issues Key Vocabulary

Junior Infants

Strand	Myself
Strand Unit	Growing and Changing
Objective(s)	The child should be enabled to develop an awareness of human birth – that a baby grows and is nurtured in the mother’s womb until ready to be born.
Language	Born, womb, breastfed, little seed, nine months in the womb.

Senior Infants

Strand	Myself
Strand Unit	Taking Care of my Body
Objective(s)	The child should be enabled to name the parts of the male and female body, using appropriate anatomical terms.
Language	Penis, vulva/vagina, breasts

1st Class

Strand	Myself
Strand Unit	Growing and Changing
Objective(s)	The child should be enabled to appreciate what is necessary in order to provide and care for new-born babies, in both animal and human world- love, regular feeding, nappy changing, careful bathing and regular check-ups.
Language	Vagina, anus

2nd Class

Strand	Myself
Strand Unit	Taking Care of my Body
Objective(s)	The child should be enabled to name body parts of the male and female body, using appropriate anatomical terms, and identify some of their functions
Language	Vulva, urine, urethra

3rd Class

Strand	Myself
Strand Unit	Growing and Changing
Objective(s)	The child should be enabled to discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human body, from conception to birth
Language	Pregnancy, umbilical cord, navel (belly button)

4th Class

Strand	Myself
Strand Unit	Taking Care of my Body
Objective(s)	The child should be enabled to understand the physical changes taking place in both the male and the female body – growing, height and weight, increasing strength, growing from boy to man, growing from girl to woman
Language	Fertilized egg, scan, hormones, cells, menstruations, periods, pubic hair, pubic areas, perspiration

5th Class

Strand	Myself
Strand Unit	Growing and Changing
Objective(s)	1: The child should be enabled to identify and discuss the physical and other changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty and understand that these take place at different rates for everyone. Female: hormonal changes, changing body shape, development of breasts, appearance of pubic hair, onset of menstruation (periods) Male: physical growth, enlargement of testicles and penis, appearance of pubic, underarm and facial hair, breaking of the voice, beginning of sperm production, onset of nocturnal emissions 2: The child should be enabled to understand the reproductive system of both male and female adults
Language	Ovaries, fallopian tubes, uterus, cervix, testicles, scrotum, sperm production, erection, wet dreams/ejaculation, conception

6th Class

Strand	Myself
Strand Unit	Growing and Changing
Objective(s)	1: The child should be enabled to understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed and loving relationship 2: The child should be enabled to discuss and explore the responsibilities involved in being a parent and the emotional and physical maturity required to be a parent (Preparing for the birth of a baby, taking care of offspring from birth onwards, emotional, psychological and practical provisions)
Language	Adolescence, responsibilities, intercourse

Appendix 2: Resources for the teaching of RSE

Websites

- www.sexualwellbeing.ie – Sample questions and age appropriate answers
- <https://vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu/HealthyBodies/> - Visual resources particularly for those with SEN
- <http://sphenetwork.ie/resources/> <http://www.belongto.org/alltogether-now/>
Anti-LGBT bullying

Books

Walk Tall, Stay Safe, Making the Links etc.

Selection of Picture books;

- Mommy, Mama & Me
- Daddy, Papa & Me
- Introducing Teddy
- My Princess Boy
- And Tango Makes Three
- King and King
- Princess Smartypants
- 10000 dresses

Referenced from INTO Documents

- Different Love Same Love pdf
- Respect; Guidelines for primary teachers in addressing homophobic and Transphobic bullying pdf
- We all belong pdf
- 50 Picture books to change the world pdf

Misc.

- Anatomically correct dolls

Appendix 3

Letter of withdrawal of pupil from sensitive lessons in R.S.E. Programme

Child's Name: _____

Child's Class: _____

Teacher: _____

I wish to withdraw my child from the sensitive issues taught in the Relationship and Sexuality Education Curriculum. I understand I will withdraw and supervise my child pending the completion of the R.S.E. lesson (approx 30/40 minutes). My child will then return to class for the continuation of his/her school day,

I understand, I am taking responsibility to cover the sensitive issues with my child outside of school hours.

I understand that the school cannot guarantee that the other children will not inform my child about the content of these sensitive lessons. I am aware that the teacher may also need to make incidental reference to the sensitive issues at another time while my child is present.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

A COPY OF THIS LETTER WILL BE KEPT ON THE CHILD'S FILE. A COPY OF THIS LETTER WILL BE SCANNED AND UPLOADED TO THE CHILD'S ALADDIN PROFILE. A COPY OF THIS LETTER WILL BE GIVEN TO THE CHILD'S PARENT/GUARDIAN FOR THEIR RECORDS.

Appendix 4

Glossary of Terms and Class – Appropriate Explanations

	Infants – 2nd Class	3rd Class – 6th Class
Lesbian	A woman who loves another woman and they can be a family together.	A woman who has or wants to have a loving relationship with another woman.
Gay	A man who loves another man and they can be a family together	A man who has or wants to have a loving relationship with another man. Sometimes this term is also used to refer to lesbians.
Bisexual	A person who can love a man or a woman and form a family with a person of either gender.	A person who can form a family with a person of either gender. A person who can have or wants to have a loving relationship with either a man or a woman.
Transgender (or Trans for short)	A girl who feels like they are a boy / A woman who feels like they are a man. A boy who feels like they are a girl / A man who feels like they are a woman.	A person who was born with the physical characteristics of a boy/girl but deep inside they feel like they are a different gender and want to live their life as that gender.
Heterosexual (or Straight)	A man who loves a woman or a woman who loves a man and they can be a family together	A man who has or wants to have a loving relationship with a woman or a woman who has or wants to have a loving relationship with a man.
Homophobic Bullying	When people are hurtful to others because they are lesbian., gay, bisexual, or transgender or because people think they are.	When people hurt others (verbally, psychologically, physically, cyber bullying etc.) because they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender or because people think they are.
Transphobic Bullying	When people are hurtful to others because they are transgender or because people think they are.	When people hurt others (verbally, psychologically, physically, cyber bullying etc.) because they are transgender or because people think they are.
LGBT	A short way to say lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender	An acronym used to refer to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities.
Homosexual	This is another term for gay or lesbian, sometimes used by scientists or doctors. LGB people generally prefer the terms lesbian, gay, or bisexual to be used.	An acronym used to refer to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities.