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Russian Schoolchildren Roleplay Weddings on Field Trips – Vyorstka

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Schools and universities across Russia have begun taking students on organized visits to civil registry offices, with some staging mock wedding ceremonies, as authorities intensify efforts to promote what they call traditional family values amid a deepening demographic slump.

More than 100 schools, colleges, universities and registry offices have reported holding the excursions since the start of 2026, the exiled news outlet Vyorstka reported, citing social media posts.

The visits come as the Kremlin seeks to reverse Russia's most serious demographic crisis since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Some 1.2 million children were born in Russia in 2024, marking the lowest annual figure since 1999. After that, the state statistics agency Rosstat stopped publishing monthly birth data.

Officials and school administrators have described the registry office trips as career guidance,

lessons under a new family studies course introduced in 2024 or initiatives aimed at fostering "traditional family values."

The extracurricular course, titled "My Family" and designed as a 36-hour program, is intended to instil "the values of a strong family, marriage and having many children," the Education Ministry said when it was rolled out.

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Vyorstka's report said students in at least seven cases were assigned the roles of "bride" and "groom" during visits to registry offices, Vyorstka reported.

Two ninth-grade students in the southern Saratov region exchanged rings and signed documents in what school staff called a simulated marriage registration to help teenagers "feel the importance and solemnity of the moment."

In the Perm region near the Ural Mountains, sixth-grade pupils were taken to a registry office, where photographs posted online appeared to show two girls participating in a staged wedding ceremony.

President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly urged young Russians not to delay having children for the sake of education or careers, saying the state must ensure they can combine parenthood with study and work.

He has pointed to increased maternity benefits for full-time female students and the opening of mother-and-child rooms at most universities.

Putin has said families with three or more children should become the norm in Russia, arguing that "value systems," rather than income levels, play the decisive role in birth rates.

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