



# **Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy**

## **Introductory Statement**

This policy is an approved approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in Scoil Naomh Sheosaimh. It was developed by the R.S.E. Policy Committee which included two teachers, two representatives of the Board of Management and two parent representatives. It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE.

## **School Philosophy**

This policy was developed and will be implemented in ways which are in keeping with the ethos of the school. The ethos of the school is characterised by the following:

- We endeavour to provide a holistic Catholic education for each child, where respect and care for all are central values.
- While upholding the Catholic ethos of the school we promote inclusiveness, and respect cultural and religious diversity.
- We endeavour to cater for the full development of each child, educationally, spiritually, morally, and socially; to help them think clearly, creatively, and critically, and to act independently; to help them to acquire moral and religious values, and to respect the principles of truth, unselfishness, politeness, honesty and temperance.
- We endeavour to prepare children to live full and useful lives as adults in our society.

## **Definition of RSE**

Relationship and Sexuality education (RSE) aims to provide opportunities for children and young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

## **Relationship of RSE to SPHE**

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) provides opportunities for pupils to learn basic personal and social skills which foster integrity, self-confidence and self-esteem while nurturing sensitivity to the feelings and rights of others.

### **Current Provision Included in the school curriculum is:**

- SPHE lessons (provided through discrete curricular time and integration)
- Use of the RSE Manuals and Busy Body resources
- Stay safe Programme / Walk Tall Programme
- Religious Education

### **Aims of our RSE programme**

- To help young people develop healthy friendships and relationships
- To promote a healthy attitude to sexuality and to relationships
- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child
- 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- Sixth Class
- To understand the physical changes taking place with the onset of puberty- Senior Classes
- 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 the sexuality of oneself and others while growing and developing. We support the aims on which RSE is modelled. We encourage good behaviour, open communication, understanding and tolerance of differences, and respect for self and others. We recognise that both pupils and staff have rights and responsibilities in our school. A sense of responsibility is fostered and attention is paid to the wellbeing of all of the members of the school community.

### **Policies which support SPHE/RSE**

- Child Protection Policy
- Code of behaviour and discipline
- Anti-Bullying Policy – where specific strategies to prevent and deal with homophobic and transphobic bullying are listed
- Enrolment Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy

### **Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School Curriculum Matters**

Curriculum Content –The curriculum by NCCA will be followed as published, and will be taught from infants to 6<sup>th</sup> class. All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school, the whole school plan for SPHE and the RSE policy. Each class teacher will teach the content for their class level.

- The Stay Safe programme will be implemented throughout the school.
- The class teachers will coordinate the teaching of Stay Safe during the school year (carefully consider time of year for teaching Stay Safe and the sensitive elements of the RSE programme)

## **Organisational Matters:**

- Parents will be informed in advance of lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme, with a letter relevant to what will be taught at their child's class level.

The letter will be issued in advance, giving parents an opportunity to observe what is covered and to prepare their children, it also gives parents an opportunity to become involved, to inform themselves of the programme content and to prepare children for the information they will acquire around the sensitive areas and discuss areas covered in RSE/SPHE. Parents are invited/welcome to speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns.

- Special consideration will be taken to ensure that the needs of children with SEN are met. Taking into account the pupil's social and emotional development, instruction will be based on individual needs where possible. Parents will be consulted around sensitive issues.

## **Curriculum Planning**

RSE forms part of the national curriculum for SPHE by NCCA and will be taught from infants to 6th class. RSE will be covered under the following strands and strand units of the SPHE curriculum:

### Myself

- Self-Identity
- Taking care of my body
- Growing and Changing
- Safety and Protection
- Making decisions (3rd Class onwards)

### Myself and Others

- Myself and my family
- My friends and other people
- Relating to other

The RSE programme is divided into two main parts:

#### A. The general programme which contains content such as:

- Friendship
- Self-identity
- Family
- Self-esteem
- Growing up

#### B. The second section will deal with any sensitive content.

<p><b>Topics covered up to 2<sup>nd</sup> include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping Safe</li> <li>• Bodily changes during growth and birth (birth-9)</li> <li>• Making age appropriate choices</li> <li>• Appreciating the variety of family types and a variety of family life that exists in our school and community</li> <li>• Recognising and expressing feelings</li> <li>• Self-care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep</li> <li>• Expressing opinions and listening to others</li> <li>• Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms (Junior/ Senior Infants)</li> <li>• Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions (1st/2nd)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Topics from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bodily changes</li> <li>• Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise</li> <li>• Keeping Safe</li> <li>• Expressing Feelings</li> <li>• Appreciating the variety of family types within our school and community and how these family relationships shape us</li> <li>• Making healthy and responsible decisions</li> <li>• Forming Friendships</li> <li>• Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb</li> <li>• Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (Sixth Class) *</li> <li>• Reproductive system of male/female adults (Sixth Class) *</li> <li>• Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship (Sixth Class)</li> </ul>
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Topics such as sexually transmitted diseases, contraception, masturbation and abortion are not covered in the primary school RSE programme

### **Approaches & Methodologies**

When implementing the programme, staff at Scoil Naomh Sheosaimh will endeavour to display respect for and sensitivity towards the different cultural family backgrounds experienced by the children. The curriculum will be taught in an age-appropriate manner at all times. The curriculum will be taught from Junior Infants to 6th class. It will be taught through a spiral curriculum (key topics will be revisited in a developmental manner at regular intervals). The materials taught will reflect the needs of the children.

The RSE curriculum will be taught through:

- Stories and poems
- Classroom discussion
- Group work
- Games
- Art activities
- Reflection
- Circle time
- Guest speaker

The approach in school is child-centered and will always take the age and stage of development of the children into account. Appropriate vocabulary relating to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, parts of the body and feeling will be used. The use of slang will be discouraged.

Questions arising from lesson content will be answered in an age-appropriate manner. The class teacher cannot answer questions which do not relate to the particular curriculum objectives for a class. Pupils will be informed if a question/issue is not on the programme and they will be advised to talk with their parents. Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents themselves if they feel that a question is very inappropriate.

**Staff should not invalidate questions but use limits.**

When deciding whether it is appropriate to answer a question or not the teacher should consider:

- If the question is a moral one, while being sensitive of different religious and non-religious backgrounds will refer the child to speak to their parents or guardians or to the Catholic teaching.
- It will be our policy not to answer personal questions about ourselves.
- A question is an opportunity to clarify, to teach and to reassure and in line with the SPHE curriculum which aims to equip children with attributes and skills necessary to live a democratic way of life with individual and group rights and responsibilities.

**Sample responses;**

- I'll do my best to answer your questions but I may not be able to answer all of them
- That's something you'll learn about as you get older
- Is that something you could talk to your parents / guardians / family
- We agreed in our contract that we wouldn't ask anyone personal questions.

For older children a 'question box' can be used as part of a structured RSE lesson. Teachers can follow up on the written questions at a later date, thus allowing time to prepare suitable answers, consult with colleagues, etc. If issues arise which might be seen to contravene Children's First Guidelines, the teacher will notify the designated liaison person in the school.

### **Parental Involvement**

- The school acknowledges that parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children about growing and changing. This R.S.E. policy seeks to support parents in this role. Parents and teachers support one another and collaborate as partners in leading the children as they grow and mature.
- Parents are welcome to view the curriculum and resources if they wish.
- Contact will be made with parents prior to the teaching of lessons involving the 'sensitive elements' of the RSE programme.
- Parents will be informed in advance when formal lessons on the sensitive areas of the programme and will be asked to discuss these issues with their child prior to the lessons in school.

## **Resources**

Relationships and Sexuality Education Manuals (DES). Each class teacher has a copy of the appropriate manual.

- Stay Safe programme
- Walk Tall Programme.
- Busy Bodies DVD and booklet. This DVD and booklet were developed to support the teaching of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class component of RSE within the context of SPHE.
- All resources are available for parents/guardians to view if they so request prior to the delivery of the lesson.

## **Provision of Ongoing Support**

- Opportunities provided by our Education Centre will be brought to the attention of staff members. Teachers will be encouraged to attend CPD in RSE.
- Application for in-school support from PDST sought when necessary.
- Staff meetings utilised as a platform for discussion and development of RSE materials.
- Peer observation opportunities for staff to develop confidence.

## **Review**

- The policy will be reviewed after every two years. The policy may also be reviewed at an earlier time should a need arise. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made.
- This plan was ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting on:

