

Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Policy

Introduction

This SPHE Policy for St. Joseph's NS was updated by the principal, senior management and teaching ancillary staff. This plan is for the information of those who work in the school, the Board of Management, parents, Department of Education and Skills and any other interested parties in the school community.

School Details

St. Joseph's National School is a mixed sex school in Ireland. The school has a catholic ethos. There are 16 mainstream classrooms and two ASD classrooms.

Introductory Statement

All schools are required to have an RSE policy to detail how RSE is taught in the school, including the sensitive aspects. This policy is an approved approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE both formally and informally.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) encompasses the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, sexual identity and intimacy. In St. Joseph's we seek to promote the overall development of the child which involves the integration of Relationships and Sexuality into personal understanding, growth and development within the context of our Catholic ethos.

RSE is a partnership involving parents, teachers and management. The school has a responsibility to put in place an RSE policy as part of the wider, Social, Personal and Health Education strand of the curriculum.

School Philosophy

We recognise that SPHE is intrinsic to the teaching and learning that occurs both formally and informally in school and in the classroom. Through our SPHE programme and subsequently through RSE, we wish to assist children to develop feelings of self-worth and self-confidence while encouraging their ability to relate to others in a positive way. The curriculum also encourages children to be aware of their rights as an individual while at the same time accepting responsibility for their actions as members of the school and the wider community. Our school values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. Our ethos means that we value respect, tolerance and openness through the lived experience of the children and school community. Parents have the primary role in the social, personal and health education of their children so their involvement will be encouraged as much as possible. SPHE and RSE are key components in supporting our school and children to develop into healthy young adults.

Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education

Relationships and Sexuality Education is an integral part of SPHE and must be taught in this context. It provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality and relationships through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework. In particular, it addresses the meaning of human sexuality, relationships, growth and development, relevant to personal and social skills.

Rationale

The need for this policy arises from our school's obligation to provide for all the needs of the student body and respond appropriately to sensitive and emotive issues relating to emerging sexuality.

Aims

1. To enhance the personal development, well being and self-esteem of each child.
2. To enable each child to gain an understanding of and respect for human love, reproduction and sexual activity in a sensitive and measured way.
3. To enable the child develop healthy friendships and relationships.
4. To develop and promote a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life.

Relationships to School Ethos

The school ethos affirms and supports close links between school and home. To this end parents were encouraged to play a meaningful role in the RSE policy formation through discussion, feedback through the B.O.M. and Parents' Council and the ratification of the finished product. Parents also have the right to withhold their children from participating in RSE classes.

Outline of Content

Strand Units

Myself	Self identity, taking care of my body, growing and changing, safety and protection.
Myself and Others	Myself and family, friends and relating to other people.
Taking Care of My Body	Naming parts of the male and female body using appropriate terminology (Senior Infants upwards). Identifying physical changes. Understanding puberty and the Reproductive System (Fifth & Sixth Classes)

Growing and Changing The stages of development of a baby from conception to birth (Middle Classes). Understanding sexual relations within the context of a committed loving relationship (Senior Classes).

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School

Curriculum Content –The curriculum by NCCA will be followed as published, and will be taught from infants to 6th 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 each year as laid out in the curriculum, and utilising the RSE manuals to complement their teaching.

Management of RSE

- The strands Growing and Changing, and Taking Care of my Body are covered in Year One of a 2 year SPHE plan.
- The sensitive lessons are covered as part of these broad topics (as outlined below and see appendix 1)
- Special arrangements exist for the delivery of the sensitive elements from 4th class up (see below)
- 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.

Month	Year 1 – Junior Infants, 1st, 3rd, 5th	Year 2 – Senior Infants, 2nd, 4th, 6th
September/October	Self-Identity (Myself)	Myself and my Family (Myself and Others)
November/ December	My Friends and Other People (Myself and Others)	Relating to others (Myself and Others)
January/ February	Safety and Protection Stay Safe Programme (Myself)	Growing and Changing Booster Stay Safe Lessons RSE (Myself)
March/ April	Making Decisions (Myself)	Taking Care of my Body RSE (Myself)
May/ June	Media Education (Myself and the Wider World)	Developing Citizenship (Myself and the Wider World)

RSE is a component of the SPHE curriculum and the sensitive lessons must be taught. The sensitive objectives of RSE fall within the Taking care of my body and Growing and changing strand units. The RSE programme however covers strands, strand units and objectives across the curriculum encompassing other areas of SPHE.

The RSE Programme is a resource that can be used to help deliver RSE and this will be delivered in the even years – SI, 2nd class, 4th class and 6th class. This will be taught in January - April under the Growing and Changing and Taking Care of my Body Strand units. Parents should be informed that teachers are about to commence teaching this programme and can be directed to the lessons on the PDST website

Parental Involvement

- Parents will be informed that the school fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE programme including sensitive aspects of the programme at enrolment.
- 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 meet/contact their child's teacher if they so wish, to discuss or clarify 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 view the curriculum and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns at any time during the year. The school acknowledges that parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children about growing and changing.
- A parent's right to withdraw a pupil from the sensitive issues process will be honoured on the understanding that the parent(s) is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves.
- Following discussion with Principal and Class Teacher, if a parent wishes to withdraw their child from the sensitive lessons it should be given in writing stating their reasons for doing so
- Any parent who wishes to withdraw their child are asked to discuss with the principal how this may be facilitated.
- As RSE is an integral component to SPHE, consent is not needed.
- If a child has been withdrawn from the sensitive RSE lessons, the school takes no responsibility for what the child may hear following on from the teaching of the lessons. eg. What they may hear on yard.

Organisation and 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 Growing and changing Taking care of my body The RSE programme is divided into two main parts:
 - 1) The general programme which contains content covered through SPHE strands and strand units and compliment the aims and objectives of RSE
 - Friendship
 - Self-identity
 - Family
 - Self-esteem
 - Growing up

2) The second section will deal with any sensitive / specific content covered through RSE strands and strand units. The sensitive aspects are in bold.

Topics covered up to 2nd include:

- Keeping safe
- **Bodily changes from birth (birth-9)**
- Making age-appropriate choices
- Appreciating the variety of family types and the variety of family life that exists in our school and community
- Recognising and expressing feelings
- Self-care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep
- Expressing opinions and listening to others
- **Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms (Junior/ Senior Infants)**
- **Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions (1st/2nd)**

Topics from 3rd to 6th include:

- Bodily changes
- Healthy eating, personal hygiene and exercise
- Keeping safe
- Expressing feelings
- Appreciating the variety of family types within our school and community and how these family relationships shape us
- Making healthy and responsible decisions

- Forming friendships
- **Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (3rd, 4th class)**
- **Introduction to puberty and changes (3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th class)**
- **Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (5th and 6th Class)**
- **Reproductive system of male/female adults (5th and 6th class)**
- **Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship (5th, 6th class)**

The Busy Bodies programme is used to support teaching of the sensitive topics in **5th and 6th class** and the relevant videos/website links/booklet will be distributed to parents in advance to support the implementation of the sensitive objectives in class

Methodologies

When implementing the programme, staff at St. Joseph's National School will endeavour to display respect for and sensitivity towards the different cultural and 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
- videos
- reflection
- circle time

Differentiation

Teachers use assessment and professional judgment to differentiate the programme and content to suit the needs of the class. Some techniques used:

- ensuring that objectives are realistic for the students
- ensuring that the learning task is compatible with prior learning
- providing opportunities for interacting and working with other students in small groups and spending

more time on tasks

- organising the learning task into small stages and ensuring that the language used is pitched at the student's level of understanding
- understanding of the activity using task analysis, outlining the steps to be learned/completed in any given task, posing key questions to guide students through the different stages/processes, and to assist in self-direction and correction
- having short and varied tasks creating a learning environment through the use of concrete, and where possible everyday materials, and by displaying word lists and laminated charts with pictures

Sometimes the stage of development in a class can vary widely and strategies to differentiate in class can support gradual and appropriate teaching

- group work and discussion
- higher and lower order questioning in groups
- moderated whole class discussions through use of a Question Box

Pupils with Special Educational Needs

Adaptions to the way in which the content is delivered will be made for children with Special Educational Needs. Consultation with parents/ guardians in advance and anticipation of the children's needs will be central to ensuring learning is meaningful.

- Children may be pre-taught language or concepts in anticipation of whole class work
- Children may work in smaller groups or 1:1 on adapted and suitable material

Language

SPHE curriculum provides a context in which children are given opportunities to develop and enhance their language skills and to increase their vocabulary related to SPHE. Children should become aware of the power and influence of language. When used positively, language can build up, affirm and show respect to another human being but if used in a negative manner can hurt, diminish and demean. Children need to recognise and become sensitive to the ways in which they themselves use language in their relationship and their everyday interactions. There are two areas where the use of language is applied in RSE lessons;

- The formal use and teaching of language generally throughout the school
- The use of language in discussion through your formal RSE lessons
- Appropriate vocabulary in formal teaching
- Relating to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, parts of the body and feelings will be used, the use of slang will be discouraged
- Anatomical terms and language introduced is consistent with RSE Materials Books

Confidentiality

- The school follows Children First Guidelines 2011 and The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2011
- If a child is withdrawn from the teaching of sensitive issues, we cannot guarantee that the other children will not tell or inform him/her about what happened.

Child Protection

The school follows the DES Child Protection guidelines and has a Child Protection policy with Ann McQuillan as Designated Liaison Person and Ciara Mc Nickle as Deputy DLP. In cases of disclosure the DLP will follow the procedures as set out in Children First.

Review

The policy will be reviewed after every two years. The policy may also be reviewed at an earlier time should a need arise and parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made.

Ratification

This policy was ratified by the BoM at a meeting on the 11th October 2021.

Signed: _____ . Chairperson BOM