

St. Joseph's N.S., Leitrim Village Roll No 01125B

Relationships and Sexuality Education (R.S.E.) Policy

1. Introduction

This policy is an approved approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in Saint Joseph's N.S., Leitrim Village. It was initially developed by the RSE Policy Committee which included two teachers, two representatives of the Board of Management and two parent representatives in 2008. It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE. This policy was reviewed between January and June 2017. Parents and teachers were issued questionnaires to seek their views and thoughts on various aspects of this policy. This policy was reviewed again in November 2020 following DES guidelines recommending that the RSE programme be taught in the first term of the school year.

2. Initial Policy Committee Members (2008)

B.O.M.: Fr. Michael McGrath
Michael Blake
Teachers: Patricia Duignan
Richella Kelly
Parents: Christena McDermott
Ursula Cullen

3. Mission Statement

Children are the messengers we send forward to a future we may not see.

4. School Ethos

St. Joseph's National School is a Catholic Primary school. The ethos of our school is to promote Catholic teaching and values. Implicit in this ethos is the intention to respect the right of all children and their parents regardless of their denomination. The ethos of the school is characterised by the following:

- Sensitive to the reality of our children's lives in a changing world.
- Mutual respect between all partners in education.
- Child-centred.
- Aims to ensure each child reaches full potential in the holistic sense.
- Hopes that children are equipped with high self-esteem to enable them to go to live happy and fulfilled lives.

The teachers in the school respect the place of the parental role, which we regard as centre stage and we facilitate the development of skills for imparting and unfolding the gift of sexuality from God, within the Catholic context and with the invaluable assistance of school and parish.

4. Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education

The following definition was taken from the Interim Guidelines Page 7: -

“Relationships and Sexuality Education seeks to provide children with opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of relationships and human sexuality, through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework”.

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 (*Going Forward Together Parent's Information Booklet, page 4*).

4.1 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. As the children progress through the SPHE Programme they will encounter a wide range of issues including relationships and sexuality. The programme ensures that these issues are not explored in isolation; rather the emphasis is on building a foundation of skills, values, attitudes and understanding relevant to all these issues, with specific information provided where necessary.

4.2 Child Protection

This policy is cognisant of all aspects of our current Child Protection Policy. The school follows the DES child protection guidelines and has a child protection policy with the Principal as Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and the Deputy Principal as the Deputy DLP. Where a child protection concern is raised, the procedures outlined in the schools Child Protection Policy will be followed.

5. Aims and Objectives

- Be self-confident and have a positive sense of self-esteem.
- 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- Fifth and 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.
- Develop a sense of personal responsibility and come to understand his/her sexuality and the process of growth, development and reproduction.
- Create and maintain supportive relationships both now and in the future.
- Develop an understanding of healthy living.
- Develop a sense of safety and an ability to protect himself/ herself from danger and abuse.

- Become aware of and discerning about the various influences on choices and decisions.
- Develop some of the skills and abilities necessary for participating fully in groups and in society.
- Promote the values of a just and caring society in an age appropriate manner and understanding the importance of seeking truth and peace.

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.

6. What the School Provides/ Content

All of the Relationship and Sexuality content will be taught in the context of our SPHE curriculum, particularly in the units **Taking care of the body** and **Growing and Changing**, as outlined below:

Junior and Senior Infants

Strand:

Taking Care of My Body

Growing and Changing

Safety and Protection

Strand Unit:

Knowing about my Body

Name the parts of the male and female body, using appropriate anatomical terms

New Life

*become aware of new life and birth in the world.
new growth in the springtime baby animals being born
develop an awareness of human birth
that the baby grows and is nurtured in the mother's womb
until ready to be born*

Personal Safety

Identify situations and places that are safe. Those where personal safety might be at risk.

feeling unsafe with people, being asked to keep a difficult secret (one that causes worry or makes him/her feel uncomfortable).

First and Second Class

Strand:

Taking Care of my Body

Growing and Changing

Strand Unit:

Knowing about my body

Name parts of the male and female body, using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions.

New Life

Begin to understand that reproduction, both life growth and death are all part of the life cycle.

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Safety and Protection

Personal Safety *recognise and explore situations where children feel safe and those where safety might be at risk*
Being with people who make me feel unsafe
Inappropriate or unsafe touches, being asked to keep a difficult secret

Third and Fourth Class

Strand:

Taking Care of my Body

Strand Unit:

Understand the physical changes taking place in both the male and female body

Growing and Changing

Growing height and weight and increasing strength

Growing from a boy to a man, a girl to a woman

Birth and new life

Discuss the changes and sequence of development of the human baby, from conception to birth

Identify the care needs to be taken while waiting for a baby to be born

Safety and Protection

Develop an appreciation of the wonder of new born baby

Personal Safety

Identify people, places and situations that may threaten personal safety

Being touched inappropriately

Being asked to keep difficult secrets

Fifth and Sixth Class

Strand:

Taking Care of my Body

Strand Unit:

Knowing about my body

Identify and discuss the physical and other changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty and understand that these changes take place at different rates for everybody

Female: hormonal changes changing body shape, development of breasts, appearance of pubic hair, underarm hair

Male: breaking of the voice, beginning of sperm production, onset of nocturnal emissions (wet dreams), appearance of pubic and underarm hair, facial hair

Understand the reproductive system of both the male and female adults

Growing and Changing

Birth and new life

Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed relationship such as marriage

Discuss and explore the responsibilities involved in being a parent and the emotional and physical maturity required to be a parent

Safety and Protection

Personal Safety

Identify situations and places that may threaten personal safety

Being asked to keep a difficult secret
Recognising inappropriate or unsafe touches
Being with people that make me feel unsafe

7. Sensitive Areas

The current teaching staff of the school views the following aspects of the S.P.H.E. Curriculum to be of a **sensitive** nature: -

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Junior/Senior Class P17 | name parts of the male/female body using appropriate anatomical terms |
| First/Second Class P27 | name parts of the male/female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions |
| Third/Fourth Class P 41 | discuss the stage and sequence of the development of the human baby in the womb |
| Fifth/Sixth Class P 56, 58 | changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty. Reproductive system of male/female adults, understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship, such as marriage |

It will be left to the discretion of the principal and class teachers to modify the above content to meet the needs of pupils in multi-class situations or with special educational requirements.

8. Organisation & Management of the R.S.E. Policy in the School

1. Parents are the primary educators and the school has a role to play in supporting and complementing the work of the home.
2. A parent's right to withdraw a pupil from the process will be honoured on the understanding that the parent is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves. It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the school of this decision in writing.
3. Teacher's right to opt out of teaching sensitive issues will be honoured.
4. If no member of staff is available to teach sensitive issues, it is left to the discretion of the principal and class teacher to arrange for the education to be made available. A suitable guest speaker may be invited in to deliver the contents of the programme to 6th class. All information delivered will be within the S.P.H.E. Curriculum (programme as set down by the NCCA.)
5. All content objectives will be covered by the time the children leave 6th class.
6. Should a pupil require information that is not in line with the curriculum content and considered not to be age appropriate for the general body of pupils the school will acknowledge the child's request but will direct the child to address this question at home.
7. An outline of the lessons will be made available to the parents before the commencement of the programme and the parents will be informed beforehand when these issues will be dealt with.
8. In relations to reporting child abuse the Child Protection Guidelines will be followed.

9. Where an outside speaker is used, the class teacher will remain in the classroom, as per circular 22/2010. The speaker will be made aware of the school's RSE policy.

10. The Stay Safe programme will be implemented throughout the school.

11. The class teachers will coordinate the teaching of Stay Safe during the school year

12. Parents have a responsibility 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.

12. In the class situation children will be encouraged to recognise that certain information is for them only and it would be inappropriate to discuss this with younger siblings/children for example.

13. With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom.

14. If a Teacher has concerns about teaching the sensitive elements in RSE they should consult with the Principal. Any teacher has the right to opt out of teaching the sensitive elements of RSE. It is the responsibility of the B.O.M. to ensure content is covered by another teacher or an outside speaker.

15. 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.

8.1 Dealing with Questions

It is natural that children should wish to ask questions in the area of RSE. All questions answered will reflect the parameters of the curriculum. Certain topics are not in the primary RSE/SPHE programme and will not be discussed i.e.: abortion, masturbation, homosexuality, contraception etc.

Questions to the teacher/ external facilitator may be oral or written within the group setting and answered within boundaries of the curriculum and school policy. If any questions asked by children are deemed to be inappropriate, the teacher/ external facilitator will refer the child to their parents/guardians, or state that this information may be available at a later stage of the curriculum, or in post-primary school. The school cannot guarantee confidentiality if a child asks a question of a personal nature or discloses personal information. With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom outside of the RSE lesson.

The following considerations will be made when responding to children's questions:

- Awareness of circumstances in which the question has arisen
- Clarification of what information is required
- Determination of whether the question is appropriate or relevant/who it is relevant to
- Provision of an age appropriate answer
- Deferral of the question to be answered at home or in the future

8.3 Parental Involvement

- Parents are welcome to view the curriculum and resources if they wish.
- Regular contact will be made with parents prior to the teaching of lessons involving the 'sensitive elements' of the RSE programme, in the form of the RSE manual home/school links pages or contact by letter etc.

- 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. *(Consider including this letter as an appendix)*
- The school acknowledges that parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children in sexual matters. The school RSE programme acts as a support to parents, and parents retain the right to withdraw their children from classes.

8. 4 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

8. 5 Policies which support SPHE/ RSE

Child Safeguarding Policy Statement and Risk Assessment

Code of Behaviour

Anti-Bullying Policy

Admission Policy

Healthy Eating Policy

ICT and Acceptable Use Policy

9. Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years or sooner should the need arise. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made. This policy was last reviewed in November 2020 following DES guidelines issued to schools in August 2020 as schools reopened after the Covid 19 closure. This policy was last ratified by the BOM on 26th November 2020 and is due for review in November 2022. RSE resources will be kept up to date. Relevant information will be provided for all members of the school community

10. Resources

- Relationships and Sexuality Education Manuals (DES). Each class teacher has a copy of the appropriate manual. (www.psdt.ie)
- Stay Safe programme (www.staysafe.ie)
- Walk Tall Programme.
- Busy Bodies DVD and booklet. This DVD and booklet were developed to support the teaching of the 5th and 6th class component of RSE within the context of SPHE. It is available for download at www.healthpromotion.ie
- All resources are available for parents/guardians to view if they so request prior to the delivery of the lesson.

10. 1 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 will be sought when necessary. Staff meetings will be utilised as a platform for discussion and development of RSE materials.

Meeting for Parents

Resources such as books and DVD/ Video and the following websites: -

www.pdst.ie

www.staysafe.ie

10. 2 Agreed language to be used at each class

(Agreed in March 2017)

| Class Level | Language |
|---------------------------|---|
| Junior and Senior Infants | Penis/Vagina or Vulva Naming parts of male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms |
| First and Second | As above: introduce womb, breast, breast feeding, urethra. Naming as above and identify some of the functions. |
| Third and Fourth | Discuss the stages and sequence of development of human baby in the womb. Umbilical cord. Any questions as to how the baby got there cannot be answered by the teacher. |
| Fifth and Sixth | Changes that occur in boys and girls at the onset of puberty. Reproductive system of male/female adults. Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within context of a committed relationship |