



St. Nicholas' Primary School

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

Introductory Statement

This policy was updated in March 2018. It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE Programme within the subject Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE).

School Philosophy

St Nicholas' Primary School is a Roman Catholic school. As such we aim to promote the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person of the pupil – intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual, based on Gospel values.

Within the school, a spirit of mutual respect is promoted between children, parents, teachers and members of the Board of Management. Pupils are drawn by example and teaching to appreciate and respect people of different religious affiliations and of different nationalities. Teachers are sensitive to the needs and particular circumstances of the pupils and supportive of their parents' role.

The Relationships and Sexuality programme will be taught within this ethos. Within our school, we promote the following ideals:

- People feel valued
- Self-esteem is fostered
- Respect, tolerance and fairness are evident
- High expectations and standards are promoted
- There is support for those with difficulties

- Open communication is the norm
- Effort is recognised and rewarded
- Uniqueness / difference is valued
- Conflict is handled constructively
- Initiative and creativity are encouraged
- Social, moral and civic values are promoted The RSE programme will reflect these ideals.

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. RSE will be taught within the wider context of Social Personal and Health Education and religious and moral education.

The programme will be covered using a cross-curricular approach but some lesson topics will be under specific curricular headings. For these sensitive lessons, the cross-curricular approach will not apply. These lesson topics will be listed separately (Appendix 1)

Current Provision Included in the school curriculum is:

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

Aims of RSE Programme

At St. Nicholas' School, we aim to provide an education in which each child can develop a responsible awareness and caring attitude towards their own and others sexuality and human worth, enabling them to form caring and appropriate relationships throughout their lives.

This education will be provided sensitively in a manner and content appropriate to individual needs.

The programme aims:

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child
- 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- 4th, 5th & 6th 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. Policies which support SPHE/RSE:
 - Child Protection Policy
 - Healthy School Policy
 - Whole School Plan for S.P.H.E.
 - Code of Behaviour Policy
 - Anti-Bullying Policy
 - Enrolment Policy
 - Acceptable Use Policy

Child Protection

This policy is cognisant of all aspects of our current Child Safeguarding Statement.

Our school follows the DES Child Protection Guidelines in line with statutory requirements under Children First Act 2015, and has a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and a Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDL). All teachers are Mandated Persons, in line with Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools.

Where a child protection concern is raised, the procedures outlined in the schools Child Safeguarding Statement will be followed.

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in Our School

The RSE content and methodology to be used will be based on the Guidelines for Primary Schools as drawn up by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. This education programme will be delivered after a process of consultation between parents, teachers and the Board of Management.

In order to promote the joint involvement of parents and teachers in implementing the RSE programme, the following will be available for review to parents:

- The RSE programme details for each class – lesson plans
- RSE resource materials – R.S.E. books; Busy Bodies booklet & DVD

Curriculum Content

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 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.

If a teacher has concerns about teaching the sensitive elements in RSE, he/she consults 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 with the assistance of another teacher or an outside speaker.

Where an outside speaker is used, the class teacher will remain in the classroom,(as per D.E.S. Circular 22/2010)

The speaker will be made aware of the school's RSE policy. The Stay Safe Programme will be fully implemented throughout the school. In our school, Stay Safe is taught every second year.

The R.S.E. sensitive content is taught every second year from junior infants to fourth class ***but every year in fifth and sixth class.***

Topics Covered/Sensitive Areas

Topics covered up to 2nd Class include:

- Keeping Safe
- Bodily changes during growth and birth (birth to 9)
- Making age appropriate choices
- Appreciating family life
- 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 (from Junior/ Senior Infants)
- Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions (from 1st/2nd)

Topics from 3rd to Sixth include:

- Bodily changes
- Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise
- Keeping Safe
- Expressing Feelings
- Family relationships
- Making healthy and responsible decisions
- Forming Friendships
- Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (Third & Fourth class)
 - Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Class)

- Reproductive system of male/female adults (Fifth and Sixth Class)
- Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship. (Fifth and Sixth Class)

Examples of the specific content and language used in the teaching of these lessons can be viewed on Appendix 2.

Organisational Matters

Parents will be informed in advance of lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE Programme.

- If children are withdrawn from the lessons pertaining to the sensitive elements of the RSE programme, parents/guardians must give notice in writing to the school that they are withdrawing their child. The child will be accommodated in another teacher's classroom in the school.
- Parents have a responsibility to become involved, to inform themselves of the RSE Programme content, and to prepare children for the information that they will be taught around the sensitive areas and discuss areas covered in RSE/SPHE.

Parents are encouraged to view the curriculum online and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns.

- 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. In this regard, the teacher would normally set ground rules beforehand.
- With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the playground or classroom.
- If a teacher has concerns about teaching the sensitive elements in RSE, he/she 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 if deemed necessary by an outside speaker.
- Special consideration will be taken to ensure that the needs of children with Special Educational Needs are met.

In consideration of these pupils' social and emotional development, instruction will be based on individual needs where possible. Parents will be consulted around sensitive issues.

- Substitute teachers (short-term) or student teachers on placement are not expected to teach the sensitive content. Student teachers should leave the classroom during these lessons.

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.

Questions to the teacher may be oral or written (question-box) 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 will refer the child to their parents/guardians, or explain that this information may be available at a later stage of the curriculum, or in post-primary school.

The school cannot guarantee confidentiality in the event of a child asking a question of a personal nature or disclosing personal information. With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the playground or classroom following 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

Parental Involvement

The school recognises that the parent is the primary educator of the child.

This RSE Policy, as in all other policy areas, acknowledges this and seeks to support parents in this role. Our school values close contact between the school and the home. Parents and teachers

support one another and collaborate as partners in leading the young pupils to the fullness of their potential as they grow and mature.

Parents' Rights and Responsibilities

The RSE programme will be delivered to support and complement the process already begun in the home.

Parents must make themselves aware in advance of the content of the programme so that they can begin the process of informing their children in advance of school involvement. This may involve teaching specific agreed terminology and content about relationships and human development.

The policy recognises the right of a parent to have concerns about the RSE programme.

Where this applies, the parent should discuss this with the Principal and teacher. Where concerns persist, the school will facilitate a parent's decision, while taking regard of the need for sensitivity towards the child.

Classroom Teaching

The Principal will make arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff. Where appropriate, boys and girls may be addressed with regard to specific issues concerning their own gender and stage of development i.e. together or separate.

With regard to the sensitive issues (i.e. puberty, adolescence, conception and birth), parents of senior pupils will be informed in advance of the commencement of these lessons.

Teachers will also use their professional judgement and discretion, based on the content or spirit of the policy to decide whether to answer certain questions in the classroom context.

Confidentiality

Teachers will deliver lessons in a spirit of respect for the rights of children and their families concerning privacy and confidentiality.

Resources

Dept. of Education and Skills 'Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)' Manuals.

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 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.
- Anatomically correct dolls for use at Infant Level Provision for ongoing support, development and review
- Opportunities provided by our local 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 is sought when deemed necessary.
- Staff meetings & Croke Park Hours time will be utilised as a platform for discussion and development of RSE materials and for curriculum planning.
- Appropriate resources will be provided to support the delivery of the programme.
- The policy will be reviewed at the end of each school year.
- Any amendments necessary as a result of such review will be undertaken.

This Policy was first ratified in March 2008 following consultation with Teachers, Parents Representatives and Board of Management.

It was reviewed in 2011, and 2015 and 2018. Date of next review 2021

Signed: *Fr. Michael Kilmartin*

John Smyth

Rev. Michael Kilmartin

John Smyth

Chairperson B.O.M.

Principal

Date: *April 10th 2018*

Appendix 1

RSE Lessons which have Sensitive Content The following topics are taught using the RSE &

Walk Tall programmes which can all be accessed on www.pdst.ie

(Junior and Senior Infants)

- New Life –an opportunity to mention the anatomically correct names for the body
- Caring for New Life
- My Body

(Senior Infants/ First and Second Class)

- The Wonder of New Life
- How my Body Works
- When my Body Needs Special Care

(Third and Fourth Class)

- The Wonder of New Life
- As I Grow I Change
- Growing and Changing
- Preparing for New Life

(Fifth and Sixth Class)

(Fifth Class lessons need to be repeated/revised in Sixth Class)

- My Body Grows and Changes
- The Wonder of New Life
- Caring for New Life
- Different Kinds of Love
- Making Healthy Decisions
- Relationships and New Life

- A Baby is a Miracle