



## **St. Nicholas' Primary School**

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

#### **School Details**

St Nicholas Primary School is a co-educational school located in Longwood, Co. Meath. The school has a Catholic ethos and is under the patronage of the Diocese of Meath. The school has 15 mainstream teachers and 5 special education teachers.

#### **Introductory Statement**

This Policy was first ratified in March 2008 following consultation with Teachers, Parents Representatives and Board of Management. It was reviewed in 2011, 2015 and 2018. All schools are required to have a policy on RSE with details of how RSE is taught in the school. This policy was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE Programme within the subject of 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. 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.

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 and will promote a sense of personal development, self-esteem and well being in each child.

### **Definition of RSE**

Relationship and Sexuality education (RSE) is an integral part of SPHE and must be taught in this context. It provides structured opportunities for children and young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that will help them think and behave in a moral, caring and responsible way. In particular, it addresses the meaning of human sexuality, relationships, growth and development, relevant to personal and social skills.

### **Relationship of RSE to SPHE**

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 SPHE 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 and language will be listed separately (Appendix 1)

### **SPHE:**

- Is a lifelong process and consequently RSE is a continual process throughout primary school and is not confined to once off inputs or lessons
- Is a shared responsibility between family, school, health professionals and the community
- RSE education should include an input from all, and collaboration can be fostered through the teaching and delivering of materials

- Is based on the needs of the child, therefore RSE should prioritise the needs of the child and their environment, with appropriate adaptations made within the curriculum to support individual requirements
- RSE is revisited at different stages throughout the child's learning and is spiral in nature. This will provide opportunities to consolidate and build upon previous learning

Through SPHE and RSE, members of the school community should be enabled to enhance their self-esteem and wellbeing through

- A sense of identity
- A sense of purpose
- A sense of belonging
- A sense of security
- A sense of competence

The programme will be covered using a cross-curricular approach. 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 & Busy Bodies resources
- Stay safe Programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Religious Education
- Webwise resources
- All Together Now - Homophobic and Transphobic bullying lessons
- RESPECT Guidelines
- Adapted resources for SEN from [www.pdst.ie](http://www.pdst.ie)
- Well being resources (Weaving Well Being Programme)

## **Aims of RSE Programme**

In St. Nicholas Primary 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
- Enrolment Policy
- Healthy School Policy
- Whole School Plan for S.P.H.E.
- Code of Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Critical Incident 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 (DDLDP). 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
- Going Forward Together - Parents Booklet
- Parents will be informed in advance of lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme, with a letter outlining what is being taught at their child's class level
- Parents are welcome to view the curriculum and they may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns
- Parents have the right to withdraw their child from the sensitive lessons and it must be given in writing stating their reasons for doing so

- If a child is withdrawn from the sensitive RSE lessons, the school takes no responsibility for what that child may hear following the teaching of the lessons. eg. What they may hear at yard time.

## **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.

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**

The RSE Programme is divided into two main parts

- 1) The general programme which contains content covered through SPHE strands and strand units and compliments the aims and objectives of RSE
  - Friendship
  - Self-identity
  - Family
  - Self-esteem
  - Growing up

- 2) The second section deals with any sensitive/specific content covered through RSE strands and strand units. The sensitive areas are in bold.

*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 (3rd & 4th Class)**

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

*Examples of the specific content and language used in the teaching of these lessons can be viewed on Appendix 1 and each teacher has been provided with a copy of the new Sensitive Language Grid 2018.*

**The RSE curriculum will be taught through:**

- Stories and poems
- Classroom discussions
- Group work
- Games
- Art work
- Circle time
- Reflection
- Guest Speakers (adhering to circular 42/2018)

**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
- Through the use of ICT to show videos, images or powerpoints giving a visual



representation

- Providing opportunities for interacting and working with other students in small groups
- Using age appropriate language
- Using appropriate questioning to guide the pupils through the task and to assess their understanding
- Having short and varied tasks creating a learning environment through the use of concrete materials
- Group work and discussion
- Higher and lower order questioning in groups
- Moderated whole class discussions through use of a Question Box
- Scaffolding the content and giving further explanation and support to those with SEN.

### **Pupils with Additional Needs**

- 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
- Any different or specific objectives related to the pupils own learning needs should be done so in consultation with parents/guardians

### **Organisational Matters**

The curriculum by NCCA will be followed and will be taught from Junior 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 as laid out in the curriculum and through RSE manuals to complement their teaching.

### **Management of RSE**

- 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
- 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.
- Any issues that arise which could be seen to contravene Children first Guidelines will result in the teacher contacting the Designated Liaison Person in the school.

### **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.

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
- No personal questions will be answered and children will be reminded not to share personal information about their families or others during the lesson. However, this information may be shared with the teacher prior to the whole class lesson if necessary.

### **Parental Involvement**

The school recognises that the parent is the primary educator of the child (Children First National Guidance 2017, pg. 2).

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 will be informed in advance of lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme, with a letter relevant to what will be taught in their child's class level - see Appendix 2. This letter will afford parents the opportunity to meet with the relevant class teacher, should it be necessary, while also giving the parents an opportunity to make themselves familiar with the content of the sensitive areas covered in RSE/SPHE lessons.

### **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 to 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. The school follows Children First Guidelines 2017 and Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017.

### **Resources**

- Dept. of Education and Skills ‘Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)’ Manuals.  
Each class teacher has been provided with a copy of the appropriate manual in soft copy and through sharing of the school SPHE folder on the school Google Drive.
- 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](http://www.healthpromotion.ie) )

- Family Wellbeing toolkit
- Respect Guidelines - Homophobic and Transphobic bullying
- 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 from Junior Infants to 2nd Class
- 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 every two years.
- Any amendments necessary as a result of such review will be undertaken.

This RSE Policy was reviewed in 2011, 2015, 2018 & 2021.

Date of next review 2024

Signed:

\_\_\_\_Fr. Tom Gilroy\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_Siobhán Henry\_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson B.O.M.

Principal

Date:

## **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](http://www.pdst.ie)

#### ***(Junior and Senior Infants)***

- New Life –an opportunity to mention the anatomically correct names for the body
- Language: womb, breastfeeding, penis, vulva
- 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
- Language: penis, vulva, vagina, womb, breastfeeding, urethra

#### ***(Third and Fourth Class)***

- The Wonder of New Life
- As I Grow I Change
- Growing and Changing
- Preparing for New Life
- Language: Revise JI-2nd language, umbilical cord, changes in puberty, menstruation

***(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
- Language: Revise JI-4th, wet dreams, Busy Bodies language, semen, sexual intercourse.



## Appendix 2 (JI - 2nd Letter)

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is an integral part of the S.P.H.E programme. The sensitive elements of the RSE programme are covered under the Strand Units, 'Growing and Changing' and 'Taking Care of my Body'. We will be completing these strand units with your child's class in the coming weeks.

Topics covered from Junior Infants to 2nd Class include

- Keeping safe
- Bodily changes
- Making age appropriate choices
- Appreciating the variety of family types and 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

There are links available on the school website explaining the content of the RSE programme and how you may support your child and encourage further discussions at home.

If you have any questions, please contact your child's class teacher.

Kind regards

## Appendix 2 - (3rd-6th Class Letter)

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is an integral part of the S.P.H.E programme. The sensitive elements of the RSE programme are covered under the Strand Units, 'Growing and Changing' and 'Taking Care of my Body'. We will be completing these strand units with your child's class in the coming weeks.

Topics covered from 3rd Class to 6th Class include

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

There are links available on the school website, explaining the content of the RSE programme and how you may support your child and encourage further discussions at home.

If you have any questions, please contact your child's class teacher.

Kind regards