

St. Declan's National School

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School Policy

Relationship Sexuality Education

This policy has been formulated by St. Declan's National School and is guided by relevant legislation and Department of Education publications/circulars to inform Teachers, S.N.A.s and parents of the R.S.E. policy.

School Details

St. Declan's N.S. is a co-educational school with single classes ranging from Junior Infants to 6th class. Our school aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the pupil: moral, academic, aesthetic, physical, cultural, social, emotional, personal and spiritual. Our school ethos is committed to ongoing whole school development in collaboration and partnership with the Board of Management, staff, parents, guardians and the wider community.

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.

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 RSE

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is an integral part of social, personal and health education and must be taught in this context. RSE is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. This education is delivered consciously and unconsciously by parents and teachers .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 personal and social skills and aspects of parenting. Central to Relationships and sexuality education is the fostering of self-esteem, through which the pupil becomes more responsible in making choices and decisions in all aspects of life, and particularly in those relating to sexuality and relationships.

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.

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 should include an input from all, and collaboration can be fostered through the teaching and delivery of materials

- Is a generic approach. It is not so much about the specific content of RSE but rather the relationship with a child's skills, attitudes, values and understanding relevant to a range of social, personal and health issues
- Is based on the needs of the child, therefore RSE education should prioritise the needs of the child and his/her environment, with appropriate adaptations made within the curriculum to suit individual requirements and individual school situations
- Is spiral in nature. RSE is revisited at different stages throughout the child's time in school, this will provide opportunities to consolidate and build on previous learning. This allows for issues and topics to be explored and treated in a manner appropriate to the children's needs, abilities and levels of maturity
- Engages children to be involved in activity based learning. RSE should provide a range of learning opportunities that include working together, learning about one's own feelings and those of others, developing a sense of empathy and experiencing and supporting healthy relationships.

Aims of our RSE Programme

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child.
- To help the child to develop healthy friendships and relationships.
- 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, human procreation and reproduction.
- To enable the child to be comfortable with the sexuality of oneself and others while growing and developing.

Broad Objectives

When due account is taken of intrinsic abilities and varying circumstances the Relationships and Sexuality education curriculum should enable the child to (in conjunction with the SPHE curriculum) :

- Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self.
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth.
- Develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well-being of others.
- Understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and in wider contexts.
- Develop an awareness of differing family patterns.
- Come to value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood.
- Develop strategies to make decisions, solve problems, and implement actions in various personal, social and health contexts.
- Become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change and understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity.
- Develop personal skills which will help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships;
- Develop some coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse.
- Acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction.
- Acquire and use an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development.
- Develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making

Current Provision included in the School Curriculum

RSE is carried out through discrete teaching, integration and whole school approaches including:

- SPHE lessons (provided through discrete curricular time and integration)
- Use of the RSE Manuals and Busy Bodies resources
- Stay Safe Programme
- Walk Tall Programme

- Webwise resources
- Adapted resources for SEN from www.pdst.ie
- Religious Education

Policies which Support SPHE/RSE

- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Substance Use Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy

Context

All of the sexually sensitive issues will be delivered within the context of S.P.H.E., which will be timetabled on our curriculum plan. Sensitive issues will be covered within the strand units – Taking Care of my Body, Growing and Changing and Safety and Protection.

Issues for Consideration

- The curriculum by NCCA will be followed as published, and will be taught from infants to 6th class
- RSE lessons are taught incrementally to support the development of the children.
- Sensitive content is taught as per the whole school 2 year SPHE plan.
- 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.
- All content objectives will be covered by the time the children leave 6th class.

- Teachers' right to opt out from teaching the sensitive issues will be honoured.
- If no member of staff is available to teach the sensitive issues we leave it to the discretion of the principal and class teacher to arrange for the education to be made available.
- All class teachers will deliver all aspects of RSE, including the sensitive elements of the programme.
- 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 refer the pupil to the parents/guardian.
- An outline of the lessons will be available to parents before the commencement of the programme each year.

Parental Involvement

- Parents are acknowledged as primary educators of their children and teachers work in a supportive role.
- Parents will be informed that the school fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE programme including sensitive aspects of the programme at enrollment.
- 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 with relevant class teachers 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 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.

- 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 the 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, compliments 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 highlighted in **bold**.

Topics covered from Infants to 2nd class include:	Topics covered from 3rd- 6th class include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Keeping safe ● Bodily changes from birth (birth-9) ● Making age-appropriate choices ● Appreciating the variety of family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bodily changes ● Healthy eating, personal hygiene and exercise ● Keeping safe ● Expressing feelings

<p>types and the variety of family life that exists in our school and community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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 identifying some of their functions (1st/2nd). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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).
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Approaches and Methodologies

When implementing the programme, staff at St. Declan’s N.S will endeavor 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
- use of ICT
- reflection
- circle time

Differentiation

Teachers use assessment and professional judgment to differentiate the programme and content to suit the needs of the class. The following are examples of 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/Additional Needs

Adaptations 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
- Any different or specific objectives related to the pupils own learning needs should be detailed in their individualized support plan and in consultation with parents/guardians.

Language

The 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. Language is a powerful tool and should be used with respect and integrity for the dignity of each person. The use of language is applied in RSE lessons via:

- The formal use and teaching of language generally throughout the school.
- The use of language in discussion through 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 and Books.

Assessment

Assessment in RSE is important to enable the teacher to pitch the lessons correctly to their respective class group. Examples of assessment strategies used by teachers include:

- Observation and questions to assess the children's engagement and interest.
- Use of teacher-designed tasks such as worksheets, quizzes or games.
- Use of reflection or learning log.

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.

Resources

- RSE programme
- Stay Safe programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Busy Bodies Booklet/Videos/Workbook (PDST)
- Anatomical Dolls
- Story/Picture books
- Posters
- RESPECT guidelines
- Video clips
- Powerpoint presentations
- Making the Links and Beyond 2017
- PDST Health and Wellbeing RSE
- SPHE/RSE Toolkit (NCCA)

Provision of Ongoing Support

- Opportunities provided by local education centres will be brought to the attention of staff members
- Teachers will be encouraged to attend CPD in RSE
- Staff meetings utilised as a platform for discussion/development of RSE materials
- Promotion and communication of resources available from www.pdst.ie

Implementation and Review



This policy will be implemented following ratification by the Board of Management.

The policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier as appropriate (next review scheduled for 2025). On-going review and evaluation will take cognisance of changing information or guidelines (e.g. from the Department of Education and Skills). All partners will be informed of any amendments necessary after such a review. Relevant information will be provided for all members of the school community. R.S.E. resources will be kept up to date.

Ratification and Communication

This policy was reviewed in November 2022 and was subsequently ratified by the Board of Management on 6th December 2022. It will be appropriately communicated to members of the school community and made available on our school's website.

Signed and dated:

	
Mr. Noel Curtin	Mr. Cian Kearins
Chairperson of the Board of Management	Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management
Date: 06-12-2022	Date: 06-12-2022