



Whole School Plan for

Relationship and Sexuality

St. Joseph's N.S.



Relationship and Sexual Education Policy

This policy statement is an approved approach to the teaching of Relationship and Sexual Education in St. Joseph's NS. It was developed in 2014 by the RSE Policy Committee, which included two teachers, two representatives of the Board of Management and two parent representatives, and was reviewed and amended with a subcommittee of teachers and parents in January 2019. It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to the material covered in the RSE programme within the SPHE curriculum.

School Philosophy

St. Joseph's N.S. is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Bishop of Meath. It is managed by a Board of Management, elected according to the procedures agreed by the Partners in Education. The school has a Catholic ethos and this ethos is a guiding principle in the formulation and implementation of this RSE Policy. This ethos recognises the value and dignity of each pupil and all those working in the school community, and aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person, including:

- a) relationship with God
- b) relationship with family
- c) relationship with teachers
- d) relationship with self
- e) relationship with others
- f) relationship with the environment.

This ethos also acknowledges the cultural and religious values of all the pupils attending the school. The school recognises that the parents are the primary educators of their children and we support them in that role.

In the area of RSE, above all, the schools' role is subsidiary to that of the parents. We support and compliment their work.

Definition of RSE

RSE is an integral part of Social, Personal and Health Education 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. (p. 5 NCCA curriculum and guidelines for RSE). RSE is the formal approach to educating children in:

- Relationships with others – parents, siblings, friends and the community in general
- Respect for themselves and others
- Physical development – bodily functions and changes, and personal hygiene
- Emotional development – maturing in society



- Parenting, personal and social skills and relationships
- Sexuality in context – part of a committed, loving relationship.

Relationship of RSE to SPHE and Religion

Social, Personal and Health Education contributes to developing the work of the school in promoting the health and well-being of children and young people. This happens in the context of their emotional, moral, social and spiritual growth, as well as their intellectual, physical, political, religious and creative development.

The key characteristics of this programme are that SPHE is a lifelong process and is a shared responsibility between family, school, health professionals and the community. The main strands of the SPHE programme are:

- Myself
- Myself and Others
- Myself and the Wider World

It is clear that the Relationships and Sexuality Programme is correctly defined as being an integral part of the programme outlined above. Sexually sensitive issues will be covered within the strand units:

- Taking care of my body
- Growing and changing

Current Provision

Traditionally we have been a child-centred school. The educational and emotional needs of the children in our care are central to our planning and policy making processes. We have always, and will always continue to put the welfare of the children first.

Included in the school curriculum in St. Joseph's N.S. is:

- Religious Education (Grow in Love)
- SPHE
- Stay Safe Programme
- Relationship and Sexual Education Manual: Department of Education and Skills.

Policies which support SPHE/RSE

- Administration of Medicines Policy.
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child protection policy
- Code of behaviour and discipline policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- Internet Safety Policy

In keeping with the sentiment and spirit of these policies, we informally support many of 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.

Aims of our RSE programme

When due account is taken of intrinsic abilities and varying circumstances, the Relationships and Sexuality Education curriculum should enable the child to:

- 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, 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 themselves 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.

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School

Curriculum Matters

The curriculum as published by the NCCA will be followed. All content objectives will be covered by the time each pupil leaves 6th class – (see Appendix A for further details). The curriculum will be taught from Infants to 6th class. It will be taught by the teaching staff. Occasionally it may be deemed necessary for an outside speaker to address the “sexually sensitive issues” i.e. puberty, reproductive system, conception, birth and sexual intercourse on the 5th/6th Class curriculum. All resources used will be in keeping with department recommended resources and ethos of the school and this policy.

- Sensitive issues classes are generally taught from infants to 4th from January to April.
- In a multi class situation, the younger class will be withdrawn when topics being taught are not age-appropriate
- When an outside speaker is used, the SPHE coordinator/principal will provide them with the RSE school policy. Parents/guardians will be notified of the name of this speaker in advance of the lesson. The class teacher will remain with the class during the lesson in accordance with Circular 22/2010.

Organisational Matters

- Parents will be informed when the RSE lessons are to be taught.
- Home School Links pages will be sent home, where relevant.



- If a parent has any concerns, they are welcome to come and discuss these with the class teacher.
- If a parent wishes to withdraw their child from the sensitive issues, this must be put in writing to the school, the reason for withdrawal and that they are taking on the responsibility of teaching the sensitive areas to their child.
- Our RSE programme is inclusive and so we actively discourage withdrawal. Should a parent seek to have their child withdrawn from the RSE lessons, the parent is welcome to come to view the relevant resource materials such as the curriculum, RSE Resource Materials Book and the Busy Bodies Booklet (5th and 6th class only). If a parent/guardian still wishes to withdraw their child, the school recognises that they are entitled to do so and will require this decision in writing from the parents as to why they are withdrawing and that they are taking full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves. This will then be filed.
- For Fifth and Sixth Class, the Busy Bodies Booklet and DVD will be sent home prior to the teaching in Class. Parents are their Child's primary educator and it is encouraged that they will have gone through the book with their child before the topic is broached in school.
- The topic of periods will be covered with the girls in 4th Class. It will then be covered in a whole class setting in 5th and 6th Class.
- Any teacher has the right to opt-out from teaching the sexually sensitive issues in RSE. It is responsibility of Board of Management to ensure that the curriculum will be delivered to the children, by another teacher, or an outside speaker.
- Parents are welcome to view the curriculum and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns. This will also be available on the school website.

Dealing with Questions

It is natural that children should wish to ask questions in the area or RSE. However, this area is treated somewhat differently from other subjects due to its sensitive nature.

All questions answered will reflect the parameters the age and stage of the child, the curriculum and the ethos of the school. Questions to the teacher may be written and placed into question box within the group setting. If any questions asked by the children are judged to be inappropriate, the teacher will refer the child to their parents, or state that this information may be available at a later stage of the curriculum. If a teacher has any concerns they will then follow the child protection guidelines.

Parental Involvement

Parents/Guardians are the primary educators of their children and as such the school supports them in this role.

Resources

Lesson plans from the DES have been assessed and amended where necessary in line with this school policy. These lessons plans are available in the SPHE press for each class grouping. The RSE Resource Materials Book, and Walk Tall, Busy Bodies, Alive O and Grow in Love programme, the Stay safe programme will also be used. All resources are available for parents/guardians to view if they so request prior to the delivery of the lesson.

- *Busy Bodies Booklet will be used from 4th Class (Girls only, periods chapter photocopied and sent home), in the teaching of the sensitive issues.*
- *The relevant RSE Resource Materials book will be used in each class.*



Provision for Ongoing Support

- Parents are welcome to view curriculum if they so wish.
- Opportunities provided by our Education centre will be brought to the attention of staff members. Career development will be sought for staff when required, or as requested.

Review

The staff, under the guidance of the Principal and SPHE Coordinator will review this policy every two years. This policy will also be reviewed should the need arise.

Ratification and Communication

The Board of Management of St. Joseph's N.S. ratified this amended plan on _____ 2019.

Signed: _____
Chairperson of BoM

Signed: _____
Principal/Secretary to the BoM

Date: _____

Date: _____