

RSE Policy

This policy statement is an approved approach to the teaching of RSE in School of the Holy Spirit. It was developed in 1995 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 in March 2013 by an RSE Policy Committee. It has been further reviewed and amended in September 2015. This policy was developed to inform teachers and parents as to the material covered in the RSE programme within the SPHE curriculum.

School Ethos

School of the Holy Spirit is a Catholic co-educational vertical school under the patronage of the Bishop of Ossory. It is managed by a Board of Management, elected according to the procedures agreed by the Partners in Education.

We aim to foster the values of respect, honesty, courtesy, responsibility, tolerance and consideration for others. We cherish each pupil as an individual and we strive to develop his or her spiritual, intellectual, artistic, physical, emotional and social potential. It is our intention that everyone feels valued and our pupils are enabled to work together in a respectful partnership. All pupils are encouraged to develop to their full potential in a caring and supportive environment.

We have committed staff that strives to create an atmosphere where cultural and religious diversity is respected. We recognise the parents as the first and most important educator of their own child, and we support them in that role.

Current Provision

Because there are links between RSE and other subjects, many aspects are already taught as part of the daily programme in our school. Due to the unique and varied circumstances of the students, each child's needs are being addressed individually.

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 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. (p.5 Going Forward Together Parents Information Booklet).

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
- Safety and protection.

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 School of the Holy Spirit is:

- SESE
- SPHE
- Religious Education.
- Stay Safe Programme/Walk Tall Programme
- Incredible Years /Friends First/ "Busy Bodies"
- SALT Conflict Resolution Programme
- 'Stop, Think, Do' Programme
- Health Promoting School

Policies which support SPHE/RSE

- Child Protection Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Absconding Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Anti-Cyber-Bullying Policy
- Adult Anti-Bullying Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Mobile phone policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- School Tour Policy
- School Visitors Policy
- Internet Safety Policy
- Administration of Medicines Policy
- Communication Policy
- Dress Code Policy
- Head lice Policy
- Substance Use 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 well being 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

Sensitive Issues

The RSE curriculum will be offered to students at the appropriate development stage following consultation with parents.

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 and at Junior and Senior Cycle, as appropriate. It will be ideally taught by the teaching staff. 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 curriculum. All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school and this policy.

- Sensitive issues classes are generally taught from infants
- When an outside facilitator is used, the SPHE coordinator/principal will make them fully aware of 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.

Organisational Matters

- Prior to the teaching of lessons involving "sensitive issues", parents/guardians will be informed by letter.
- Written parental/guardian consent will be sought for lesson 3 (conception) in 6th class
- It is a parents/guardians right to withdraw a pupil from these lessons. This request for withdrawal must be made in writing.
- If parents/guardians request the withdrawal of a child from RSE lessons, provision will be made for them to leave the classroom at that time. Supervision will be provided. With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom. If a child is withdrawn from RSE class, it will be the responsibility of the parent to provide the essential education.
- 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.

Dealing with Questions

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

All questions answered will reflect the parameters of the curriculum and the moral ethos of the school. Questions to the teacher may be written or oral within the group setting and answered within the boundaries of the curriculum and school policy. 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. The school cannot guarantee confidentiality if a child asks a question of a personal nature or discloses personal information.

At all times the child's and teacher's right to privacy will be maintained

Parental Involvement

Parents/Guardians are the primary educators of their children and as such the school supports them in this role. As stated, parents/guardians will be given the option of withdrawing their child from a particular lesson if they so wish. The Parents' Association may on occasion arrange for speakers/meetings to help them in the task of communicating with their children on aspects of their development. Parents/Guardians may access copies of the policy from the school office, or school website.

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 Stay Safe programme, Walk Tall, Busy Bodies, The Alive O programme and a selection of other appropriate resources will also be used. All resources are available for parents/guardians to view if they so request prior to the delivery of the lesson.

Provision for Ongoing Support

- Parents are welcome to view curriculum if they so wish.
- Funding will be sought for the provision of suitable materials when deemed necessary.
- 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.
- An outside speaker/facilitator will be invited to speak to class groups and will be informed of the school's RSE Policy in advance
- While visitors are invited, the delivery of the programme remains the responsibility of the teachers, who will remain in the class with the class group during the visit.

Appendix A

RSE - Sensitive Areas

Junior Infants

New Life - mention of baby in the womb.

Senior Infants

My Body - specific names for male and female sex organs - vagina, penis, womb.

First Class

New Life - New baby. Baby joined to mother by umbilical cord - mention breast feeding.

Second Class

Birth of baby through vagina. Mention umbilical cord and breast feeding.

Third Class

As for second class, but in more detail.

Fourth Class

Language around baby's development in womb, i.e., fertilised egg, cord. Pictures of foetuses (in RSE manual) to be used.

Fifth and Sixth Classes

- Menstruation in the context of hygiene and growth from a girl to a woman.
- Boys and girls development - puberty.
- How does new life begin? (6th class only)
- Biological facts as follows: (6th class only)
- What journey does the egg make?
- What journey does the sperm make?
- Where do they meet?
- What happens when they meet?
- Optional videos : Fifth class - Growing
- Sixth class - Busy Bodies.

Topics for Junior Cycle students will include:

Human Growth and Development

- An understanding of physical and emotional changes at puberty
- Fertility, conception, pregnancy and birth
- An awareness of the consequences and implications of sexual activity

Human Sexuality

- Understanding and respecting what it is to be female and male
- An appreciation of the roles of women and men in society
- Awareness of discrimination
- Personal safety
- Sexual orientation

Human Relationships

- Developing skills regarding making and maintaining good relationships and friendships
- Family roles and responsibilities
- Group behaviour and resolving conflict
- An understanding of how peer pressure works

Topics for Senior Cycle students will include:

Human growth and development

- Fertility and family planning
- A deeper understanding of pregnancy and the developing foetus

Human Sexuality:

- Treating women and men with equal respect
- Sexual harassment
- Sexual abuse, rape, legal rights: voluntary and statutory agencies
- Making moral and healthy choices regarding sexual activity

Human relationships

- An awareness of what constitutes a loving relationship
- The long-term commitment involved in marriage
- Parenting and family life

This Policy was re-ratified by the Board of Management on 28th September 2016.

Date of next review: September 2018



Signed: _____
Chairman Board of Management

Signed: _____
Principal

Date: _____