

**Relationships and Sexuality Education (R.S.E)**

**POLICY STATEMENT**

**Scoil Chroí Íosa Philosophy.**

To foster the development of relationships - the love of every human being is central to our school philosophy. The Christian version of human life and human relationships is communicated in an environment where concern and respect for the individual are paramount. It is the aim of our school to enable each child to reach her full potential in all areas of development in a positive and caring atmosphere. 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. RSE will be taught in accordance with the Department’s directives and within the Philosophy framework of the school. Teachers will not teach any content outside the DES Curriculum. The teaching methods used in the school are child-centred and reflect the age and stage of development of each child. Sensitive issues will be dealt with appropriately.

**DEFINITION OF R.S.E. (Relationships and Sexuality Education).**

The R.S.E. programme will endeavour to support parents to help their children to understand human relationships and sexuality in an age-appropriate way within a moral, spiritual and social framework. The programme will develop the child’s self-respect and respect for others, self-worth and sense of responsibility.

**RELATIONSHIP OF R.S.E. TO S.P.H.E.(SOCIAL, PERSONAL and Health Education)**

Its aim is to promote the health and well-being of the child. The content of the S.P.H.E. programme includes a wide range of topics such as healthy eating, environmental issues, safety, social responsibility and education in alcohol and drugs. RSE will be taught as a component part or module, within the Social, Personal and Health Education programme. SPHE contributes to developing the work of the school in promoting the health and well-being of children. It 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.

**WHAT THE SCHOOL CURRENTLY PROVIDES :**

Aspects of the S.P.H.E. / R.S.E. programmes have always been taught in our school both formally and informally on a cross-curricular basis. In particular, Religious Education, Physical Education and S.E.S.E. reflect elements of R.S.E.

The Stay Safe Programme is also taught in the school. Relationships and Sexuality in Education, Stay Safe Programme and the Walk Tall Programme are used. The Stay Safe Programme is taught annually in the school during the same term.

RSE is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. In a school situation RSE, provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire a knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality through processes which enable them to form values and to establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework, appropriate to their age. In circular 2/95 issued by the Department of Education and Science the Minister requested all schools to introduce Relationship Sexuality Education (RSE) as part of the curriculum. In the 1999 curriculum RSE was included in Social Personal and Health Education.

**THE AIMS OF OUR R.S.E. PROGRAMME:**

* In partnership with the home our aims are:
* 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
* and reproduction
* To develop and promote in the child a sense of wonder 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
* The development of relationships is an integral part of all curriculum subjects.
* Aspects of RSE are taught during SPHE, Religion, Science, implementation of the Code of Behaviour etc.
* An integrative approach towards RSE ensures that the children encounter RSE in a holistic manner rather than in isolation.

Content: Topics for pupils from Junior Infants to Second Class

* Expressing opinions and listening to the opinions of others
* The different changes taking place in the children’s body as they grow and
* develop
* Caring for themselves regarding hygiene, exercise and sleep
* Keeping self, knowing what to do if they get lost
* Recognising and expressing feelings like happiness and sadness
* Appreciating and understanding family life
* Making and having friends
* Making responsible choices appropriate to their age

**Overview of STAY SAFE PROGRAMME**

**Aim:** To teach children personal safety skills so they can look after themselves in situations that could be upsetting or dangerous.

**Content:**

The lessons cover the following areas:

* Feeling Safe and Unsafe
* Friendship and Bullying
* Touches
* Secrets and Telling
* Strangers
* Children participating in this programme will learn:
* To distinguish between safe and unsafe feelings
* What to do if lost
* What to do if the phone or doorbell rings when they are alone in the house
* The importance of friends in children’s lives
* What to do if bullied
* Stay Safe Rules: Say No/ Get Away/ Tell
* Why not to bully others
* Appreciating normal, appropriate touches
* That unsafe touches should never be kept secret
* How to respond to inappropriate touches (Stay Safe Rules)
* Good and bad secrets
* That some secrets should not be kept
* Who and how to tell if in trouble
* About strangers and safety strategies

**Overview of RSE PROGRAMME**

**Aims:**

In partnership with the home our aims are:

* 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 and reproduction
* To develop and promote in the child a sense of wonder 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.

The development of relationships is an integral part of all curriculum subjects. Aspects of RSE are taught during SPHE, Religion, Science, implementation of the Code of Behaviour etc. An integrative approach towards RSE ensures that the children encounter RSE in a holistic manner rather than in isolation.

**Content: Topics for pupils from Junior Infants to Second Class**

* Expressing opinions and listening to the opinions of others.
* The different changes taking place in the children’s body as they grow and develop.
* Caring for themselves regarding hygiene, exercise and sleep.
* Keeping self, knowing what to do if they get lost.
* Recognising and expressing feelings like happiness and sadness
* Appreciating and understanding family life.
* Making and having friends.
* Making responsible choices appropriate to their age.

**Topics for pupils from Third to Sixth Class will include**

* Caring for themselves regarding hygiene, exercise and sleep.
* Keeping themselves safe.
* Changes in their bodies as they mature and develop.
* How babies are conceived and born (5th and 6th programme).
* Their feelings and the appropriate expression of these feelings.
* Extended family relationship.
* Making healthy and responsible decisions.
* The nature of friendships.
* Having conflict in friendships
* Evaluating the portrayal of relationships and sexuality in the media.

Content to be addressed during discrete time for the sensitive areas of RSE:

**Junior Infants, Senior Infants:**

Naming parts of the body including parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms.

* Term “Womb” will be taught.
* Term “penis” and “vagina” will be taught as the obvious physical difference between boy/girl.
* Term “breast feeding” may be used in conversation as a means of feeding a baby.

**First and Second Class:**

* “Penis” and “vagina” will be revised.
* The term “urethra” will be taught in the context of biological function. Teachers will teach that the baby is in the womb for 9 months and may be breast fed.

**Third and Fourth Class:**

Sequence of development of the human baby from conception to birth. The

* words “umbilical cord” and “navel” will be taught

**Fifth and Sixth Class**

* Menstruation.
* Changes in male and female bodies as they grow
* Puberty.
* Reproductive system of male and female.
* Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth.

In Scoil Chroí Íosa children may be segregated for RSE lessons if deemed appropriate.

Dealing with Questions:

It is normal that children should wish to ask questions in the area of RSE as they do in other subject areas. However, this area of the curriculum is treated somewhat differently from other subjects, in that certain topics are regarded as sensitive. These are generally regarded as the areas that deal with growth, development and reproduction. Where these topics are concerned, there can be quite a range of understanding and often misunderstanding, in the same class level. In order to preserve an attitude of respect and to ensure that parents are confident that only the matters agreed in the policy are dealt with in the various class levels, we recommend that teachers

Teachers do not cover content outside that of the DES curriculum. Teachers should answer questions sensitively, aware that there are children in our school from many social backgrounds. No child should be made feel uncomfortable or embarrassed when these issues are raised. Request for withdrawal by parent of pupil or teacher: If parents are concerned about the more sensitive aspects of the RSE or Stay Safe programmes, they are welcome to visit the school to examine the content of the programmes and discuss their concerns with the Class Teacher and/or Principal. However, both subjects are now mandatory. All parts of the Stay Safe programme must be covered by all children, with no exceptions.

In RSE, parents have the right to withdraw their children when sensitive issues are being discussed, in all classes, if they so wish. Should a parent wish to withdraw their child/children from the sensitive issues of RSE, we trust that the parent/parents will provide an alternative in this area of education for their child/children. If a child is withdrawn from the aforementioned sensitive areas, the school cannot guarantee that other children will not inform the child in question of the content of the lesson from which the child was withdrawn or that the children will not refer incidentally in class to aspects of the lesson during subsequent days/weeks.

A teacher who is concerned about teaching a particular topic within the RSE or Stay Safe Programme should talk to the principal about his/her concerns. Such concerns will be handled discreetly. The BOM will endeavour to accommodate such teachers. Resources outside the school profession will be availed of if considered appropriate. Before the sensitive sexual issues in fifth and sixth classes are introduced to the children in class, parents will be invited to the school. At an information meeting they will be given an overview of the content of the RSE programme for this level and their opinions will be sought and noted. Outside speakers may be used from time to time if deemed necessary.

**Timetable:**

Teachers will decide the timetabling of RSE lessons and a letter will be sent to parents prior to the commencement of these lessons.

**GUIDELINES FOR THE MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATION OF R.S.E. IN OUR SCHOOL:**

The school follows the DES Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, which are based on Children First, National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children. The principal is the designated liaison person (DLP) and the Deputy Principal is the Deputy DLP. Each teacher has a copy of our policy on Child Protection and a copy is available to parents, online and through the secretary, if they request one.

Resources

A comprehensive selection of resources is available in the staff room for teaching all strand units including Walk Tall, Stay Safe programme, Relationships and Sexuality (DES), Circle Time.

**Staff Development**

Some/all of the Teaching Staff have attended

2 days In-service by the Primary Curriculum Support Programme in SPHE

Training in the CAPP (Stay Safe)

Training in RSE and Walk Tall programmes

Training in the Children First Guidelines

**Parental Involvement**

RSE in the context of SPHE is a shared responsibility between family and school. Copies of the school plan for SPHE and RSE are available from the office. Parents will be made aware of content objectives that deal with ‘sensitive’ issues before teachers cover these in class. We encourage parents, if at all possible, to talk to your child/children about what they will learn through RSE in a mature and thoughtful way.

**Community links**

The school will liaise with the Health Promotion Unit of the Health Board and other agencies/professionals to assist, as appropriate, the school’s programme for SPHE.

**ONGOING SUPPORT, DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW:**

Development opportunities in the area of R.S.E. will be availed of and the policy and programme will be reviewed

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on­­­­­­­­­ 27th November 2017

It will be reviewed in November 2018

Responsibility for Review: All members of staff, Parents’ Committee, B.O.M.

Policy ratified by B.O.M

Signed: *Fr. Michael Fitzgerald*  Date: 27/11/2017

Chairperson Board of Management