



## **Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy**

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### **Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)**

RSE as part of Social Personal and Health Education aims to help children learn at home and in school about their own development and about their friendships and relationships with others. This work is based on developing a good self-image, promoting respect for themselves and others and providing them with appropriate information.

RSE aims to provide opportunities for children and young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

### **Relationship to SPHE**

All of the RSE will be delivered within the context of Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) which is timetabled on our Curriculum. SPHE is spiral, developmental in nature and age appropriate in content and methodology. The RSE programme is designed to follow this principle and pattern.

Apart from the specific lessons of RSE, SPHE covers other areas which would be pertinent to the development of a healthy attitude to sexuality in oneself and one's relationship with others. SPHE deals with many issues such as self esteem, assertiveness, communication and decision making skills - all of which can contribute to the effectiveness of the RSE programme.

RSE specific context will be covered in the Strand Units; taking care of my body, Growing and Changing and safety and protection.

### **The aims of RSE**

- To enhance personal development, self-esteem and well being of the child
- To foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework
- To help the child understand and develop healthy friendships and relationships
- To enable the child to acquire an understanding of, and respect for, human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction
- To develop and promote in the children a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life
- To enable the children to be comfortable with the sexuality of oneself and others while growing and developing

- The school's function is to provide a general education about sexual matters and issues and not to offer individual advice, information or counselling on aspects of sexual behaviour or contraception.

### **Class Specific Content**

The acquisition of appropriate language in RSE is crucially important to enable children to communicate confidently about themselves, their sexuality and their relationships. Not being familiar with the biological terms for the body can put children at a disadvantage.

Therefore we will give the correct and appropriate language as outlined in RSE Resource materials (Appendices):

#### Junior and Senior Infant Classes

- The term 'womb' will be taught,
- The term 'penis' and 'vagina' will be taught as the obvious physical difference between boy/girl while bathing the baby.
- The term 'breast feeding' may be used in conversation as means for feeding a baby.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Classes

- Penis, vagina, womb and urethra will be taught/revised in terms of passing urine.
- Teachers will teach that baby is in the womb for 9 months and may be breast or bottle fed.

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Classes

- Developing foetus and menstruation.
- Menstruation for 4<sup>th</sup> class
- Nutrition in the womb and the function of the umbilical cord.
- Good nutrition – Mother needs to eat healthy to look after the baby.
- Taking care with medicines, alcohol and smoky environments – mother should avoid all of these as some of the medicine or alcohol could travel through the umbilical cord to the baby.
- Ways that family members can help – Helping a mother who is expecting.
- Travel/Work – Letting pregnant women have a seat on public transport.
- Exercise - Mother needs to stay healthy and exercise.
- Medical check ups – Mother who is expecting goes to the doctor regularly.
- After 9 months the baby is born.

Most common question: How did the baby get out of the Mammy? Answer to be given: Through an opening in the Mammy's body called the vagina.

## 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Classes

### *5<sup>th</sup> class*

- Different kinds of friends
- Feelings and Emotions - psychological and emotional changes during puberty
- My body grows and changes – Puberty, physical changes in girls and boys, sperm, semen, testicles, scrotum, erection, wet dreams, female reproduction, Ovaries, fallopian tubes, womb/uterus, cervix, menstruation
- Caring for new life

### *6<sup>th</sup> class*

- Puberty
- Different kinds of love
- Keeping safe and healthy – virus, bacteria
- Feelings and emotions - psychological and emotional changes during puberty
- Growing and changing – what age must I be....
- Relationships and new life – male/female reproduction and sexual intercourse in the context of a committed loving relationship. This will be taught using the language outlined in DES RSE Resource Materials for 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> classes.
- Caring for new life

## **Special Education Needs**

All lessons will be differentiated appropriately to cater for the individual needs of children. Both the age and stage of the child will be considered. Our SEN policy will be followed.

## **Explicit Questions**

When deciding whether or not to answer questions the teacher should consider the age and readiness of the students, the RSE programme content, the ethos of the school and the RSE policy. Teachers will only answer questions relating to the relevant part of the curriculum for that class level.

On occasion, children may ask questions that are not age appropriate. Teachers may choose to say that it is not appropriate to deal with that question at this time or may suggest that the child ask their parents.

If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised he/she should seek advice from the SPHE Co-ordinator or the Designated Liaison Person (DLP).

## **Confidentiality**

It is school policy that in circumstances where a pupil is considered at some risk of any type of abuse or in breach of the law, the teacher must refer this immediately to the DLP. The DLP will decide whether to inform the parents and/or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling.

The following is also school policy:

- teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality;
- pupils must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the DLP and possibly to parents if the Principal decides that it is in the best interests of the pupil to notify parents;
- teachers must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard the information;
- teachers must indicate clearly to pupils when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential - the pupil can then decide whether to proceed or not.
- Any action taken would be fully in compliance with our Child Protection Policy.

*The Child Protection Guidelines for Primary schools state in 4.1.1. and 4.2.1.*

- *4.1.1. If a member of staff receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse he/she should, without delay, report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person in that school. A written record of the report should be made and placed in a secure location by the Designated Liaison Person. The need for confidentiality at all times, as previously referred to in Chapter 1 Paragraph 1.2 of these guidelines, should be borne in mind. The supports of the school should continue to be made available to the child.*
- *4.2.1 If the Designated Liaison Person is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation he/she should report the matter to the relevant health board immediately.*

**Parental involvement should exist in terms of language used and parents should see this policy.**

All content objectives will be covered by the time the children leave 6<sup>th</sup> class.

Teachers will only teach the topics laid down for the class and will answer only those questions on the programme for that year.

In the event of a teachers discomfort with a particular topic, that teacher should make an arrangement with a colleague to support him/her.

A suitable guest speaker may be invited in to deliver the contents of the programme to 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> class.

All information delivered by such a speaker will be informed by the content objectives of the SPHE curriculum. A teacher will remain in the classroom at all times during the guest speaker's presentation, the speaker does not replace the teacher, they act as a support.

Everyone has a right to privacy. Teachers will not answer personal questions about themselves nor require the child to give information of a personal nature which they do not wish to share.

### **Role of the Board of Management**

The Board of Management will support the teaching of RSE through ensuring the adequate supply of relevant course material and through the provision of sufficient training. Also the BOM are active in developing and reviewing this policy.

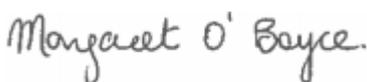
### **Review**

This policy is open to review by the Board of Management.

Ratified and signed on behalf of the Board of Management of St. Mochta's National School.



**Valerie Haslam**  
**Chairperson**



**Margaret O'Boyce**  
**Acting Principal**

25<sup>th</sup> May 2021

**Date**