



RSE Policy

Scoil Chroí Ró Naofa

Ballymurn

Introductory Statement

The school has a responsibility to put in place an R.S.E. policy as an integral part of the wider, Social Personal Health Education (SPHE) strand of the curriculum.

Rationale

The need for this policy arises from our schools obligation to provide for all the needs of the student body and respond appropriately to sensitive and emotive issues relating to emerging sexuality.

SCHOOL ETHOS

Scoil Chroí Ró Naofa is a Catholic School under the patronage of the Bishop of Ferns. 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 and we support and compliment their work. The school ethos affirms and supports close links between school and home. To this end parents are encouraged to play a meaningful role in the R.S.E. policy formation, through a series of Parent Committee meetings and the ratification and implementation of the finished product.

Active participation is encouraged through the use of the parents' booklet, School links pages etc. Parents also have the right to withdraw their children from participating in the sensitive lessons of the R.S.E programme. Supervision of withdrawn children will be the responsibility of the parents/guardians.

Definition of R.S.E.

RSE is the formal approach to educating children in –

- a) Relationships with others – parents, siblings, friends and the community generally;
- b) Respect for self and others;
- c) Physical development – bodily changes and functions and personal hygiene;
- d) Emotional development – maturing in society
- e) Sexuality in context – part of a loving relationship.

RSE is further defined in terms of its environment, aims and strategy.

Environment

RSE will be a vital part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). It will take place in the school context but is based on and supported by home teaching. It will be supportive of the Catholic culture of the school.

Aims of R.S.E.

At primary level RSE aims to help children learn at home and in school about their own development and about their friendships with others. This work will be based on developing a good self-image, providing respect for themselves and for others and providing them with appropriate information.

Central to RSE 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:

- 1. To promote an understanding of and a healthy attitude to sexuality and relationships;
- 2. To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction;
- 3. To promote a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life;
- 4. To enable the child to feel comfortable with his / her sexuality and that of others.

Broad Objectives

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

- 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, 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.

Relationship of R.S.E. to S.P.H.E. and Religion

RSE is taught as an integral part of the SPHE curriculum. The aim of SPHE is to foster the personal development, health and well being of the child and to help him/her to create and maintain supportive relationships to become an active and responsible citizen in society.

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. As stated previously, the content of all lessons will be governed by the schools' Catholic ethos as taught in the Alive-O Religion programme.

School Provision for R.S.E. under the S. P. H. E. **Strand Units**

Myself - Self identity, taking care of my body, growing and changing, safety and protection.

Myself and Others – Myself and family, friends and relating to other people.

Taking Care of My Body – Naming parts of the male and female body using appropriate terminology (Junior and Lower Middle classes). Identifying physical changes, Understanding puberty and the Reproductive System (Senior Classes)

Growing and Changing – The stages of development of a baby from conception to birth (Middle Classes). Understanding sexual relations within the context of a committed loving relationship (Senior Classes).

Topics covered up to 2nd class include:

- Keeping safe.
- Naming bodily parts using correct terminology.
- Bodily changes during growth and development.

- Making and keeping friends.
- Making age appropriate choices.
- Appreciating family life.
- Recognising and expressing feelings.
- Self care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep (link with P.E. Healthy Eating Policy and S.P.H.E.)
- Expressing opinions and listening to others.

Topics covered from 3rd to 6th Classes include:-









- Bodily changes.
- Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise.
- Keeping safe.
- Expressing feelings.
- Family relationships.
- Making healthy and responsible decisions.
- Forming friendships.
- Reproduction, conception (5th and 6th Classes)

Teachers **do not** cover topics such as contraception and same sex relationships. Children who ask questions in class on such content are advised to speak to their parents.

Management and Organisation of RSE

What the school currently provides:

1. Parental information meetings on preparation for enrolment in the school and booklets advising parents on how to deal with entry to the primary system.
2. The school has policies in many areas which regulate the organisation of the school day e.g. Healthy Eating, Code of Behaviour, Attendance etc.

-  School Rules as part of the above Code (included in the school Homework Journal)
-  Regular news updates to parents
-  Celebration of important events/milestones/achievement
-  School homework policy
-  Active Parents' Council
-  Visits by guest speakers
-  Visits by the parish priest
-  Staff development

Withdrawal of Children

Permission from parents is **not** required for the teaching of RSE. However, two weeks' notice of the dates and times of RSE lessons shall be furnished to parents prior to whole school commencement. Should any parent wish to withdraw their child(ren) from the RSE curriculum, they must put this **request in writing** and state that they 'accept responsibility for teaching their child the content of the RSE curriculum'. The supervision of any child removed from RSE lesson by their parents becomes the **sole responsibility** of the parent.

Methodology

- ✚ All lessons will be taught by the class teacher
- ✚ Standardised, age appropriate answers will be agreed for all classes. If a child asks something which will be covered later the teacher will say "that's a difficult question for this class, you will be learning that in ____ class". If a child asks a question which the teacher deems inappropriate she will say, "I think that it would be better to ask that question at home".
- ✚ All classes shall be taught as a mixed group e.g. 5th/6th class boys and girls together*

A teacher with a conscientious objection to teaching an element of the programme will have the option of asking a colleague or outside person to take that lesson.

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

Active Learning is the principal learning and teaching approach recommended. It is a process in which children participate meaningfully in their own learning, in which they can begin from what they already know, explore possibilities, question, draw conclusions and reflect on outcomes.

The strategies used are: drama activities; co-operative games; circle time; discussion; written activities; pictures, photographs and visual images; the media and information and communication technology; looking at children's work. *Boys and girls are taught together in all classes though sensitive issues may be taught separately. Senior pupils are treated in a mature way and are encouraged to discuss issues that arise with their parents.

RESOURCES: Alive-O; RSE; Stay Safe and Walk Tall

Guidelines for Management

Parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children in sexual matters. The school R.S.E. programme acts as a support only to parents, and parents retain the right to withdraw their children from classes. The programme is taught within the ethos of the school and contemporary issues/topics are dealt with by the teacher at a level appropriate to the age and stage of development of pupils within a moral and spiritual framework.

- The nine lessons of R.S.E. will be taught as a block to each class (Junior Infants to 6th class)
- The timetable will be sent to parents.
- The children will receive a booklet containing worksheets for each lesson.
- Sensitive lessons will be sent home to parents in advance (if requested)

Child Protection

The school follows the D.E.S. child protection guidelines and has a Child Protection policy with the Principal as Designated Liaison Person. In cases of disclosure; the D.L.P. will follow the procedures as set out in Children First.

Teacher Choice/Staff Development

The teacher's right to choose is enshrined in the policy and if teachers do not wish to teach specific aspects of the programme or require additional resources, an arrangement will be made within the school. The teacher may need to plan the specific material to be covered and should be present during the talk.

The staff/management shall continue to avail of training in:-

- Stay Safe Programme
- Relationships and Sexuality Programme (R.S.E.)
- Walk Tall Programme
- In-career development will be sought for teachers.
- Parents' Council/Board of Management will seek to access information for parents.
- The Board of Management will fund the purchase of suitable materials if deemed necessary.

The SPHE whole school plan is available in the Principal's office and on the school 'Z' shared drives. Each teacher is responsible for his/her long term and short term planning comprising of a yearly and fortnightly scheme of work. A Cuntas Miosúil is retained in the Principal's office.

Evaluation

- Teacher observation.
- Inventory of what needs to be changed.
- Ensuring all strands are covered.
- Teacher designed tasks and tests and self-evaluation.
- Community feedback.

Roles and Responsibilities

The whole school community of B.O.M., staff, pupils and parents play a key role in the formulation and implementation of the plan.

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 have the option of withdrawing their child from a particular lesson if they so wish.
- The Parents' Council will on occasion arrange for speakers/meetings to help them in the task of helping them to communicate with their children on aspects of their development.
- Parents/Guardians are notified that copies of the policy are available for them from the school office.

Review

This will be reviewed by the Principal and whole staff every two years.

Ratification and Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 21st March, 2012. The policy is now on the school 'Z' shared drive for all staff to access.

Signed: *Nick Byrne*
Nick Byrne
Chairperson
Board of Management

Date: 21st March, 2012