

# Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy

## Scoil Bhríde, Rathcormac

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### ■ Introductory Statement

This policy is an approved approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in Scoil Bhríde. RSE is an integral part of SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education). This policy was developed by the SPHE co-ordinator and principal. It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE in the school.

### ■ School Philosophy

This policy was developed and will be implemented in ways which are in keeping with the ethos of the school. The ethos of the school is characterised by the following:

- Sensitive to reality of our children's lives in a changing world.
- Mutual respect between all partners in education.
- Child-centred.
- Aims to ensure each child reaches full potential in the holistic sense.
- Hopes that children are equipped with high self-esteem to enable them to go to live happy and fulfilled lives.

### ■ Definition of RSE

Relationship and Sexuality education (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 (*Going Forward Together Parent's Information Booklet, page 4*).

### ■ Relationship of RSE to SPHE

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) 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.

### ■ Current Provision Included in the school curriculum is:

- SPHE lessons (provided through discrete curricular time and integration)
- Use of the RSE Manuals and Busy Body resources
- Stay safe Programme (updated Stay Safe Programme will be implemented in the school in term 2, 2018) (SEE APPENDICES 2 and 3 for updated language to be taught and links to RSE lessons)
- Walk Tall Programme (updated Walk Tall Programme will be implemented from September 2017)
- Religious Education

## ■ Aims of our RSE programme

- To help young people develop healthy friendships and relationships
- To promote a healthy attitude to sexuality and to relationships
- To enhance the 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 enable the child to acquire an understanding of, and respect for, human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction- (Sixth Class)
- To understand the physical changes taking place with the onset of puberty- Senior Classes
- To develop and promote in the child a sense of wonder and awe 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.

We support 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.

## ■ Policies which support SPHE/RSE

- Child Protection Policy
- Code of behaviour and discipline
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy

## Child Protection

This policy is cognisant of all aspects of our current Child Protection Policy. The school follows the DES child protection guidelines and has a child protection policy with the Principal as Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and the Deputy Principal as the Deputy DLP. Where a child protection concern is raised, the procedures outlined in the schools Child Protection Policy will be followed.

## ■ Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School

### Curriculum Matters

- Curriculum Content –The curriculum by NCCA will be followed as published, and will be taught from infants to 6<sup>th</sup> class. All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school, the whole school plan for SPHE and the RSE policy. Each class teacher will teach the content for their class level.
- Where an outside speaker is used, the class teacher will remain in the classroom, as per circular 22/2010. The speaker will be made aware of the school's RSE policy.
- The new Stay Safe programme will be implemented throughout the school from term 2 , 2018.

- The SPHE co-ordinator and class teachers will coordinate the teaching of Stay Safe during the school year (at a time during term 2)

#### **Topics in Junior / Senior Infants include:**

- Keeping Safe
- Bodily changes during growth and birth
- Making age appropriate choices
- Appreciating family life
- Recognising and expressing feelings
- Self-care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep
- Expressing opinions and listening to others
- Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms

#### **Topics in 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Classes:**

- Keeping Safe
- Bodily changes during growth and birth
- Making age appropriate choices
- Appreciating family life
- Recognising and expressing feelings
- Self-care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep
- Expressing opinions and listening to others
- Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions

#### **Topics in 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> Classes**

- Bodily changes
- Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise
- Keeping Safe
- Expressing Feelings
- Family relationships
- Making healthy and responsible decisions
- Forming Friendships
- Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (*4<sup>th</sup> class*)
- Changes that occur in girls with the onset of puberty (*4<sup>th</sup> Class girls – talk on menstruation*)

#### **Topics in 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> Classes**

- Bodily changes
- Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise
- Keeping Safe
- Expressing Feelings
- Family relationships

- Making healthy and responsible decisions
- Forming Friendships
- Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (5<sup>th</sup> / 6<sup>th</sup>)
- Reproductive system of male/female adults (5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup>)
- Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship. (**6<sup>th</sup> Class only**)

#### Organisational Matters:

- Parents will be informed in advance of lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme. They will also be informed of the language covered in these lessons for each class. ( See appendix 1 - example of letter to parents). (See appendix 2 - a note on language for the body covered in RSE lessons).
- If children are withdrawn from the lessons pertaining to the sensitive elements of the RSE programme, they must give a notice in writing to the school that they are withdrawing their child. The child will be accommodated in another teacher's classroom in the school.
- If parents wish to have their child/children withdrawn from these RSE lessons, parents then have the responsibility themselves to educate their children on these elements of RSE.
- Parents have a responsibility to become involved, to inform themselves of the programme content and to prepare children for the information they will acquire around the sensitive areas and discuss areas covered in RSE/SPHE. Parents are invited/welcome to view the curriculum and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns.
- In the class situation children will be encouraged to recognise that certain information is for them only and it would be inappropriate to discuss this with younger siblings/children for example.
- 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 Teacher has concerns about teaching the sensitive elements in RSE they should consult with the Principal. Any teacher has the right to opt out of teaching the sensitive elements of RSE. It is the responsibility of the B.O.M. to ensure content is covered by another teacher or an outside speaker.
- Special consideration will be taken to ensure that the needs of children with SEN are met. Taking into account the pupil's social and emotional development, instruction will be based on individual needs where possible. Parents will be consulted around sensitive issues.

#### **Dealing with Questions:**

It is natural that children should wish to ask questions in the area of RSE. While it is important to create an environment in which a child feels free to ask questions, it is also important that a safe environment is created for all the children in the class. Teachers are advised to set boundaries in the teaching of RSE as they would in any other subject and discuss the importance of respect for everyone before the beginning of RSE lessons.

All questions answered will reflect the parameters of the curriculum. Certain topics are not in the primary RSE/SPHE programme and will not be discussed i.e.: abortion, masturbation, contraception.

Questions to the teacher may be oral or written within the group setting and answered within boundaries of the curriculum and school policy. If any questions asked by children are deemed to be inappropriate, the teacher will refer the child to their parents/guardians, or state that this information may be available at a later stage of the curriculum, or in postprimary school. The school cannot guarantee confidentiality if a child asks a question of a personal nature or discloses personal information. With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom outside of the RSE lesson.

The following considerations will be made when responding to children's questions:

- Awareness of circumstances in which the question has arisen
- Clarification of what information is required
- Determination of whether the question is appropriate or relevant/who it is relevant to
- Provision of an age appropriate answer
- The school RSE policy
- The ethos of the school
- The content objectives of the SPHE curriculum guidelines
- Deferral of the question to be answered at home or in the future

### **RSE for Children with Special Educational Needs**

Many students with special educational needs may lack confidence and need opportunities to develop the following skills through a structured SPHE/RSE programme:

- Development of positive self esteem
- Social and communication skills
- Appropriate expression of feelings
- Safety and protection skills
- An understanding of their body and the changes that take place at puberty.

When teaching RSE to children with special educational needs it is important that:

- The education of the child should be needs led, meaning that the teacher should try to establish what the needs of the student are and also what the child's emotional readiness and base level of understanding are. This can be done through consultation with the parents and with the student him/herself.
- Close and ongoing co-operation with the parents is advisable.
- A lesson plan differentiated lesson / education plan for the student may need to be developed in consultation with parents and other staff involved in teaching that student e. g Learning Support Teacher.

### **■ Parental Involvement**

- Parents are welcome to view the curriculum and resources if they wish.
- Regular contact will be made with parents prior to the teaching of lessons involving the 'sensitive elements' of the RSE programme, in the form of the RSE manual home/school links

pages and by letter informing parents of the lessons going to be covered at each class level and the language that will be covered in these lessons etc.

- After parents are informed in advance when these formal lessons on the sensitive areas of the programme are going to be taught, they may, if they wish discuss these with their child prior to the lessons in school.
- The school acknowledges that parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children in sexual matters. The school RSE programme acts as a support to parents, and parents retain the right to withdraw their children from classes.
- See also organisational matters above in relation to parents wishing to withdraw children from these 'sensitive lessons' of the RSE programme.

### ■ Resources

- Relationships and Sexuality Education Manuals (DES). Each class teacher has a copy of the appropriate manual.
- Stay Safe programme and Walk Tall Programme (updated versions September 2017).
- Busy Bodies DVD and booklet. This DVD and booklet were developed to support the teaching of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class component of RSE within the context of SPHE. It is available for download at [www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie)
- All resources are available for parents/guardians to view if they so request prior to the delivery of the lesson.

### ■ Provision of Ongoing Support

- Opportunities provided by our Education Centre will be brought to the attention of staff members. Teachers will be encouraged to attend CPD in RSE.
- Application for in-school support from PDST sought when necessary.
- Staff meetings utilised as a platform for discussion and development of RSE materials.

### ■ Review

The policy will be reviewed after every two years. The policy may also be reviewed at an earlier time should a need arise. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made.

This plan was ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting on 14/03/2019

Canon Michael Leamy (Chairperson)

Margaret Howard (Principal)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_