

Relationships and Sexuality Education

**Scoil Naomh Mhuire NS
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Category : Rural

School Philosophy

Introductory Statement and Rationale

(a) Introductory Statement

The staff and Board of Management of Scoil Naomh Mhuire NS. Initially formulated this school policy for RSE in 2009/2010, in consultation with our parents, as we believe that RSE is a shared responsibility and their contributions and involvement will be essential to the effective implementation of the RSE programme in the school. It was drafted during an in-school planning day following staff training. It was reviewed and updated in 2018/2019 in line with recommended guidelines from PDST and Child Protection legislation.

(b) Rationale

RSE has been taught in Scoil Naomh Mhuire N.S. for many years, however, we wish to formalise our approach to teaching of RSE in line with new guidelines and recommendations from the PDST.

Definition of RSE

Relationships and Sexuality Education is an integral part of SPHE 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. In particular, it addresses the meaning of human sexuality, relationships, growth and development, relevant to personal and social skills.

RSE in the context of our SPHE programme

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.

SPHE:

- Is a lifelong process and consequently RSE is a continual process throughout primary school and is not confined to once off inputs or lessons.
- Is a shared responsibility between family, school, health professionals and the community. RSE education should include an input from all, and collaboration can be fostered through the teaching and delivery of materials.
- Is a generic approach. It is not so much about the specific content of RSE but rather the relationship with a child's skills, attitudes, values and understanding relevant to a range of social, personal and health issues.
- Is based on the needs of the child, therefore RSE education should prioritise the needs of the child and his/her environment, with appropriate adaptations made within the curriculum to suit individual requirements and individual school situation.
- Is spiral in nature. RSE is revisited at different stages throughout the child's time in school, this will provide opportunities to consolidate and build on previous learning. This allows for

issues and topics to be explored and treated in a manner appropriate to the children's needs, abilities and levels of maturity.

- Engages children to be involved in activity-based learning. RSE should provide a range of learning opportunities that include working together, learning about one's own feelings and those of others, developing a sense of empathy and experiencing and supporting healthy relationships.

Through SPHE and RSE, members of the school community should be enabled to enhance their self-esteem and wellbeing through;

- A sense of identity
- A sense of purpose
- A sense of belonging
- A sense of security
- A sense of competence

In an ever-changing world, RSE encourages children through consistent messages that are taught in line with SPHE. The school has a responsibility to ensure that its curriculum is free of bias and that issues of inequality in any form are addressed and dealt with (SPHE Teacher guidelines, p.25). In learning about cultures and traditions of others, children can develop a sense of respect for difference and appreciate the contribution that such has to offer. It will encourage children to be inclusive with each other, challenge prejudice and learn how to live in an intercultural society.

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
- Walk Tall Programme
- Webwise resources
- Making the Links
- Adapted resources for SEN from www.pdst.ie
- Grow in Love programme

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 and 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

Policies which support SPHE/RSE

- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Substance Abuse Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Admissions and Enrolment Policy
- Acceptable Usage Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School:

Curriculum Content- The curriculum by NCCA will be followed as published and will be taught from infants to 6th class. All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school, the whole school plan for SPHE and the RSE policy.

Management of RSE

- Each teacher is responsible for the teaching of RSE to their own class.
- The curriculum will be covered in Year One of a two year SPHE plan. Due to the multi-grade nature of our classes and following the recommendations of the PDST, the content will be taught as follows:

Junior and Senior Infants:
 1st and 2nd Class
 3rd and 4th Class
 5th and 6th Class

Senior Infant lessons (RSE programme)
 2nd Class content (RSE programme)
 4th Class content (RSE programme)
 6th Class content (RSE programme)

- The sensitive lessons are covered as part of the broad topics – Growing and Changing, and Taking Care of My Body.
- Special arrangements exist for the delivery of the sensitive elements from 4th class up, this may include availing an external facilitator if deemed necessary by the staff and Board of Management.
- Special consideration will be taken to ensure that the needs of the 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.

Specific Issues in relation to the Implementation of RSE in our school

- Due to the multi-grade nature of our school, the staff may make organisational arrangements for the teaching of certain material to a specific class.
- Our school is a co-educational school and we teach boys and girls together. We may teach boys and girls separately, giving each group the boys and girls information, depending on the topic being discussed and the particular class group.
- It is the policy of our school that age appropriate material will be presented
- It is the policy of our school to respect and consider the wishes of individual teachers who feel uncomfortable teaching the lessons on the sensitive issues, however the school has an obligation to provide RSE for the students.
- It is the policy of our school to allow for the visitation of visiting speakers. All parents / guardians will be given prior notification of these visits and opportunity for consultation where appropriate. A parents' information evening may be held prior to the visits.
- It is our policy to help cultivate an atmosphere of mutual respect and sensitivity within the school.
- The practical day-to-day organisation of the RSE teaching programme will be decided by the principal and teaching staff.
- The caring, inclusive, tolerant ethos of our school will ensure that the discussion of such topics as marriage, separation, divorce, teenage pregnancy etc. will be dealt with sensitively and sympathetically. At all times the privacy of the individual and the family will be respected.
- Topics such as homosexuality, contraception, abortion and masturbation are not in the primary RSE/SPHE programme and will be taught in these lessons. Questions on these topics will be referred home.
- Children's queries will be answered in an age appropriate manner and in accordance with the Primary School SPHE curriculum and queries can also referred home.
- It is the responsibility of the Principal and the Class Teachers to ensure that the RSE programme is taught to every class-level. If deemed necessary, and with the prior agreement of the Board of Management, 5th and 6th class pupils may receive instruction on sexuality, conception and birth from an outside agency such as Accord or a PDST-trained facilitator. These lessons will take place in the summer term of Year Two of a two-year SPHE cycle.

Parental Involvement

- Parents will be informed that the school fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE programme including sensitive aspects of the programme at enrolment.
- Parents will be informed in advance of lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme, with a letter relevant to what will be taught at their child's class level.

- The letter will be issued in advance, giving parents an opportunity to meet with relevant class teachers if they so wish, to discuss or clarify what is covered and to prepare their children, it also gives parents an opportunity 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 welcome to view the curriculum and may speak to the class teacher if they have concerns at any time during the year. The school acknowledges that parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children about growing and changing.
- Following discussion with Principal and Class Teacher, if a parent wishes to withdraw their child from the sensitive lessons it should be given in writing stating their reasons for doing so and this kept on file.
- If a child has been withdrawn from the sensitive RSE lessons, the school takes no responsibility for what the child may hear following on from the teaching of the lessons. eg. Other children discussing what they have learnt.

Approaches and Methodologies

When implementing the programme, staff at Scoil Naomh Mhuire will endeavour to display respect for and sensitivity towards different cultural and family backgrounds experienced by the children. The curriculum will be taught in an age-appropriate manner at all times. The curriculum will be taught from Junior Infants to 6th class. It will be taught through a spiral curriculum. The materials taught will reflect the needs of the children.

The RSE curriculum will be taught through:

- Stories and poems
- Classroom discussion
- Group work
- Games
- Art activities
- Reflection
- Circle time

Differentiation

Teachers use assessment and professional judgement to differentiate the programme and content to suit the needs of the class. Some techniques used:

- Ensuring that objectives are realistic for the students
- Ensuring that the learning task is compatible with prior learning
- Providing opportunities for interacting and working with other students in small groups and spending more time on tasks

- Organising the learning task into small stages and ensuring that the language used is pitched at the student's level of understanding
- Understanding of the activity using task analysis, outlining the steps to be learned/ completed in any given task, posing key questions to guide students through the different stages/ processes, and to assist in self-direction and correction
- Having short and varied tasks creating a learning environment through the use of concrete, and where possible every day materials, and by displaying word lists and laminated charts with pictures

Sometimes the stage of development in a class can vary widely and strategies to differentiate in class can support gradual and appropriate teaching

- Group work and discussion
- Higher and lower order questioning in groups
- Moderated whole class discussions through the use of a Question or Worry Box.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs

Adaptations to the way in which the content is delivered will be made for children with Special Educational Needs. Consultation with parents/guardians in advance and anticipation of the children's needs will be central to ensuring learning is meaningful.

- Children may be pre-taught language or concepts in anticipation of whole class work
- Children may work in smaller groups or 1:1 on adapted and suitable material
- Any specific objectives related to the pupils own learning needs should be detailed in their SSP in consultation with parents/ guardians

Language

SPHE curriculum provides a context in which children are given opportunities to develop and enhance their language skills and to increase their vocabulary related to SPHE. Children should become aware of the power and influence of language. When used positively, language can build up, affirm and show respect to another human being but if used in a negative manner can hurt, diminish and demean. Children need to recognise and become sensitive to the ways in which they themselves use language in their relationship and their everyday interactions. Language is a powerful tool and should be used with respect and integrity for the dignity of each person. There are two areas where the use of language is applied in RSE lessons;

- The formal use and teaching of language generally throughout the school
- The use of language in discussion through your formal RSE lessons
- Appropriate vocabulary in formal teaching
- Relating to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, parts of the body and feelings will be used, the use of slang will be discouraged

- Anatomical terms and language introduced is consistent with RSE Materials Books, and is attached as an Appendix to this plan.

Junior Infants and Senior Infants: Womb, Breast feeding, Penis, Vagina

1st & 2nd Class: Urine passes through the penis in boys and the urethra in girls. Baby in the womb for nine months and may be breast or bottle fed, naval

3rd & 4th Class; developing foetus, menstruation

5th Class & 6th Class: Puberty, physical changes in boys and girls; reproduction; Sexual intercourse in the context of a loving, committed relationship; such as marriage

The RSE programme will be taught in our school from March 2010. Parents and teachers of children in the older classes will need to cooperate in ensuring that any 'catch-up' on information regarding unfamiliar topics or language goes well. The teachers will give additional time to introducing particular lessons (checking prior knowledge, introducing vocabulary, etc.)

Questions

We use some simple principles when fostering discussion and questioning

- No personal questions of the teacher
- The Question Box will be availed of by the children
- The teacher will be mindful of their reaction to any questions
- Questions do not have to be answered straight away

During the delivery of each section of the sensitive lessons, children will be encouraged to place their questions in a question box in the classroom. These questions will then be monitored and screened with the teacher answering the questions at a later time taking into account the following;

- Questions arising from the lesson content will be answered in an age- appropriate manner
- The class teacher cannot answer questions which do not relate to the particular curriculum objectives for a class
- Pupils will be informed if a question/issue is not on the programme and they will be advised to talk with their parents
- Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents themselves if they feel that a question is very inappropriate or needs to be communicated with home because of other reasons
- No personal questions will be answered and children will be reminded not to share personal information about their families or others- but can share with teacher after the lessons.

If issues arise which might be seen to contravene Children First Guidelines, the teacher will notify the Designated Liaison Person in the school.

Assessment

Assessment in RSE is important to enable the teacher to pitch the lessons correctly to their respective class group.

The teacher uses;

- Observation and questions to assess the children's engagement and interest
- Use of teacher-designed tasks such as worksheets, quizzes or games
- Use of reflection or learning log

Confidentiality

- Teachers establish ground rules covering the limits of the discussion, the level of respect required and the concept of confidentiality. All discussions remain within the parameters of the planned materials.
- Should a disclosure be made in the course of the lesson, the teacher will follow Children First Guidelines 2017 and The Children First Act 2015 and the school's Child Safeguarding Statement
- If a child is withdrawn from the teaching of sensitive issues, we cannot guarantee that the other children will not tell or inform him/her about what happened.

Language

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 of the body can put children at a disadvantage.

We will give children the correct and appropriate language as outlined in the RSE materials.

Junior Infants and Senior Infants: Womb, Breast feeding, Penis, Vagina

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3rd & 4th Class: developing foetus.

5th Class & 6th Class: Puberty, physical changes in boys and girls; reproduction; Sexual intercourse in the context of a loving, committed relationship; such as marriage

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Parental Involvement

We acknowledge that parents are the primary educators of their children in developing relationships and knowledge of themselves and others. The programme provided by the school is to supplement and assist the parent's role.

Parents will be informed about the content of the RSE lessons in advance by sending home Home/School links pages outlining the content of the lessons. Parents should take an active involvement in the discussion of lesson themes with their children. This can be done in an informal and relaxed manner.

Since RSE is an obligatory requirement of the Department of Education and Science, it should be inclusive and our school strongly discourages withdrawal. The school will, however, take account of parental concerns and a parent's right to withdraw a pupil from a lesson will be honoured on the understanding that the parent is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education. Parents are

obliged to inform the school in writing of their decision to withdraw the child from the sensitive issues classes. Any parent who wishes to withdraw their child should make arrangements for the supervision of the child while the RSE class is in progress.

Information for Parents

Appendices A and B of this plan

RSE – Going Forward Together. (Department of Education and Science)

Resource Materials for RSE (Four books: Infants, 1st/2nd classes, 3rd/4th and 5th/6th) (available online)

Website: www.ecdruimcondra.ie/programmes (A range of resources available, including the booklet 'Going Forward Together: An introduction to RSE for parents.')

Busy Bodies: A book about puberty for you and your parents, Health Service Executive. (5th and 6th class children)

Providing for Ongoing Support Development and Review

It is the policy of our school to ensure access to Continuous Professional Development opportunities for teachers. The Board of Management will provide relevant RSE school resource material. This plan will be reviewed in two years. Any amendments necessary as a result of such review will be undertaken. The review committee to be set up by the B.O.M. and will include parents, teachers and B.O.M. members. Report to be presented to the B.O.M. for approval.

Ratification and Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Scoil Naomh Mhuire on :

Signed: Mary McDowell
Principal

Date: March 11th, 2019

Signed: Maeve Caldwell

Date: March 11th, 2019

Date of next review: October 2021

Appendix A

RELATIONSHIPS and SEXUALITY EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Parent Information Leaflet



Introduction

Learning about relationships and sexuality is a process that goes on throughout our lives. Children learn primarily from their families. Therefore, as a parent, you are the first and most important teacher of your child when it comes to relationships and sexuality. A school-based Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme can complement and support what children are learning at home. RSE is most effective when schools and parents work in partnership.

Partnership is supported when schools:

- Inform parents about what will be taught in RSE, and when it will be taught
- Consult with parents of a child with a learning difficulty to ensure that his/her needs are being met.
- Inform parents of their right to withdraw their child from the sex education component of RSE.
- Collaborate with parents when reviewing their RSE policy

The Department of Education and Skills requires all schools to teach RSE and to have an RSE policy. The policy will ensure that RSE is taught in a way that reflects the core values and ethos of the school.

The purpose of this leaflet is to give you some information about RSE. For more detailed information please go to the Drumcondra Education Centre website: www.ecdrumcondra.ie/programmes/rse

What is RSE?

RSE teaches children about relationships, sexuality and their own growth and development. The lessons give children the opportunity to reflect on their lives and their relationships in a social, moral and spiritual framework. RSE is taught in the context of a wider subject called Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE).

SPHE provides opportunities to:

- Foster the personal development of children
- Promote the health and well being of children
- Help children to maintain supportive relationships
- Encourage children to become active, responsible citizens

The lessons in SPHE are arranged under three strands: **Myself, Myself and Others, Myself and the Wider World.**

The RSE programme is incorporated into the strands **Myself** and **Myself and Others**. Each strand is sub-divided into strand units. These are shown below, with a very brief summary of their content.

The Stay Safe Programme is also an aspect of SPHE and should be taught under the strand unit 'Personal Safety'. The programme helps children to deal with upsetting, unsafe or frightening situations. For more information go to: www.staysafe.ie

JUNIOR INFANTS TO SECOND CLASS

MYSELF:

Self Identity: What makes me unique and special, becoming self reliant, making choices, expressing opinions.

Taking Care of My Body: Caring for one's body, respect for one's body and that of others, diet, hygiene, being able to name parts of male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms.

Growing and Changing: Understanding growth and change, exploring feelings, becoming aware of new life and birth, understanding a baby's needs.

Safety and Protection: Identifying risks, developing strategies for keeping safe, understanding why there are rules.

MYSELF AND OTHERS:

Myself and My Family: Learning about how families love and take care of each other.

My Friends and Other People: Appreciating friendship, treating others with dignity and respect, recognising bullying behaviour, understanding that it is wrong and knowing what to do about it.

Relating to Others: Listening to others, practicing care and consideration towards others, resolving conflict.

THIRD CLASS TO SIXTH CLASS

MYSELF

Self Identity: Self awareness, self confidence, expressing feelings and opinions, coping with change, becoming more responsible, body image, identifying goals and targets.

Taking Care of My Body: Understanding health, dangers of substance misuse, personal hygiene, nutrition. For 3rd/4th Class: understanding physical changes for boys and girls. For 5th/6th Class children: understanding physical and other changes at puberty, understanding the male and female reproductive system.

Growing and Changing: Identifying and discussing feelings, having a positive sense of self. For 3rd/4th Class children: being able to discuss the development of the human baby from conception to birth, recognising how feelings are influenced by puberty. For 5th/6th Class children: understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth in the context of a committed, loving relationship.

Safety and Protection: Identifying threats to safety, knowing how to keep safe, helping others to be safe.

Making Decisions: Decision making, understanding that decisions have consequences, recognising the role of adults in setting boundaries for young people.

MYSELF AND OTHERS

Myself and My Family: Exploring what it means to belong to a family, identifying behaviour that promotes harmony in families.

My Friends and Other People: Appreciating the importance of friendship, coping with the loss of friendship, learning how to deal with bullying, recognising the importance of courtesy, good manners and caring for others.

Relating to Others: Listening and communication skills, positive strategies for resolving conflict.

Appendix B

RSE SENSITIVE AREAS LANGUAGE

Junior/Senior Infants

My Body: Identify external parts of the male and female body. Head, eyes, ears, nose, nipple, breast, skin, hips, navel, private parts, penis, bottom, vagina/vulva/urethra

New Life: A baby grows and is nurtured in the mother's womb until ready to be born.

First/Second Classes

My body: How my body works. Name and identify external parts of the male and female body and their associated function.

Navel: The proper name for the part of the body where a baby was joined to his/her mother before being born.

Penis: The proper name for the part of the body of a boy that passes urine.

Urethra: The proper name for the part of the body of a girl that passes urine.

Vagina: Opening where a baby leaves a mother's womb. Sometimes a mother has to have an operation to have the baby. This is all normal.

Vulva: The vulva is external and is the correct name for the opening of the vagina which is internal.

Breasts: Breasts produce milk after a mother has had a baby. Sometimes the mother feeds the baby with this milk. It is known as breast-feeding. Some mothers also use powdered milk.

New Life: Caring for a new born baby. A baby grows in the mother's womb until ready to be born.

Third and Fourth Class

My body: As I grow I change

New Life: Caring for a new baby. Nutrition in the womb and the function of the umbilical cor. Before a baby is born the baby spends nine months in the mother's womb and gets food through a tube called the umbilical cord.

My body: Growing and changing-body changes. Hormones. Changes in shape. Increases in body hair. Pubic hair. Menstruation. (Ref: p.199 RSE Fourth Class Resource Materials).

Birth and New Life: Stages of growth of a baby from conception to birth. Identify objects which coincide with size of foetus at different stages. Care while waiting for a baby. After nine months the baby is ready to be born. Develop an appreciation of the wonder of the birth of a new baby.

Fifth and Sixth Class

Physical Development: Puberty Physical changes for boys: Growth spurts, Testicles, Scrotum, Penis enlarge, Pubic/Facial and other body hair, Voice deepens, Nocturnal emissions-'wet dreams', Perspiration, Oily skin, Pimples. Physical changes for girls: Breasts develop, Menstruation/Periods begin, Growth spurt, Underarm and pubic hair, Hips broaden, Perspiration, Oily skin, Pimples, Male/Female Reproductive Organs. Ovulation/Menstruation. Psychological, Emotional and Social Changes. (Ref: pp.82-92 RSE Fifth Class Resource Materials).

New Life: How New Life Begins? Ovum (Ova)/Sperm. Ovaries. Conception. (Ref: p.96 Fifth Class Resource Materials).

Growing and Changing:Responsibility. What age must I be to...?

New Life: Relationships and a context for New Life. Conception. Sexual Intercourse in the context of a committed loving relationship.

Respect for Human Life. Development in the womb. (Ref: Chapters 7 and 8 RSE Sixth Class Resource Materials).

Portrayal of Sexuality and Relationships: Body Images male/female in the media/Soaps/Films. Magazines. Relationships in the media How sexuality is defined in the media Sexual images portrayed in advertising (drink/perfume/aftershave) The influences of famous personalities on our understanding of sexuality and relationships Gender Equality in sport and leisure Roles in Society Sexual Stereotyping