



Relationships & Sexuality Education Policy

Our Lady of Good Counsel B.N.S.

Introduction

All schools are required to have an RSE policy to detail how RSE is taught in the school, including the sensitive aspects. This policy is an approved approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE both formally and informally.

School Philosophy

Johnstown B.N.S. caters for pupils from Junior Infants to Sixth class. The school is a Catholic primary school in the parish of Johnstown, Killiney. The ethos of the school is founded on Christian principles where tolerance and respect for others is paramount. It is our intention that everyone feels valued and our pupils are encouraged to develop their full potential in a caring and supportive environment.

We recognise that SPHE is intrinsic to the teaching and learning that occurs both formally and informally in school and in the classroom. Through our SPHE programme and subsequently through RSE, we wish to assist children to develop feelings of self-worth and self-confidence while encouraging their ability to relate to others in a positive way. The curriculum also encourages children to be aware of their rights as an individual while at the same time accepting responsibility for their actions as members of the school and the wider community. Our school values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. Our ethos means that we value respect, tolerance and openness through the lived experience of the children and school community. Parents have the primary role in the social, personal and health education of their children so their involvement will be encouraged as much as possible. SPHE and RSE are key components in supporting our school and children to develop into healthy young adults.

Mission Statement

We endeavour to create a caring, Catholic and child-centred environment, promoting tolerance, co-operation, courtesy and respect, catering for children of all abilities and backgrounds. We aim to provide a broad and diverse education both curricular and extra-curricular, which develops the child's self-confidence, happiness and security through the work of a united team of staff, management and parents.

Development of Policy

This policy was reviewed in consultation with staff and the Board of Management. This policy takes into account the views of the CSPMA who have created the Flourish Programme to provide a framework based on the teachings of Jesus Christ and reflecting the dignity of each person created in the image and likeness of God while providing structured opportunities for pupils to acquire a knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework.

Definition of SPHE

Social, personal and health education (SPHE) provides particular opportunities to foster the personal development, health and well-being of the individual child, to help him/her to create and maintain supportive relationships and become an active and responsible citizen in society.

S.P.H.E. has moral and spiritual dimensions and will, therefore, be developed within the context of the ethos or characteristic spirit of the school. Issues examined will include relationships both at home and in school, building self-esteem, developing communication skills, promoting decision making and the expression of feelings in an appropriate way. It also includes giving clear information on a variety of topics which include nutrition, alcohol, drugs, human growth and development, personal safety and social responsibility. Active participation in a wide range of activities is encouraged so that children will become increasingly responsible for their own learning and be able to apply what they have learned in a variety of situations in their own lives.

Definition of R.S.E.

The definition of RSE used is from the Interim RSE Guidelines 1996 and Going Forward Together Parents Information Booklet. RSE is an important part of the education of young people, and schools provide a safe context within which young people can learn about themselves and the wider world. This makes access to RSE in schools all the more important' - (Mayock, Kitching and Morgan 2007,

p2). The policy guidelines state that schools can develop a working definition within the context of both the NCCA's and the policy guidelines definitions. This definition must be in line with the SPHE Curriculum and other relevant policy documents.

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

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. SPHE is taught through school atmosphere and culture, integration and discrete teaching time. Formal RSE lessons and informal RSE messages must be consistent with the whole school approach to SPHE.

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 situations
- 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, p25). 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

Relationship Education is already an integral part of education in the school. Elements are already included in Religious Education, Physical Education and S.P.H.E. through:-

- SPHE lessons (provided through discrete curricular time and integration)
- Use of the RSE Manuals and Busy Bodies resources
- Stay Safe Programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Webwise resources
- All Together Now - Homophobic and Transphobic bullying lessons
- RESPECT Guidelines (suggested approaches to teaching about different families)
- Adapted resources for SEN from www.pdst.ie
- Religious Education
- RSE primary Programme- Flourish

Aims

The aims of R.S.E. 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, sexual intercourse and reproduction.
- 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 himself and others while growing and developing.

Broad Objectives:

When due account is taken of abilities and varying circumstances, the RSE education curriculum should enable the child to (in conjunction with the SPHE curriculum)

- Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self
- Develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and wellbeing of others
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-worth
- Understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and 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 help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships
- Develop coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse
- Acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction
- Acquire the use of appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development
- Develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making.

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

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of R.S.E. in our School

Curriculum Matters

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. Each class teacher will teach the content for their class level each year as laid out in the curriculum, utilising the Flourish programme and the RSE teacher manuals to complement their teaching.

Management of RSE

- The four lessons of the Flourish programme are taught each year.
- The strands *Growing and Changing*, and *Taking Care of my Body* are covered in Year One of a 2 year SPHE plan.
- The sensitive lessons are covered as part of these broad topics.
- 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.
- When the RSE facilitators visit in October, a teacher is always present.

Organisational Matters

The teacher must be discreet in handling matters of a confidential nature. In the event of this occurring the teacher should try to curtail and defer the discussion to a more appropriate time and place. The teacher may also need to discuss the matter or seek the advice of the Designated Liaison Person (D.L.P.) or the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (D.D.L.P.)

Themes of the RSE Flourish Programme:

Strand: Myself; Junior Classes

- I Am Me (God loves me, I am unique)
- My body is a sacred gift from God.
- Respect for my own and other people's bodies. God loves us as we grow and change.

- We can recognise dangerous situations. Respect for personal space. God will help us as we try to keep ourselves safe.

Senior Classes:

- My sexuality is part of who I am. God loves me as I am
- Sex is a gift from God. It belongs in committed relationships. Sex is not a commodity.
- Puberty is a gift from God. We are perfectly designed by God to procreate with him.
- Good and bad choices. Moral as well as physical dangers. Being Christ-like in our decision-making.

Strand: Myself and Others; Junior Classes

- Love is central to families. Jesus asked us to love one another.
- Relationships are important. Jesus called us to live in communion with each other.
- Friendship and commitment.

Senior Classes:

- Sexual love belongs within a committed relationship. Marriage as a sacrament of commitment.
- How we relate to each other. What is appropriate and affirming? How relationships can be abusive and damaging.
- Loyalty and fidelity.

Language/Terminology

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 in teaching issues related to RSE the teachers will use the children the correct biological terms as outlined in RSE Resource Materials as follows:

Jnr. /Snr. Infants:

Terms "penis", "vagina" or "vulva", "womb" and "breast" 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. These terms will then be used by all teachers at all levels.

Terms "private" and "personal" will also be explored through the Stay Safe Programme.

1st/2nd

Above terms will be revised will be revised. Teachers will teach that a baby is in the womb for nine months and may be breast or bottle fed.

3rd/4th

Terms "gay", "lesbian", "gender", "homophobic" and "identity" will be taught in line with the Stay Safe Programme.

5th/6th

Puberty, human reproduction and sexual intercourse in the context of a committed loving relationship will be taught using the language outlined in DES RSE Resource Materials and Flourish Programme for 5th/6th classes. Term "testicles" and "uterus" will be taught in line with the Stay Safe Programme. All previous taught terms will be revised.

Sexuality

Creating an open and trusting culture will be of paramount importance when dealing with topics that may arise. Discussions on the nuclear family, one parent families and single sex families will be dealt with sensitivity through RSE, SPHE and SESE. Gender and sexuality will be discussed when it arises and appropriate language will be taught in a positive and open environment.

Dealing with Questions

Appropriate questions will be answered by the teacher or health visitor in a sensible, sensitive and age appropriate manner. The child will be advised to discuss questions which are deemed to be outside the teacher's remit with his parents/guardians. The school recognises the primary role of parents as educators. Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents themselves if they feel a question is very inappropriate.

Pupils with Additional Educational Needs

In line with our subject plan for SPHE, teachers will endeavour to adapt and modify activities and methodologies in the Stay Safe to encourage participation by children with special needs. The learning support and resource teachers will supplement the work of the class teachers where necessary. Our Lady of Good Counsel B.N.S. will liaise with trained professionals/appropriate agencies when dealing with sensitive issues such as bereavement or loss to ensure that the children involved are fully supported.

The implementation of a successful R.S.E. programme is the responsibility of the entire school community - Board of Management, parents, teachers and pupils. Full collaboration and good communication between home and school is essential in delivering a meaningful and worthwhile programme for the benefit of pupils and their families. Each partner in the school community has individual and distinctive contributions to make regarding the formation, implementation, ongoing management and review of the programme.

Review and Development

The R.S.E. policy will be reviewed on a three year basis or beforehand if necessary.

The Role of Parents

The school recognises that, in this area above all, its role is subsidiary to that of the parent. The parents are acknowledged as the primary educators of their children.

The home is recognised as exerting a major influence on all aspects of the child's life, and especially so in the domain of relationships and sexuality. This aspect of a child's development can be complemented by a school-based R.S.E. programme. The parents are welcome to view RSE teaching materials at the school.

In relation to the sexuality aspect of R.S.E. parents will be given prior notice of what is proposed, thereby affording them the opportunity to deal with these matters at home. This will also enable them to deal with follow up work thereby complementing the work done in class.

It should be noted in line with the Education Act 1998, section 30 subsection 2 (e) shall not require any student to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parent of the student or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years. Therefore, parents have the right to withdraw their child out of the sensitive aspects of RSE if they so wish. 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.

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. what they may hear on yard.

The Board of Management

The Board will support, facilitate and resource the development and implementation of the R.S.E. programme.

The Board will:

- Facilitate the consultative process thereby enabling the school community to contribute and respond.
- Examine and approve the completed R.S.E. policy and programme prior to its implementation in the school

- Recognise the rights of parents not to delegate in whole or in part the responsibility for dealing with R.S.E. issues, and will equally respect the rights of teachers in this regard.
- At all times seek to accommodate and be sensitive to the religious and cultural beliefs of all parents while fulfilling its responsibility to ensure the availability of an adequate R.S.E. programme for all children.

The Principal

The Principal has a key role in implementing R.S.E. policy in the school. The Principal, in consultation with the teaching staff, will present the revised document to the Board of Management for approval. It will then be made available to all parents on the school website or in hard copy where requested. The Principal will allocate time for planning, training, delivery, review and evaluation of the R.S.E. programme on an ongoing basis.

Teachers

Teachers have a major and diverse role in planning, implementing and delivering R.S.E. in the school. The role of the teacher will at all times be complementary to that of parents taking due cognisance of the individual needs, stage of development and family background of each child.

The extent to which content will be treated will be dependent upon the emotional and intellectual maturity of the children. Care will be exercised within the classroom so that no child is exposed to information or discussion which would be inappropriate to his age or level of maturity. Parents may discuss any reservations they have in this regard with the class teacher.

The programme will be delivered by way of core periods complemented in a cross-curricular manner.

Teachers will select and review resource materials bearing in mind the views of parents and the Board of Management. They will also be involved in the ongoing review and evaluation of the programme in conjunction with parents and the Board of Management.

A child's right to privacy will be respected in all classes by both the teacher and all other pupils. Teachers equally share this right and should never feel obliged to impart information about his/her own personal life.

Teachers will be encouraged to adopt an approach which is genuine, open and respectful. Communication strategies used in the classroom will reflect those

advocated in the R.S.E. programme - listening to all sides of the argument, resolving conflict without aggression.

Teachers will identify links between R.S.E. and other curricular areas thus ensuring that children experience a broad based approach to R.S.E.

External Facilitators

Where appropriate, a suitable person outside of the school staff (e.g. nurse) may deliver any aspect(s) of the R.S.E. programme with the approval of the Board of Management. A teacher must be present and parental permission must be given prior to the talk.

This revised policy was ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting. Review will be in 2024 if required.

Signed: _____ **Date:**
Michael J. Hunt
Chairperson B.O.M.

Signed: _____ **Date:**
Neil Cadogan
Principal