



Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

(Ratified by Board of Management, 9th of June 2014)

Introductory Statement

This Relationships and Sexuality Education (R.S.E.) Policy has been put in place as part of the wider Social, Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E.) strand of the curriculum in order to organise and manage the provision of RSE in the school.

School Philosophy

Our school is a mixed school on the outskirts of Cork city. Our mission statement states that we value and respect each member of our school community. We foster an atmosphere where pupils respect all members of the community. We acknowledge that the life skills taught in the Relationships and Sexuality Education as a component of Social Personal and Health Education furthers this mission.

Rationale

The school recognises that parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children in their relationships and sexual matters. The school policy aims to support parents in this regard.

The policy arises from our school's obligation to provide for the needs of the student body and respond appropriately to sensitive and emotive issues relating to emerging sexuality.

Definition of Social, Personal and Health Education

S.P.H.E. is the process, which enables pupils to develop an understanding of themselves. It helps them to choose and follow a healthy lifestyle and enables them to play responsible roles as individuals and as members of society.

Definition of R.S.E. and its relationship to Social, Personal and Health Education

Relationships and Sexuality Education is an integral part of S.P.H.E. and must be taught in this context. It provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding of these areas through processes, which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework. It specifically addresses growth, development, relationships with others, development of self-esteem, the meaning of human sexuality, relevant personal and social skills.

Aims

This R.S.E. Policy aims to:

- Support parents in educating their children in sexual matters.
- Enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child.
- Help the child to develop healthy friendships and relationships.
- Foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- Develop in the child an understanding of the process of birth and new life.
- Enable the child to be comfortable with the sexuality of oneself and others while growing and developing.
- Provide opportunities for our pupils to learn about relationships and sexuality imparted in a professional manner, within an appropriate educational setting.
- Help pupils think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.
- Enable each child to gain an understanding of and respect for human love, reproduction and sexual activity in a sensitive and measured way.

Relationship to the Ethos of Scoil Náisiúnta Mhuire

Scoil Náisiúnta Mhuire is a Catholic School under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Cloyne - Bishop William Crean.

The school encourages the values that are at the heart of the Christian Faith. We instill and encourage:

- The love of God and Christ for each individual
- Grace and forgiveness
- Peace and reconciliation
- Honesty and diligence
- Distinguishing between right and wrong, good and evil
- Tolerance of differences
- Kindness and generosity
- Caring and co-operation
- Service and personal responsibility

This policy seeks to develop a sense of these Christian values and standards, hand in hand with the R.S.E. part of the S.P.H.E. Curriculum. The ethos strives to develop caring, friendly and tolerant individuals in relation to relationships and sexuality. The ethos is based on the core principle of having respect for oneself and for one another.

The R.S.E. programme is taught within the ethos of the school at a level appropriate to the age and stage of development of pupils within a moral and spiritual framework.

Topics such as contraception and same sex relationships are not covered as they are not in keeping with the Catholic ethos of the school. Children who ask questions in class on content outside the curriculum will be advised and encouraged to speak to their parent/guardian.

Parents and the R.S.E. Programme

Parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children in sexual matters. The school R.S.E. programme acts as a support to parents.

Parents, however, are encouraged to play a meaningful role in the school's delivery of the R.S.E. programme. They will be invited to attend information meetings on the more sensitive issues in 6th Class. They will be given information via leaflets and booklets and will be referred to relevant websites where deemed necessary.

Parents will be given notice of when the RSE strands of the SPHE Curriculum will be taught. They will be asked to get involved when the programme is being delivered and to work with their child/children when discussion sheets and worksheets are sent home.

Parental Consent and the RSE Programme

It is a parent's right to withhold their child from participating in RSE classes if they so wish. Parents will be informed of this when notice is given that the RSE strands will be taught.

If parents are concerned about the lessons provided, or the content of the R.S.E. programme, they are kindly asked to discuss their concerns with the Principal.

Where a parent, having discussed their concerns with the Principal, still wishes that their child not take part in RSE, they are required to send a written request to 'opt out' of RSE. **The parent will be requested to give a written understanding that they will provide the information to their children themselves.**

Parents should note that the school will not be responsible for anything children may hear from friends in the school yard or elsewhere.

Current School Provision of R.S.E.

R.S.E. is being taught in the context of Religious Education, using the Alive-O programme, and through a positive school climate and atmosphere. It is also included in S.P.H.E. programmes, such as Stay Safe and Walk Tall and through a positive school climate and atmosphere. R.S.E. will be timetabled into the curriculum in accordance with DES guidelines.

Strand Units: The following three strands will be taught by the class teacher.

1. **Myself** - Self-identity, taking care of my body, growing and changing, safety and protection
2. **Myself and Others** - Myself and family, friends and relating to other people
3. **Taking Care of My Body** – Naming parts of the male and female body correct terminology (Junior and Lower Middle classes).

Strand unit 4: 'Growing and Changing' - will be delivered by an appropriately trained outside speaker to pupils in 6th Class. A teacher will also be present.

The 'Growing and Changing' strand deals with:

- The stages of development of a baby from conception to birth
- Understanding sexual relations within the context of a committed loving relationship.

Prior to the delivery of this aspect of the RSE Programme, an information meeting will be held where the facilitator will make the parents aware of the content to be delivered. This will include an outline of the content of the talk, watching the DVD "Busy Bodies" followed by a question and answer session.

Methodology

Circle Time will be used extensively in the delivery of R.S.E.

All content objectives will be taught developmentally and concluded by the time the children leave 6th class. All issues will be discussed with sensitivity and professionalism at the varying levels of development within a class, in accordance with the primary school curriculum guidelines. Boys and girls will be taught together in all classes with the exception of the more sensitive issues in 6th Class.

Senior pupils are treated in a mature way. All pupils are encouraged to discuss issues that arise with their parents.

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
- Recognizing 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

- Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise
- Keeping safe
- Expressing feelings
- Family relationships
- Making healthy and responsible decisions
- Forming friendships
- Bodily changes
- Reproduction and conception (6th Class). This will be taught by a guest speaker.

Possible sensitive issues such as naming the body parts and sexual intercourse will be covered within the strand units, 'Taking Care of my Body', 'Growing and Changing' and 'Safety and Protection'.

Topics such as feeling safe, touches, bullying and secrets are also dealt with using the Stay Safe programme and the Walk Tall programme.

Language

Use of appropriate language in R.S.E. is crucially important to enable children to communicate confidently about themselves, their sexuality and their relationships. Their understanding of human sexuality and issues concerning intimacy and relationships is significantly influenced by the language used by others when discussing these topics. Many children are unable to communicate about themselves, their feelings and bodily functions due to an inadequacy of language, acute embarrassment or other factors.

However, the use of proper terms for body and bodily functions should be encouraged from the earliest age; so that terms are given a status and acceptability.

Our School

In our school where there is a multi-class situation, there are children of different class levels and abilities. Should information be inappropriate for the younger age group, we will separate the two groups.

Co-Ed Class

Our school is a co-educational school and we will teach the boys and girls together in all aspects of RSE with the exception of the more sensitive issues in 6th Class.

Answering Questions

Should a pupil require information, which is not in line with the curriculum content and not considered to be age appropriate for the general body of pupils, the school will refer the pupil to his/her parents.

Privacy

Everyone has the right to privacy (see Universal Declaration of Human Rights and UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child). 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.

R.S.E. Policy and other curricular areas

Integration on a cross curricular basis will take place with subjects such as English, Maths, S.E.S.E., Music, Drama and Art as well as by the creation of a positive school climate and atmosphere.

Child Protection.

The school follows the DES Child Protection Guidelines and has a Child Protection Policy in place. All staff have a copy of this policy.

The Principal, Susanna O'Neill, is the Designated Liaison Person with regard to all Child Protection Issues. The Deputy Principal, Mary O'Brien, is the Deputy D.L.P.

In cases of disclosure, the DLP will follow the procedures as set out in the Department of Education and Skills *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011)* in relation to child protection and welfare.

Teacher Choice

If a teacher does not wish to teach specific aspects of the programme, another teacher may deliver the programme to the class. Alternatively, a suitably trained speaker will be employed by the Board of Management.

Where an outside speaker is employed, a teacher, will be present during the delivery of the programme or the specific aspect of it.

Staff Development

The staff will avail of training in;

- The Stay Safe Child Abuse Prevention Programme (C.A.P.P.)
- Relationships and Sexuality Programme (R.S.E.)
- Walk Tall Programme (SMPP)

Planning and Record Keeping

Each teacher is responsible for his/her long term and short term planning, comprising of a yearly and fortnightly scheme of work. A Cúntas Míosúil or Monthly Record of all work covered is retained in the Principal's Office. This will include what has been covered in SPHE and RSE.

Sources and Resources

We will use the R.S.E. and the Stay Safe programmes and other resources that are deemed suitable by the principal/S.P.H.E. coordinator in consultation with staff and a

representative of the parents. The Alive-0 8 resource materials will be used extensively in senior classes.

Guest speakers specializing in RSE will be invited to cover certain aspects of the programme.

Evaluation

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

Provision for ongoing support, development and review

This policy and the R.S.E. programme will be reviewed after 1 year and every 2 years thereafter.

All relevant parties will be informed of any amendments necessary after such a review. R.S.E. resources will also be reviewed to ensure they are kept up to date.

Ratification

This policy was discussed and ratified by the BOM at its meeting of June 9th, 2014

Implementation

Implementation is from September 2014.

Signed:

Frank Maguire
Chairperson on behalf of the Board of Management.