

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

St. Patrick's NS is a mixed, rural, Catholic school and therefore all policies developed are 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 the 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 their full potential in a holistic sense
- ♣ Hopes that children are equipped with high self-esteem to enable them to live happy and fulfilled lives

Introductory Statement

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.

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 individuals 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 development of 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.

Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

In St. Patrick's NS, we aim to teach the RSE programme having regard for the Catholic ethos of the school while respecting the rights of all the children and their parents regardless of religious denomination.

Rationale

RSE has formed part of our curriculum for many years. This policy is to ensure that we are covering the appropriate content for the children and observing best practice in our teaching methods and in our responsibilities to the wider community.

Our School Vision

Our school cherishes all pupils equally and endeavours to help them in achieving their true potential. With regard to RSE programme we are therefore keen to foster the personal development, health and well-being of the child. We want to ensure that they are prepared for the changes and challenges that come with growing up and moving on in society.

Aims

The aims of this policy are:

- To contribute towards the development of all aspects of the individual child.
- To provide opportunities for children to learn about healthy friendships and relationships in ways that help them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- To deal with the issue of relationships and sexual education within the parameters of the revised SPHE programme.
- 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 develop a sense of personal responsibility and come to understand their own sexuality and processes of growth, development and reproduction.
- To help children learn, at home and in school, about their own development, about their friendships and relationships with others.

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of each child while providing pupils with appropriate and accurate information.

Content

What is RSE?

Relationships and Sexual Education (RSE) is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. This education is already being delivered both consciously and subconsciously by parents, teachers, peers, adults and the media. It is a spiral curriculum which ensures that topics are taught in a developmental manner through the child's primary school years.

RSE is part of a subject called Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), which is on the curriculum for all classes in the national school. Social, personal and health education (SPHE) provides particular opportunities to foster the personal development, health and well-being of the child and to help him/her create and maintain supportive relationships and become an active and responsible citizen in society. SPHE aims to develop the child's emotional, moral, social and spiritual growth as well as their intellectual, physical, political, religious and creative development.

The content of the SPHE curriculum covers a wide range of topics such as healthy eating, exercise, well-being, alcohol and drug awareness, environmental issues, safety and social responsibility as well as RSE. The content of the SPHE curriculum is as follows:

Strand	Strand unit
Myself	• Self identity • Taking care of my body • Growing and changing • Safety and protection

Myself & others	• Myself and my family • My friends and other people • Relating to others
Myself & the wider world	• Developing citizenship • Media

SPHE contributes to developing the work of the school in promoting the good health and well-being of children. Since the Department of Education has introduced S.P.H.E. as a subject the R.S.E. Policy will be closely linked with the S.P.H.E. Policy.

The full SPHE curriculum is available to view on the www.ncca.ie website in the Primary Curriculum section.

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

School Policies and Curricular Plans which support our RSE

We are a child-centered school. The educational and emotional needs of the children in our care are central to our planning and policy making processes and this consideration is central to many of our policies including

- School's Code of Behaviour and Discipline Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Enrolment Policy

- Digital Policy
- Substance Use Policy

In keeping with the sentiment and spirit of these policies, we encourage good behaviour, open communication, understanding and tolerance of differences and respect for staff 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 well-being of all the members of the school community.

We draw content from different programmes from across the curriculum including

- Grow in Love (Religious education)
- Stay Safe Programme
- Webwise
- Walk Tall
- RSE resources provided by PDST and HSE
- An external speaker is used to deliver the sensitive areas of the RSE curriculum to 5th and 6th class (on a 2-year cycle)

Timetabling

One half hour period per week is timetabled for each class for SHPE. RSE will be included in the programme taught during this time. It is envisaged that some aspects of RSE (including the sensitive issues) will be taught through a number of core periods while some material may be taught in a cross curricular manner. The "sensitive issues" of RSE will be taught in each classroom in the last term.

Parental Involvement

RSE is an ongoing process throughout life. Parents are acknowledged primary educators of their children and the school work in partnership with them in a supportive role. On enrolment of their child, parents will be provided guided to these policies on our website and provided with a hard copy at their request. Each year prior to the implementation of the RSE programme parents will be informed when the teacher will begin to teach the programme. The curriculum

books and resource materials are available online on [www.pdst .ie](http://www.pdst.ie) and parents are welcome to view these if desired.

Withdrawal from RSE

RSE is an obligatory requirement of the Department of Education and Skills and it should be inclusive. However, a parent's right to withdraw a pupil from these themes pertaining to sensitive issues will be respected 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 classes based on sensitive issues. The school cannot be responsible for any information which a child may receive outside the direct teaching of RSE lessons.

Overview of content for Junior Infants, Senior Infants, 1st Class & 2nd Class

Strand

1. Myself

Strand Units

I am unique

My Body

As I grow I change

New Life

Feeling Safe

Feelings and emotions

Making decisions

Myself and my family

Myself and my friends

2. Myself and Others

Special people in my life - other people

Relating to others

Overview of content for 3rd & 4th Classes

Strand

Strand Units

1. Myself

Accepting myself

Physical development

Growing and changing

Birth and new life

Feelings and emotions

Personal Hygiene

Personal safety

Making decisions

2. Myself and Others

Roles and responsibilities in families

Portrayal of sexuality and relationships

Roles of males and females in society

Relating to others

Overview of content for 5th & 6th Classes

Strand

Strand Units

1. Myself

Accepting myself

Physical development

Becoming an adult

Parenthood

Feelings and emotions

Personal Hygiene

Personal safety

Making decisions

2. Myself and Others

Changing relationships in families and friendship

Group affiliation and loyalty

Portrayal of sexuality and relationships

Sexual stereotypes

Relating to others

The Management and organisation of R.S.E. in our school

- It is intended that the Department's Guidelines would be adhered to in so far as is possible and that some of the Department's resource materials will be used.
- RSE will be taught in all classes
- The SPHE/RSE curriculum will be of a spiral nature and all content objectives will be covered by the time children leave 6th class
- Questions arising from lesson content will be answered in an age-appropriate manner.
- All resources in the teaching of the programme will be in keeping with the ethos of the school and in the spirit of this policy.
- The lessons relating to puberty and sexual differences, conception and development of the baby in the womb and other sensitive issues will be taught in Fifth and Sixth Class, on a two year basis. These lessons will be taught in all cases by an external speaker.
- The Stay Safe Programme will be covered in every class.

- Naming the body parts will be covered from First Class.
- Webwise will be covered in the Senior Classes.
- It will be pointed out to parent(s) that it is the policy of the school to provide R.S.E. to the pupils in accordance with the Department of Education's Guidelines.
- In the event that a parent seeks to absent their child from specific R.S.E. lessons, which is their right, that parent(s) must give a commitment in writing that they themselves will provide their child(ren) with this information.
- As the teaching of these lessons is a very sensitive issue, parents will be provided with the content and specific dates of lessons four weeks in advance of the teaching of these lessons. This will be done by letter.
- Teachers will teach this policy in a consistent manner mindful at all times of the Catholic ethos of our school.
- While it is not currently in the Primary Curriculum to teach Homosexuality, Contraception or Abortion the teacher will be allowed to explain briefly, if the topics should arise in conversation/questioning, always adhering to the Catholic ethos of the school and remembering the social inclusion of all individuals.
- It will be left to the discretion of the principal and class teacher to modify the content to meet the particular needs of any child with special needs. Parents of such an individual may be contacted specifically by the class teacher in relation to this. The school will facilitate the teaching of the lessons on 'sensitive issues' on another occasion individually or in a small group setting.
- All children will be given equal access to R.S.E. within the S.P.H.E. curriculum.

Resources:

- RSE teaching materials - available to view online
- Busybodies booklet and DVD
- Selected worksheets from Health Series (Prim-Ed)
- Stay Safe Programme
- Other resource material as deemed appropriate by class teachers in consultation with the Principal

Confidentiality and Child Protection

Where there is a disclosure by a child of abuse, the school will follow the Department of Education and Skills child protection guidelines and guidelines as set out in "Children First".

Provision for Ongoing Support

For Parents

- Parents are welcome to view the Curriculum if they wish
- There will be contact with parents prior to and during the teaching of lessons involving "sensitive issues". Parents of 5th & 6th class pupils will be informed of the dates and content of the RSE programme prior to the teaching of these lessons. Copies of the 'Busy Bodies' programme will be given to each child and made available to parents, should they wish.

For Teachers

- The Board of Management will support in-career development in the area of SPHE/RSE as opportunities arise

Implementation and Review

Roles & Responsibilities

The policy will be implemented by the principal and staff of St. Patrick's N.S. and will be supported by the B.O.M. The teachers and parents of any concerned pupils will evaluate it.

Implementation/Ratification and Review

Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made. However, reviews of SPHE, changes to Stay Safe, to government policy or concerns within the school community may necessitate an earlier review, if necessary.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on June 20th 2023. It was published on the school website. It will be reviewed in 2027. The responsibility for the review will lie with the principal, deputy principal, teachers, BOM and parents of children attending the school at the time of review.

Signed: _____

Signed: _____

Chairperson of the Board of
Management

Principal/ Secretary to the Board
of Management

Date: _____

Date: _____