

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

Vision

The child is the focus of our energy. In partnership with the community of Killinarden and the Department of Education and Science, our school team strives to deliver a holistic education to each child. Our vision is that all children and all staff realise their full potential in a safe, happy and stimulating and Christian environment.

Definition of RSE (Interim Curriculum and Guidelines 1996)

"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/RSE Curriculum

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. RSE is part of the SPHE curriculum. Through SPHE and RSE pupils are 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 competency

Aims of RSE (the Interim curriculum and guidelines for primary schools (DE 1996, p.9))

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and wellbeing 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 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

Broad Objectives of RSE (Interim curriculum and guidelines for primary schools (DE 1996, p.9)

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

- 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

Policies that support RSE

- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- SPHE policy
- Stay Safe Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy

Curriculum Planning for RSE

There are 3 strands in the SPHE curriculum. There are nine strand units for Junior Infants to Second Class and ten strand units for Third Class onwards. (Making Decisions strand unit only applies to 3rd - 6th Class). The Department of Education advises to follow a 2-year plan when planning for SPHE. Each year schools should teach from each of the three main SPHE strands. Sharing the strand units over a two-year period ensures pupils will have covered the entire content relevant to their class grouping with a balanced offering from the three strands. It also ensures adequate time is allocated to each strand unit. If a teacher has any concern in relation to the teaching of specific content, the teacher should consult with their school leader.

Our School follows a two year plan for SPHE with the Stay Safe and the RSE programme being taught on an alternate year basis. RSE, which largely looks at the

development of relationships, is interwoven through all strands and strand units of the SPHE curriculum. The more sensitive aspects of RSE will be covered under the strand 'Myself' and strand units 'Growing and changing' and 'Taking care of my body'. Teachers will refer to the resource Making the Links to support their planning for the delivery of these strand units.

RSE Programmes and Methodologies

This school endorses the following resources for teachers in the provision of the R.S.E. programme

Grow in Love
Walk Tall
Relationship and Sexuality Education
Quality Circle Time
Stay Safe
Be Safe

The methodology of R.S.E is cross-curricular and the children may be involved in discussions, role play, art, music, movement, story and language development, as they participate in the R.S.E. programme. Active learning is the principal learning and teaching approach recommended for SPHE. It requires children to actively participate in their learning in a wide variety of ways, thereby increasing the possibility of internalising what they have explored and of being able to use this learning in their everyday lives. Active learning contributes significantly to fostering their self-confidence, self-discipline and self-control in the learner. Active learning methodologies are an integral part of teaching and learning in SPHE and RSE. The curriculum will be taught in a developmentally-appropriate manner at all times. The teaching materials and methodologies used will reflect the needs of the children.

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

Confidentiality -

Children are encouraged to treat discussions of a personal nature as confidential. However, children are encouraged to talk to their parents about the topics covered in school and their own feelings about such topics. The child's right to privacy is respected by the teacher and other pupils. The teacher's right to privacy is equally important and will be respected.

If a child discloses abuse of any kind or where a teacher has grounds to believe that a child may be abused, at risk or neglected, s/he will follow the Schools Child Protection Policy.

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, through a notice on the Aladdin noticeboard or by letter where required. The notice 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 invited/welcome to view the curriculum on the website and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns at any time during the year. The school acknowledges that parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children about growing and changing
- If a parent has concerns regarding a sensitive lesson, a scheduled meeting can take place with the Principal and Class Teacher. If they wish to withdraw their child from the lesson, notice is to be given in writing stating their reasons for doing so. Our aim is to include and foster a relationship to support parents in their RSE education of the children in the school.
- As RSE is an integral component to SPHE, consent is not needed. However, with open communication and systems of dialogue, our hope is that withdrawal can be avoided. Parents have the right to withdraw their child out of the sensitive aspects of RSE if they so wish. Parents must arrange for the supervision of their child during this time.
- 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. e.g. what they may hear in the yard.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs

- Adaptions 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 different or specific objectives related to the pupils own learning needs should be detailed in their IEP or SLP in consultation with parents/guardians.

Sensitive Lessons – Staff -

Parents will be informed in writing in advance when a teacher intends to teach a lesson on sensitive areas (the body parts: penis, vulva / vagina, and urethra). If parents wish to withdraw their child, they must inform the school in writing. Children will not be taught about sexual intercourse in this school. If a child asks a question about sexual intercourse, the teacher will inform the parents that the question has been asked.

If a teacher has a difficulty in teaching some aspects of the R.S.E programme, he/she should approach the Principal and make this known. The Principal will decide how to resolve this difficulty and this may involve teaching duties with another class and/or another subject in lieu while the subject is presented to the class by another teacher.

Assessment

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

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

Ongoing Support, Development and Review

When opportunities arise, CPD will be sought for teachers.

The HSCL will arrange training for parents if necessary.

This policy will be reviewed every two years. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made.

This plan was ratified by the Board of Management

Signed on behalf of the Board of Management: _____

Date: _____

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is an integral part of the Social, Personal and Health Education curriculum. As per school policy, we will be commencing formal RSE lessons in Term 2. RSE predominantly lies within the strand units 'Taking care of my body' and 'Growing and changing' which can all be viewed at www.curriculumonline.ie.

Our school's RSE policy is available to view on our school website. It outlines our agreed approach to achieve the objectives of the strand units.

If you wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to arrange an appointment to meet with your child's class teacher.

Yours sincerely,

Orla McLoughlin - School Principal

www.sacredheartjns.ie