

6.3 Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

Introductory Statement

Scoil Choilm Community National School has a responsibility to put in place a Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) policy to detail how RSE is taught in our school. This RSE Policy was developed to inform teachers and parents about the content which is covered in the RSE Programme. Our school aims to develop a policy on RSE which reflects our ethos of respect for diversity, inclusion and partnership in education and our school vision. This policy is in accordance with the 'National Curriculum and Guidelines for RSE' as prepared by the 'National Council for Curriculum and Assessment' (NCCA) and the new 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017'.

Development of the Policy

Parents and staff were encouraged to play a meaningful role in the RSE policy formation, through a series of meetings, representation on the Policy Development Committee and the ratification of the finished product. A committee was first formed in 2013 and following the introduction of the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017', the original policy was reviewed, and hence, a new committee was established in February 2019. The committee comprised of the following members:

- School Principal: Treasa Lowe
- SPHE coordinator: Gráinne Casey
- Teachers' Representative: Sinéad Kehoe
- Teachers' Representative: Lena Phipps
- Teachers' Representative: Maeve Kitt
- Parents' Representative: Nuha Ibrahim
- Parents' Representative: Ann Murphy
- Parents' Representative: Monika Mirek

School Philosophy and Ethos

Scoil Choilm CNS is a multi-denominational school which welcomes pupils of all faiths and beliefs. Our school is committed to inclusion, equality and fairness. Through our Social, Personal and Health Education (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.

We believe that Scoil Choilm CNS should be a happy, pleasant place for the children, where there is cooperation between parents, teachers and pupils. All three parties have a duty to work together in order to establish a friendly and happy atmosphere. 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. In drawing up this RSE policy, we recognise and respect the racial and ethnic diversity among our school community.

Definition of RSE

RSE aims to provide opportunities for children to learn about relationships, sexuality, growth and development in an age-appropriate manner and in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way. The RSE programme is based on developing a positive self-image, promoting respect for themselves and others, and providing them with age-appropriate information.

Relationship of RSE to SPHE

Throughout the school year, 'Social, Personal and Health Education' (SPHE) is taught as a subject from Junior Infants to Sixth class. A wide variety of topics are included in this programme, at age-appropriate levels. RSE forms a part of this programme.

RSE will be covered under the following strands and strand units of the SPHE curriculum:

- Myself
 - Self-Identity
 - Taking care of my body
 - Growing and Changing
 - Safety and Protection
 - Making decisions (3rd Class onwards)
- Myself and Others
 - Myself and my family
 - My friends and other people
 - Relating to others

Aims of our RSE Programme

The RSE programme aims:

- To enhance the personal development, well-being and self-esteem of each child.
- To help the child develop healthy friendships and relationships.
- To foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, relationships and sexuality in a moral, ethical and social framework.
- To enable the child to acquire an understanding of, and respect for human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction. (Sexual intercourse and reproduction are only part of the 5th and 6th Class Curriculum)
- To develop and promote in the child, a sense of understanding of and respect for the process of new life.
- To enable the child to be comfortable with the sexuality of oneself and others while growing and developing.

Broad Objectives of RSE

The RSE programme should enable the child:

- To acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self.
- To develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth.
- To develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well-being of others.
- To understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and in wider contexts.
- To develop an awareness of differing family patterns.
- To come to value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood.



- To develop strategies to make decisions, solve problems and implement actions in various personal, social and health contexts.
- To become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change, and to understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity.
- To develop personal skills which will help them to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships.
- To develop some coping strategies to protect themselves and others from various forms of abuse.
- To acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction.
- To acquire and use an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development.
- To develop in the child a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making.

Policies which support SPHE/RSE

- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment
- Substance Use Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Anti-Racism Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- Code of Behaviour

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE

Management of RSE:

- One half hour period per week is timetabled in each class for SPHE; RSE will be included in the content taught during this time.
- The approach to the teaching of RSE will be kept as normal as possible and all RSE lessons will be taught in their entirety from Junior Infants to 6th Class by the class teacher.
- Each class teacher will teach the content for their class level only.
- RSE content will be taught developmentally with age appropriate lessons being taught at each class level as per the curriculum guidelines.
- The strand units 'Growing and Changing' and 'Taking Care of My Body' are covered in Year Two of our 2-year SPHE plan as outlined in our SPHE Whole School Plan. The year when we are not teaching these strand units, 4th Class - 6th Class will revise the lessons in relation to puberty. Fifth and Sixth class will also revise the lessons in relation to sexual intercourse over a few weeks during Term 3.
- 5th and 6th Class will use the '**Busy Bodies**' resource along with the RSE manual when teaching these lessons.
- Special consideration will be taken to ensure that the needs of children with Special Educational Needs are met.



Parental Involvement:

- Scoil Choilm CNS recognises that parents are the primary educators of their children and that the home is the natural environment in which RSE should take place. The role of the school therefore is seen as one of support.
- Parents will be informed that the school fully implements the RSE programme in its entirety in line with the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017'.
- Parents are welcome to view the RSE programme online and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns.
- Our RSE programme is inclusive and so we actively discourage withdrawal. A parent's right to withdraw their child from themes pertaining to sensitive issues, will be honoured on the understanding that the parent is taking full responsibility for this aspect of their child's education themselves.
- Parents will be informed in advance of lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme. **It will be the responsibility of the parents to inform the school in writing of a decision to withdraw a pupil from the sensitive aspects of the programme.**
- **Parents who opt to withdraw their children from these sensitive aspects of the RSE lessons should also be aware that material taught during the RSE programme may be discussed by the children outside class time, and the staff will have no control over what aspects of the information are passed on.** Furthermore, television, videos, advertising, magazines, computers and friends may be informal sources of information which may influence children's attitudes to relationships and sexuality. Parents may not even be aware of, or indeed may not like, the messages their children are getting from these informal sources. Scoil Choilm Community National School believes that it is preferable that this information is presented accurately and sensitively by a professional educator.
- A copy of this policy will be made available on our school website (<http://www.scoilchoilmcns.ie/>) and to any parent on request from the school office.

Organisation and Curriculum Planning

RSE forms part of the national curriculum for Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and will be taught from Junior Infants to 6th Class.

The RSE programme is divided into two main parts:

- a) The general programme which contains topics such as;
 - Friendship
 - Self-Identity
 - Family
 - Self-esteem
 - Growing up
- b) The second section will deal with any sensitive/ specific content which is covered under the following strands and strand units.

Myself
Growing and Changing
Taking Care of my Body

The sensitive aspects are in **bold**.

Topics – Junior Infants – 2 nd Class	Topics – 3 rd – 6 th Class
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping safe • Bodily changes from birth (changes from baby/ toddler/ child) • Making age-appropriate choices • Appreciating the variety of family types and the variety of family life that exists in our school and community • Recognising and expressing feelings • Self-care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep • Expressing opinions and listening to others • Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms (Junior/ Senior Infants) • Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identifying some of their functions e.g. heart, lungs, stomach, urinating (1st/ 2nd Class) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bodily changes from birth (changes from baby/ toddler/ child/ young adult) • Healthy eating, personal hygiene and exercise • Keeping safe • Expressing feelings • Appreciating the variety of family types within our school and community and how these family relationships shape us • Making healthy and responsible decisions • Forming friendships • Discussing the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (3rd/ 4th Class) • Introducing puberty and bodily changes (4th Class) • Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (4th/ 5th/ 6th Class) • Reproductive system of male/ female adults (5th/ 6th Class) • Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship (5th/ 6th Class)

Approaches and Methodologies

The curriculum will be taught in its entirety in an age-appropriate manner at all times. The curriculum will be taught from Junior Infants – 6th Class. It will be taught through a spiral curriculum with key topics being revisited in a developmental manner at regular intervals.

The RSE curriculum will be taught through:

- Stories and poems
- Classroom discussion
- Group work
- Games
- Art activities
- Reflection
- Circle time
- Videos – Busy Bodies

Differentiation

Teachers use assessment and professional judgement to differentiate the programme and content to suit the needs of pupils with special education needs. Some techniques include:

- Ensuring that objectives are realistic for the children.
- 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.
- Breaking down the learning tasks and ensuring that the language used is pitched at the student's level of understanding.
- Understanding of the activity by sharing learning outcomes, using strategies such as WALT (We Are Learning To) with the children.
- Having short and varied tasks.
- Using concrete, and where possible every day materials. E.g. anatomical dolls

Sometimes the stage of development in a class can vary widely and strategies to differentiate in class could be:

- group work and discussion
- higher and lower order questioning in groups

Children with Special Education Needs

Adaptions to the way in which the content is delivered will be made for children with Special Education Needs. Where necessary, consultation with parents/ guardians in advance and anticipation of the children's needs will be central to ensuring that learning is meaningful. The RSE programme will be modified and differentiated to meet the individual needs of the pupils in our two Special Classes for pupils with a diagnosis of autism. Some strategies may include;

- The pre-teaching of language or concepts in anticipation of whole class work
- Working in smaller groups or 1:1 on adapted and suitable material

Language

The SPHE curriculum provides a context in which children are given opportunities to develop and enhance their language skills and to increase the 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 it can hurt, diminish and demean e.g. the use of homophobic language. Children need to recognise and become sensitive to the ways in which they themselves use language in their relationships and in everyday interactions. Language is a powerful tool and should be used with respect and integrity for the dignity of each person.

The correct terms 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 the language introduced is consistent with the RSE Books. (See *Appendix 1* for breakdown of when the different terms are introduced)

Questions

Questions which arise in relation to the sensitive content of the programme will be answered by the class teacher depending on the nature of the question and provided that they relate to topics covered in the RSE programme. Teachers will not give personal information and will not seek personal information from pupils.

When deciding whether or not to answer questions, the teacher should consider the age of the students, the RSE programme content, the ethos of the school and the RSE policy. If topics arise which do not feature in the curriculum, children will be requested to address these questions to their parents and wherever needed, involvement and cooperation of parents may be sought. Some sample responses to questions could be as follows;

- I'll do my best to answer your questions, but I may not be able to answer all of them.
- That's something you will learn about as you get older.
- Is that something you could talk to your parents/ guardians/ family about?
- We agreed in our contract that we wouldn't ask anyone personal questions.
- Somebody asked a question and the language that was used was slang language, what they meant to ask was....

Question Box

For older children a 'question box' will be used as part of a structured RSE lesson. Children will be encouraged to place their questions into a box in the classroom. These questions will then be monitored and screened with the teacher answering the questions later, 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 is not on the programme and they will be advised to talk with their parents.
- Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents themselves or Tusla, The Child and Family Agency, 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.

Assessment

Assessment in RSE is important to enable the teacher to pitch the lesson correctly to their class. The teacher uses;

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

Confidentiality

Where there is a disclosure made, or a teacher has any concerns about a child, they will report these concerns to the Designated Liaison Person or in her absence the Deputy Designated Liaison Person. The school will refer to their Child Safeguarding Statement, which is in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education and Skills' *'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'* (2017). The Designated Liaison Person is Treasa Lowe (Principal). The Deputy Designated Liaison Person is Gráinne Casey.



(See *Child Safeguarding Statement* and *Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment* for further information.)

These policies are available on the school website (www.scoilchoilmcns.ie) and on request from the school office.

Resources

Each class teacher has a copy of the RSE Manual. Other resources that support the aims of RSE include:

- Stay Safe programme
- Walk Tall programme
- Anatomical Dolls
- Story books
- Busy Bodies Booklet and videos
- RESPECT Guidelines

Provision of Ongoing Support

- Opportunities provided by our Education Centre will be brought to the attention of staff members.
- Staff meetings can be used as a platform for discussion and development of RSE materials.
- Support from a PDST Advisor.

Review

- The policy will be reviewed every two years. This policy may also be reviewed at an earlier time should a need arise. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management in June 2019.

Signed: _____

Chairperson of BOM

Signed: _____

Principal

Date: _____

Date: _____

Last date reviewed: June 2019

Next review date: June 2021