

Ballinderreen N.S. Policy on Relationships and Sexual Education



This policy was developed to inform teachers and parents as to the material covered in the RSE programme within the SPHE curriculum.

School Philosophy

Ballinderreen N.S is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Bishop of Galway. It is managed by a Board of Management, elected according to the procedures agreed by the Partners in Education. The school has a Catholic ethos and this ethos is a guiding principle in the formulation and implementation of this RSE Policy. This ethos recognises the value and dignity of each pupil and all those working in the school community, and aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person, including:

- a) relationship with God
- b) relationship with family
- c) relationship with teachers
- d) relationship with self
- e) relationship with others
- f) relationship with the environment.

This ethos also acknowledges the cultural and religious values of all the pupils attending the school. The school recognises that the parents are the primary educators of their children and we support them in that role.

In the area of RSE, above all, the schools' role is subsidiary to that of the parents. We will compliment their work.

Definition of RSE

RSE is an integral part of Social, Personal and Health Education 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. (p. 5 NCCA curriculum and guidelines for RSE). RSE is the formal approach to educating children in:

- Relationships with others – parents, siblings, friends and the community in general
- Respect for themselves and others
- Physical development – bodily functions and changes, and personal hygiene
- Emotional development – maturing in society
- Parenting, personal and social skills and relationships
- Sexuality in context – part of a loving relationship.

Relationship of RSE to SPHE and Religion

Social, Personal and Health Education contributes to developing the work of the school in promoting the health and well-being of children and young people. This happens in the context of their emotional, moral, social and spiritual growth, as well as their intellectual, physical, political, religious and creative development. (p.5 Going Forward Together Parents Information Booklet).

The key characteristics of this programme are that SPHE is a lifelong process and is a shared responsibility between family, school, health professionals and the community. The main strands of the SPHE programme are:

- Myself
- Myself and Others
- Myself and the Wider World

It is clear that the Relationships and Sexuality Programme is correctly defined as being an integral part

of the programme outlined above. Sexually sensitive issues will be covered within the strand units:

- Taking care of my body
- Growing and changing
- Safety and protection.

As stated previously, the content of all lessons will be governed by the schools' Catholic ethos as taught in the Grow in Love Religion programme.

Current Provision

We are a child-centred school. The educational and emotional needs of the children in our care are central to our planning and policy making processes. We have always, and will always continue to put the welfare of the children first.

Included in the school curriculum in Ballinderreen National School is:

- Religious Education (Grow in Love)
- SPHE
- Stay Safe Programme

Policies which support SPHE/RSE

- Code of behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Admissions Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- Internet Safety Policy

In keeping with the sentiment and spirit of these policies, we informally support many of 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 well being of all of the members of the school community.

Aims of our RSE programme

When due account is taken of intrinsic abilities and varying circumstances, the Relationships and Sexuality Education curriculum should enable the child to:

- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth
- Develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well-being of others
- Understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and in 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, change and understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity
- Develop personal skills, which will help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships
- Develop some coping strategies to protect themselves and others from various forms of abuse
- Acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction
- Acquire and use an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development
- Develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making.

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School

The curriculum as published by the NCCA will be followed. All content objectives will be covered by the time each pupil leaves 6th class – (see Appendix A for further details). The curriculum will be taught from Infants to 6th class. It will be taught by the teaching staff. All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school and this policy.

- Sensitive issues classes are generally in the month of June.
- In a multi class situation, the younger class will be withdrawn when topics being taught are not age-appropriate.

Organisational Matters

- Prior to the teaching of lessons involving “sensitive issues”, parents will be informed by letter with an accompanying outline of the vocabulary to be used. Appendix A
- Sensitive issues will be dealt with in the following class groupings

Puberty- With boys and girls during fifth class.

Puberty, intercourse and birth- With boys and girls during sixth class.

- It is a parents/guardians right to withdraw a pupil from these lessons. This request for withdrawal must be made in writing.
- If parents/guardians request the withdrawal of a child from RSE lessons, provision will be made for them to leave the classroom at that time. Supervision will be provided. With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom. Should a child who is withdrawn from the sexually sensitive classes receive inappropriate information from others outside of these classes, it will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian to address the issues.
- Parents are welcome to view the curriculum and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns.

Dealing with Questions

It is natural that children should wish to ask questions in the area of RSE. However, this area is treated somewhat differently from other subjects due to its sensitive nature.

All questions answered will reflect the parameters of the curriculum. Certain topics will not be discussed i.e. abortion, masturbation, homosexuality, contraception. Questions to the teacher may be written or oral within the group setting and answered within the boundaries of the curriculum and school policy. If any questions asked by the children are judged to be inappropriate, the teacher will refer the child to their parents, or state that this information may be available at a later stage of the curriculum. The school cannot guarantee confidentiality if a child asks a question of a personal nature or discloses personal information.

Parental Involvement

Parents/Guardians are the primary educators of their. As stated parents/guardians will be given the option of withdrawing their child from a particular lesson if they so wish. The Parents' Association may on occasion arrange for speakers/meetings to help them in the task of communicating with their children on aspects of their development. Parents/Guardians may access copies of the policy from the school office, or school website.

Provision for Ongoing Support

- Funding will be sought for the provision of suitable materials when deemed necessary.
- Opportunities provided by our Education centre will be brought to the attention of staff members.

Review and Ratification

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 29th of April 2021 and will be reviewed during the 2024/2025 academic year.

Signed: 

Mr. Diarmuid Kelly
(Chairperson BOM)

Signed: 

Mr. Barry Quinn
(School Principal)

Appendix 1

INFANTS and FIRST AND SECOND CLASSES:

Strand unit: Taking care of my body

Knowing about my body

- Name parts of the male and female body, using appropriate anatomical terms

Strand unit: Safety and protection

Personal Safety

- Identify situations and places that are safe and those where personal safety might be at risk.

THIRD AND FOURTH CLASSES

Strand unit: Taking care of my body

Knowing about my body

- Realise the importance of caring for and treating his/her own body, and that of others, with dignity and respect

Strand unit: Growing and changing

Birth and new life

- Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby, from conception to birth.

Strand unit: Safety and protection

Personal Safety

- Identify people, places and situations that may threaten personal safety.

FIFTH AND SIXTH CLASSES

Strand unit: Taking care of my body

Knowing about my body

- Recognise the importance of treating his/her body and others with dignity and respect
- Identify and discuss the physical and other changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty and understand that these take place at different rates for everyone
- Understand the reproductive system of both male and female adults
- Become aware of some communicable diseases and explore how diseases and infections spread.

Strand unit: Growing and changing

As I grow I change

- Explore patterns of development and growth, comparing present development with that of earlier stages: physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual

Birth and new life

- Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of marriage involving a committed, loving relationship.
- Discuss and explore the responsibilities involved in being a parent and the emotional and physical maturity required to be a parent

Strand unit: Safety and protection

Personal Safety

- Identify situations and places that may threaten personal safety.

All parents should discuss these topics with their child prior to class discussion. If you have any questions or concerns about the programmes please do not hesitate to contact me or your child's class teacher.