



# **SAINT EITHNE'S PRIMARY SCHOOL**

## **RSE Policy**

Date of Review: March 2027

## 1. Introduction

**The school Mission Statement states that:**

**“As a Catholic school, we stand for respect, dedication, achievement, equality, success, creating opportunity, high standards, and strong ties with our parish and community. We strive to develop happy learners through providing an education that nurtures and develops each child as a whole person, in the image of Christ.”**

We aim to develop in our children a love of learning, a respect for all and a desire for them to realise their full potential.

We can achieve this within a Catholic centred, inclusive and safe environment through a combination of traditional and innovative teaching and learning methods.

### **Rationale:**

In Saint Eithne’s Primary School we recognise the importance and complexity of Relationship and Sexuality Education. It is a lifelong process which includes the gaining of age-appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills whilst developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. In our school the provision for RSE is understood and delivered within the context of our Catholic Ethos, in keeping with the Department of Education, which emphasizes the need for the values inherent in a school’s RSE programme to be consistent with the core values and ethos of the school. In keeping with our holistic vision for education, our specific task in RSE is to teach, nurture and advise the young people, made in the image and likeness of God, to recognise their own sacredness and the sacredness of others within the context of the Catholic faith and teaching. We recognise the dignity of the human person and believe that the inherent respect which originates from God should be shown to every individual. Our school, as a haven of respect and guardians of the true dignity of each human person will not tolerate any form of marginalisation, harassment, bullying and/or discrimination of children on grounds of race, religion, disability, gender or sexual orientation which is not consistent with the Christian vision of the human person as a child of God. RSE will be firmly embedded in the PDMU and the RE Curriculum as it is concerned with nurturing human wholeness and integral to the physical, spiritual, emotional, moral, social and intellectual development of pupils, is centred on Christ’s vision of being human as good news and will be delivered in accordance with the Church’s moral teaching emphasising the importance of marriage and family life whilst respecting each child’s specific family circumstances.

### **The school’s aims and objectives are:**

At Saint Eithne’s Primary School, Christ is at the foundation of our whole educational enterprise. We develop attitudes and values based firmly on the Gospels, within our catholic ethos. We view the development and implementation of a policy in Relationships and Sexuality (RSE) as an important step towards achieving our main aim to develop each child spiritually, morally, intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically in order that they may realise their full potential and have an appreciation of their self – worth. The morals and

values of our Catholic ethos are the core principles that underpin the teaching of RSE. Sexuality includes all aspects of the human person that relate to being male and female and develops throughout life. It is a complex dimension of human life and relationships.

As parents/carers are the primary educators of their children. They have a key role in education concerning relationships and sexual education. The role of the Catholic school is to support and complement this role through partnership with those with parental responsibility. Parents will be invited to become involved in a process of consultation regarding the content and delivery of this policy and the RSE programme itself.

In line with our school's ethos, RSE should provide opportunities that enable pupils to:

- (i) Form values and establish behaviour within a moral, spiritual and social framework consistent with the Catholic ethos, enabling them to make positive, responsible choices about themselves and the way they live their lives.
- (ii) Learn how to develop and enjoy personal relationships and friendships which are based on responsibility and mutual respect.
- (iii) Build the foundations for developing more positive personal relationships in later life.
- (iv) Make positive, responsible choices about their relationships with others and the way they live their lives.

## **2. Consultation and Participation**

This policy has been developed following the guidelines set out in the Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance Document for Primary Schools: Northern Ireland 2021, Catholic Preschool and Primary School Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland 9Red Curriculum Document and CCEA requirements.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Saint Eithne's Primary School has drawn up their RSE Policy mindful of the The UNCRC (1989) which states in Articles 28 & 29 that children and young people are entitled to good quality education while at the same time acknowledging (Article 24e) that parents have the right to 'access education' for their children. The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Protocol 1, Article 2 of the Right to Education states, No person shall be denied a right to an education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure that such education and teaching is in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.

Everyone had a voice:

- Senior Management Team and staff have had the opportunity to discuss and contribute their views during the formulation of the policy. Staff Development days were assigned to facilitate this.

- Board of Governors met to express their opinions.
- Consultation with Therese Ferry, Diocesan Advisor for Religious Education.
- Consultation with pupils was through discussion with School Council and class-based activities.
- The final draft of the policy will be circulated to parents to enable them to make any comments or suggestions they feel might be appropriate.

### 3. **Implementation and Review of Policy**

Implementation of the policy will take place after consultation with the Board of Governors in the second term of 2024.

The policy will be reviewed every second year by the RSE Co-ordinator, the Board of Governors and staff. The next review date is 2026.

### 4. **Dissemination**

Parents/carers and pupils should be made aware of the school's policy from the time of enrolment of the pupil. A contact person should be named in the policy to allow for comments and feedback on the policy.

The draft policy will be given to all members of the Board of Governors, and all teaching and non-teaching members of staff. Copies of the document will be available to all parents through the school's prospectus and a copy is available in the school office. Details of the content of the RSE curriculum will also be published on the school's website.

### 5. **The Centrality of Virtue**

Children will be taught RSE within a framework which models and encourages the following values:

- A respect for God and creation.
- To be able to distinguish between what is right and wrong.
- A respect for self.
- A respect for others.
- Self-discipline.
- A responsibility for one's own actions, and an understanding of the long term and short-term consequences of their actions.
- Non-exploitation in relationships.
- Commitment, trust and bonding within relationships.
- A development of critical self-awareness for themselves and others.

- Compassion, forgiveness, mercy and care when people do not conform to their way of life.

## 6. Aims, Objectives and Skills

Our Mission Statement commits us to the education of the whole child (spiritual, physical, intellectual, moral, social, cultural, emotional) and we believe that RSE is an integral part of this education. Furthermore, our school aims state that we will endeavour to raise pupils' self-esteem, help them to grow in knowledge and understanding, recognise the value of all persons and develop caring and sensitive attitudes. It is in this context that we commit ourselves, in partnership with parents, to provide children and young people with a positive and prudent sexual education which is compatible with their physical, cognitive, psychological, and spiritual maturity, and rooted in a Catholic vision of education and the human person.

Our programme aims to:

- Promote a Catholic vision of sexuality that reflects selfless love, respect and commitment within a moral, social, spiritual framework.
- Help all pupils to appreciate their worth, dignity and uniqueness as children of God.
- Enable young people to appreciate sexuality as a gift from God and that love is the central basis of all relationships.
- Enable children to form healthy and respectful friendships and relationships.
- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child.
- To foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- To foster and develop mutual respect and understanding.
- To develop a respect for difference, gender and race within the school and community.
- To enable the children to identify and manage a range of feelings.
- To help all children to value family life in its diversity and the gift of marriage.
- To help young people recognise, understand and prepare for the body changes that they (and their friends) will undergo in the years ahead (puberty).
- Promote respect for all individuals regardless of sexual orientation, race, gender or creed.

Our programme enables pupils to:

- Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self
- 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 the diversity of family life and family patterns.

- Use decision making and problem-solving strategies.
- Acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction.
- Discuss their feelings, growth and development using an appropriate vocabulary.
- Develop coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse.

Pupils will develop:

- Communication skills- Listening to others' points of view, putting one's own view forward, dealing with conflict peacefully and being assertive.
- Decision making skills- Making good choices with the relevant information at hand, making moral judgements wisely in context and then putting them into practice, acting responsibly as an individual or as a member of a group.
- Interpersonal skills- Managing healthy relationships with confidence and with effectiveness.

## 7. Inclusion and Special Needs

We will ensure RSE affirms the right of every child to be treated equally, preparing them for adult life, regardless of their level of maturity, gender, culture, sexual orientation, disability status, religion, or social class. Lessons will be sensitive to these differing needs and will also help children to realise the nature and consequences of discrimination, teasing, bullying and aggressive behaviours (including cyber-bullying), use of prejudice-based language and how to respond and ask for help.

## 8. RSE Curriculum

The themes are:

- Relationships;
- My Body and Development (Health, Growth and Change); and
- Safety and Wellbeing (Self-awareness, Feelings and Emotions).

### *Foundation and Key Stage 1*

Myself:

- How I grow, feed, move and use my senses; caring for myself, for example: hygiene, sleep, exercise.
- Their own and others' feelings/emotions and how their actions affect others.
- Naming parts of the body (basic) - developing an agreed language for our bodies.
- Being myself - I am unique, my self-esteem, self-confidence, independence, respect and caring for myself.
- Similarities and differences between myself and others, for example: uniqueness, fingerprints, gender issues, different rates of growth.
- An introduction to the stages of human development - changes as we grow, for example: baby, child, teenager, adult, mother/father, grandparents.
- Recognising moods, feelings and concerns and developing a language and an appropriate manner of expressing them, for example: what do I do if I feel sad or angry?

- Personal likes and dislikes.
- The importance of keeping healthy and safe.
- The importance of keeping healthy and strategies and skills for keeping healthy.

#### My Relationships:

- My family, special people in my life - what they do for me and what I do for them.
- Friendships, getting on with each other for example: communicating, playing together, listening, co-operating and sharing.
- Ageing - how do we know that things are alive, dead, young and old.
- Loss and mourning - death of a person or a pet (Note: situations of the pupils should be considered prior to introducing this topic).
- Respect and caring for family members and friends, for example: caring for a new baby.
- Bullies and what to do about them.
- Personal safety - simple skills and practices to maintain personal safety.
- The difference between good and bad touches.
- Realise that adults and older children are not always friends; the potential danger of relationships with strangers or acquaintances.
- Strategies which pupils might use to protect themselves from potentially dangerous situations.

#### My Community/Environment:

- Awareness of different types of families and the roles of individuals within families.
- Keeping safe, for example: dangerous places, dangerous situations, the adults who will help, how to get help from others.
- Rules at home, at school and in the community. Respect and caring for people in the community, e.g. elderly people.

#### Key Stage 2:

##### Myself:

- The importance of keeping healthy and safe.
- My body, how it works and how to keep it healthy.
- The physical, social and emotional changes that occur during puberty (girls and boys).
- Myself and my peers - different rates of growth and physical development, maturity.
- Valuing and respecting myself, identifying personal strengths and weaknesses.
- Feelings for example: things that make me happy, sad, excited, embarrassed, angry, scared; expressing our feelings, showing love and affection.
- Gender roles.
- Making choices - the influences on me and the consequences of actions for oneself and others.
- Distinguishing between right and wrong.
- Secrets - knowing the difference between good and bad secrets, what to do about bad secrets.

##### My Relationships:

- Identifying the positive traits of friendship and their corresponding values.
- Differences and similarities in people; the need to respect other people's views, emotions, feelings, and relationships built on love, trust and respect.

- Families and how they behave - what family members expect of each other.
- The meaning of friendship and loyalty; making and maintaining friendships and social relationships for example: identifying and understanding pressures and influences, taking account of other people's points of view.
- Handling difficult situations for example: teasing, bullying, death of a family member.
- The meaning of relationships within families, between friends and in the community.
- Behaviour - what constitutes appropriate and non-appropriate physical contact.
- Identifying dangers and risks within relationships.
- Being assertive in defending individual rights and beliefs.
- People who can help pupils when they have anxieties, concerns or questions.

#### My Community/Environment:

- Appreciation of the family in relation to the school and the wider community.
- Cultural differences in families and family relationships.
- Helping agencies who can support families and individuals in different circumstances.

RSE lessons will take place in the third term. For most aspects of RSE children will be taught together. In Year 6 and 7, the delivery of specific topics of the RSE programme will take place in single gender groups. The activities will complement the RSE curriculum. The teacher will only deliver content he/she is comfortable teaching and deem appropriate for the maturity profile of his/her class. Pupils will be prepared for the class and parental permission is to be received. The session is informal and follow-up activities are undertaken by the class teacher.

#### RSE Resources/Programmes used:

- 'Grow in Love' Catechetical Series (P1-P7). (Veritas)
- 'In the Beginning' RSE Primary Programme (Down and Connor Diocese)
- Living Learning Together: PDMU Programme (CCEA)
- Flourish

In light of the RSE Policy, and in context of the ethos of the Catholic School, the statutory requirements for RSE are taught through the religious education programme Grow in Love and 'In the Beginning' while linking with the significant and relevant areas of the curriculum such as PDMU and Safeguarding. Teachers will cover themes in Circle Time, R.E. and PDMU. We encourage active learning strategies e.g. mind mapping, discussion techniques, reporting back, listening exercises, circle time, role-play, questionnaires and quizzes.

#### Special Educational Needs

Special Needs are paramount – the given material may need to be broken down into smaller segments to meet the individual needs of the child. A child's additional needs will be taken



into consideration when delivering the RSE programme. Parents will work in partnership with the child's class teacher, regarding the pace and content of the child's individual programme.

#### The use of the expertise of agencies and individuals:

The activities which the agency or individual are to undertake should complement the ongoing RSE curriculum and are in harmony with the ethos of the school. Parents will be made aware in advance of the use of the outside agency. Type of activities to take place will be explained to ensure that parents and carers have the opportunity to raise any concerns they might have before the visit. Pupils should be prepared for the visit, a suitable room should be allocated, the session should be uninterrupted and follow-up activities should be undertaken by the class teacher.

#### Balanced Curriculum

While promoting Catholic values and virtues, we will ensure that pupils are offered a balanced programme by providing an RSE programme that offers a range of viewpoints on issues.

Pupils will also receive clear scientific information. Knowing about facts and enabling young people to explore differing viewpoints is not the same as promoting behaviour and is not incompatible with our school's promotion of Catholic teaching. We will ensure that pupils have access to the learning they need to stay safe, healthy and understand their rights as individuals and how to relate to other individuals in a mature and respectful way.

#### Assessment of RSE

The nature of RSE is strongly oriented towards Personal Development which does not necessarily lend itself to summative assessment. RSE is not easily measurable as it is qualitative rather than quantitative.

### **9. Parents and Carers**

Parents and carers will be informed of the content, timing and the delivery of the RSE programme in order to enable them to support the work of the school.

### **10. Specific Issues**

#### The Status of the Family:

The model of family life and marriage remain at the centre of the RSE policy, particularly as it is taught through Religious Education while linking up with other curricular disciplines. There is also an inherent sensitivity to the social change and family make-up today.

#### b) Sacredness of Life:

Life from the very moment of conception is sacred and this tenet of belief is reflected in RSE and based upon moral and spiritual principles; in no way can that life ever be compromised.

C) Sexual Orientation

Bullying on the grounds of sexual orientation is as unacceptable as it is in any other situation where someone is mistreated or bullied because of their differences from those who are perceived to be the majority. All issues relating to bullying on the grounds of sexual orientation will be dealt with appropriately in line with the school's anti-bullying policy.

d) Safeguarding:

- The child's right to privacy must be respected at all times by both the teacher and all other pupils in the class. A key rule to agree in advance of any discussion is that "no one will be expected to ask or answer any personal questions".
- Teachers must not promise confidentiality. A child does not have the right to expect that incidents in the classroom or in the wider context of the school will not be reported. This does not mean that issues are shared with the whole school, but rather any risks to a child's health, safety and wellbeing will be reported as appropriate and necessary in line with DE/EA/CCMS guidelines.
- The principal or designated teacher must be informed of any disclosures, which might suggest that a pupil is at risk or that physical or sexual abuse is suspected.

e) Homosexuality:

Within the primary school context and given media influence, children are much more aware of the language in this area: 'gay', 'lesbian'. Rather than going into what is really a post-primary issue, it may be important to look at issues related in the context of bullying and the use of names.

f) Withdrawal from class and supervision:

The DENI Circular 2001 clearly stipulates the right to withdraw from RE and children can be withdrawn from class by parents over the area of RSE, particularly if taught through RE. This may mean the child going to another class for the duration of the lesson.

g) Detail

Emotional and Physical Changes:

Emotional and pubertal changes are caused by hormonal activity; relations with parents can diverge with an increase in communication difficulties. Children can begin to view themselves in an adult world and yet are very much children.

## 11. Responsibility for Teaching the Programme

Trustees

The diocesan bishop has the right of supervision, visitation and inspection of Catholic schools in his diocese, even those established or directed by members of religious orders. He also has the right to issue directives concerning the general regulation of Catholic schools.

#### Board of Governors

Boards of Governors should ensure that their schools have a Relationships and Sexuality Education policy and curriculum linked to their pastoral care/child protection policy. This policy and the associated teaching should be the subject of consultation with staff and parents and endorsed by the Governors.

#### Principal and Senior Management Team

It is the role of the Principal to make possible a coherent and co-ordinated approach to RSE in keeping with the Catholic ethos of the school. It is the role of the Vice Principal to support the work of the Principal.

The Principal and Senior Management Team co-ordinate the school's approach to RSE and consults the Board of Governors, staff, parent(s)/carer(s) and health professionals, as appropriate.

#### RSE Coordinator

It is essential that the co-ordinator is respectful and committed to the school's Catholic ethos and the aims and direction of RSE within the school. The RSE Co-ordinator's role includes:

- upholding and ensuring that the programme is taught in accordance with the school's Catholic ethos;
- ensuring that the programme is taught effectively and is appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils;
- liaising with the Board of Governors, the Principal, the Vice Principal (Pastoral), all staff, parents and health and educational visitors on RSE matters;
- attending in-service training and disseminating appropriate information to other staff members;
- organising training for staff as and when appropriate;
- liaising with outside agencies where appropriate.

#### Designated Teacher/Special Needs Co-ordinator

The Designated Teacher and Special Needs Co-ordinator will provide relevant information which will ensure that the needs of all pupils are met and liaise with parents, particularly of statemented pupils, in ensuring the RSE programme is, where necessary, tailored to meet the children's needs.

#### Chaplain

The role of the chaplain is to:

- support the teaching of RSE where possible;
- meet with the RSE co-ordinator to discuss the RSE programme and its delivery in school;
- witness to Gospel values.

### Diocesan Advisor/Diocesan Advisor Support Service

The Diocesan Advisor supports schools in the development and delivery of an RSE policy and programme which reflects the Catholic ethos and respects the wishes of parents. In addition the Diocesan Advisor will support RSE Co-ordinator and staff as required.

### Teachers

In line with the guidance as per Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance Document for Primary Schools: Northern Ireland 2021, every effort will be made, where appropriate and applicable, to uphold the values and Catholic ethos of (name of school), whilst respecting each member of our whole school community.

## **12. Responding to Pupils' Questions and Sensitive Areas**

While it is important to create an environment in which pupils can discuss issues openly, teachers may not always be able to answer all questions about issues and should set appropriate boundaries. Teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the pupils and the RSE curriculum. Any advice provided and the way teachers respond should support the role of the pupils, parents or carers and reflect the ethos of the school.

All staff teaching RSE related issues should use the proper biological names for body parts and sexual acts, where appropriate and relevant to the RSE programme. The use of common slang should be avoided.

Teachers should remember that, as they are not medical professionals, they must not give personal medical advice to any pupil. Teachers must advise pupils to seek advice from parents or carers and health professionals. If any question asked raises child protection issues, this should be referred to the designated teacher for child protection.

## **13. Monitoring and Evaluation**

The RSE programme will be monitored and evaluated by:

- RSE Co-ordinator
- Principal
- Vice-principal
- Teaching staff
- Board of Governors