



SAINT EITHNE'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

RSE **(Relationships & Sexuality Education)** **Policy**

Date of Review: February 2023
Chair of Governors: _____

Introduction

a) Rationale

(i) Ethos statement

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 Gospel. We seek to develop each child spiritually, morally, intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically in order that they may realize their full potential and have an appreciation of their self – worth.

- (i) Given the current media climate and culture, where children have the opportunity to be misinformed about sexuality RSE has been introduced.
Through RSE and other relevant areas of the curriculum, we endeavour to equip, form and prepare children for life in a moral and spiritual context, enabling them to make positive responsible choices about themselves and the way they live their lives.
- (ii) RSE taught through Religious Education and linking with other subject areas such as Health Education, PE and Science, addresses the current trends in sexual activity, albeit in a progressive and sensitive manner according to the age of the children.
- (iii) After consultation with staff it was felt that better provision must be made for the teaching of RSE. The RSE Policy was drawn up by the RE/RSE Co-ordinator after consultation with all class teachers.
- (iv) The DENI Circular 2015/22 states that RSE is included on a statutory basis within the NI Curriculum, particularly through Health Education and Science and other spheres of influence. RSE must be taught in harmony with the ethos and values of the school. RSE is not value free and has family and marriage at its heart. Any RSE policy and programme should link up with Pastoral Care and Child Protection and any other relevant document.
- (v) Each gender shall receive the same input.

Relationships and Sexuality Education

- Respects the rights of children
- Promotes a better understanding of diversity and inclusion.
- Helps children keep themselves safer in the digital world
- Provides reliable, accurate and timely age appropriate information.
- Promotes the use of appropriate language

- Helps children to recognise inappropriate behaviour and touch.

“The teaching of RSE enables pupils to develop the skills and knowledge they need to build positive relationships and to develop their understanding of relationships and sexuality.” (Education Minister John O Dowd....Guidance on Relationships and Sexuality Education)

Definitions

(i) Relationships and Sexuality Education

As the title suggests there is an intricate entwining between relationships and sexuality, which is a lifelong process. The process involves the whole person in terms of belief, corresponding values and relationships in the personal and social domain. Skills, attitudes and parental influence are crucial. Sexuality impacts upon the physical, spiritual, social, psychological and cultural aspects of the human person. This gift of sexuality shapes and crafts relationships through the qualities of love, respect and future new life.

- (ii) Sexuality in its essence is a gift from God. Our gift of sexuality calls us into a relationship with Christ, encompassing the whole person. We have a sense of belonging and identity particularly in our connectedness to others, the world, God and ourselves. Faith colours and influences our sexuality so we can interpret our relationships in and through Christ.
- (iii) Morals: is essentially linked with behaviour and what we actually do. It is also directly connected with experience and faith.

Ethic(s): refers to a systematic structure such as the ‘Christian Tradition’, which provides a particular lifestyle with corresponding and inherent values.

Value: The characteristics of good moral behaviour e.g .respect for self, honesty with self and others.

Personal: Morality by its nature is personal but also public or social. It is about what we do every day and through example. The ethos of the school is concerned and caught up in the morality Christ presents.

Aims

- To help young people recognize their worth and dignity as children of God
- To help young people to appreciate their uniqueness and full potential as human beings.
- To enable young people to appreciate sexuality as a gift from God.

- To foster the growth of values which impact on moral behaviour personally and socially.
- To develop a respect for difference, gender and race.
- To develop a respect for women.
- To encourage and promote a deep respect for women and men within the context of the school among staff, pupils and parents/carers/guardians.

Specific Issues

a) 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 tenant of belief is reflected in RSE and based upon moral and spiritual principles, in no way can that life ever be compromised.

c) Confidentiality:

- 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.
- The Designated teacher for Child Protection/Safeguarding must be informed of any disclosures, which might suggest that a pupil is at risk or that physical or sexual abuse is suspected.

d) 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.

- e) Withdrawal from class and supervision:
The DENI Circular 2015/22 clearly stipulates the right to withdraw from RE and children can be withdrawn from class by parents/carers/guardians 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.
- f) Detail
Emotional and Physical Changes:
Emotional and pubertal changes are caused by hormonal activity; this is revealed in the influence of peers and going through such change, 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. Bodily changes are intricately linked with emotional changes. The school must therefore address these issues in a comfortable, non-threatening manner with effective resources.

The Programme:

The RSE Programme which we use in Saint Eithne's P S is the Programme "**In The Beginning**", which is recommended by our Diocesan Advisor for Religious Education. The Programme is in keeping with our Catholic faith and the ethos of our school.

It will be delivered by class teachers from Year 2 to Year 7, supported by the RE/RSE Co-ordinator Mrs M. Flanagan.

"**In The Beginning....**" is a carefully constructed vehicle, designed in such a way as to enable teachers and parents/carers/guardians to explore life and life issues with children through natural, appropriate and purposeful conversation, and through tasks & visual prompts which stimulate further discussion within the bounds of suitability. It puts Sex Education into its context~ surrounded by Gospel values, morals values and family values. Our relationship with God sits at the heart of this programme and the teachings of Jesus Christ provide the blueprint for the ways we should relate to each other as human beings (and as members of God's global family), and to the world around us.

(a) An Outline of the Programme:

Set within a strong Christian framework the programme itself is made up of eight pupil workbooks. Each workbook comes with a corresponding parents/carers/guardians advice booklet offering helpful guidance on a page basis. Each of the booklets is enhanced by appropriate work designed to reinforce religious beliefs, strengthen moral values and raise awareness of our responsibilities as human beings, central to this being the way we form lasting and loving relationships with our family and friends, with our peers and our community, with the wider world and with God.

(b) Time:

There is no right or wrong time of the year to commence the work but most teachers will introduce it in the Summer term. A workbook should not take longer than half a term to complete.

(c) Control:

Teacher dictates the work pattern throughout, the pace at which the class will go, and the amount to be completed in any time slot. The scheme is designed in such a way as to allow parents/carers/guardians the freedom to develop a topic further at home if the child is asking the right questions and is ready for further information and/or explanation. However, parents/carers/guardians must not interpret this freedom as an opportunity to race ahead and complete the booklet at a faster pace than the rest of the class.

(d) Terminology:

Use of proper biological terms and language is vital and when these terms are placed in the context of respect and self-respect then their essence is understood.

(e) Parental/Carer Support

Anything up to 80% of the time needed to complete a booklet comes from home. The signature box at the foot of each work-page offers parent/carer/guardian an easy way to indicate to teacher they have covered the page through discussion.

(f) Special Educational Needs

Special Needs are paramount – the given material may need to be broken down into smaller segments.

(g) The use of the expertise of Agencies and Individuals:

The activities which the agency or individual is to undertake should complement the ongoing RSE curriculum. 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.

Implementation:

a) Monitoring and Evaluating:

- i) The RE Co-ordinator will be involved in monitoring and evaluating throughout the process; on individual lessons, the actual programme, staff feedback, pupil feedback and parental/carer/guardian views.
- ii) The aims as listed in the policy will be at the forefront of any monitoring and evaluation to ascertain if they are being achieved.
- iii) This will be carried out through the creation of questionnaires.
- iv) Evaluating lessons is essential. Written evaluation should be kept whenever possible. Evaluation should be kept simple. Sentence completion is one technique. Another simple technique is the use of a continuum, with participants marking how they feel along the line.
- v) Evidence of pupils' learning might include:
 - * Feedback from staff and pupil evaluations.
 - * Reviewing a selection of pupils' work.
 - * Comments from EA and Diocesan Advisers.
 - * Questionnaires will be created in order to gain feedback.

b) Staff Training:

Staff training will be co-ordinated by the R.E. Co-ordinator, in conjunction with Diocesan Advisers. There will be a need to crystallize a strategy for formation using teamwork and tapping into positive practice and teachers who have had positive experience of the programmes

c) Roles and responsibilities:

i) **Board of Governors**

Collaboration with Teachers and Parents/Carers/guardians.
Examine and approve policy.
Review policy.
Religious sensitivity.

ii) **Principal**

Communication.
Consultation with Governors, Staff, parents/carers/guardians, Health Professionals and other community representatives.

iii) **RE Co-ordinator**

Draft document
Ratification from Board of Governors.
Co-ordination of Staff Training and Parent Information Presentation.

iv) **Parents/Carers/Guardians**

At Saint Eithne's Primary School we recognize that parents/carers/guardians are the primary educators of their child. In delivering this programme we will consult with parents/carers/guardians. We will ask for their views and opinions on a variety of issues that may arise in the teaching of RSE. A copy of the policy is readily available for parents to consult at any time.

vi) **Staff**

Training.

Planning and implementation of RSE.

In The Beginning Programme.

Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland.