

Relationship and Sexuality Education

Version 1 October 2023

This policy is an agreed approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). It was developed to inform teachers and parents/guardians/carers about the provision of RSE in St Mary's Primary School.

St Mary's is a co-educational Catholic Primary School.

The following definition of RSE is referenced from the Interim curriculum and guidelines for primary schools (DE 1996, p.5)

Definition of RSE

“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.

RSE is part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). 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 competence

SPHE/RSE is

- **a lifelong and continual process** throughout primary school and should not be confined to once off inputs or solitary lessons.
- **a shared responsibility** and collaboration between family, school, health professionals and the community.
- a subject which develops a child's **skills, attitudes, values and understanding** relevant to a range of social, personal and health issues.

- **child-centered.** RSE education should prioritise the needs of the child and his/her environment, with appropriate adaptations made to suit individual requirements and individual school situations.
- **spiral in nature.** SPHE/RSE formally begins in Junior Infants and is developed throughout the child's time in school. This will provide opportunities to consolidate and build on previous learning in a developmentally appropriate manner.
- taught through **active learning methodologies.** RSE provides a range of learning opportunities that requires children to actively participate in their learning in a wide variety of ways e.g. discussion, circle time, role play.
- **free of bias.** Lessons, language and resources selected by the school should reflect this. SPHE/RSE encourages children to be inclusive with each other, challenge prejudice and learn how to live together in an intercultural society.

Aims of RSE

- 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 enable the child to acquire an understanding of, and respect for human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction.
- 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

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.
- Develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making.

Policies that support SPHE/RSE (will link policies when ratified)

- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Substance Use Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- GDPR Policy

Curriculum Planning for SPHE/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 is only a strand unit from 3rd – 6th, Juniors – 2nd may complete the Safety Issues section of Safety and protection at this time. Due to the increased amount of lessons in the Stay Safe Programme from 3rd to 6th class, placing the strand unit Making decisions after the Safety and protection in a standard two year plan will enable the teacher to achieve some of the content objectives of Making decisions through the Stay Safe Programme.

Month	Year 1	Year 2
September/October	Self-identity (Myself)	My friends and other people (Myself and others)
November/December	Taking Care of my body (Myself)	Relating to others (Myself & Others)
January/February	Safety and protection (Myself)	Safety and protection (Myself)
March/April	Growing and changing (Myself)	Making decisions * (3rd to 6th) (Myself)
May/June	Developing citizenship (Myself and the wider world)	Media education (Myself and the wider world)

Guidelines for the Implementation of RSE

The SPHE curriculum will underpin all teaching and learning of RSE in St Mary's P.S. The SPHE curriculum 1999 is allocated 30 minutes of discrete teaching time by the Department of Education. SPHE and PE will together fall under the new term 'Wellbeing' in the New Primary Curriculum Framework 2023. Wellbeing will be allocated 2 and a half hours weekly, in Junior and Senior Infants and 3 hours weekly from 1st-6th classes.

Teachers are encouraged to use an integrated approach for the delivery of SPHE. All resources used will be in keeping with this RSE policy and will take into consideration the sample criteria for choosing resources, as outlined in the [SPHE Teacher Guidelines p.103](#).

- [The curriculum by NCCA](#) will be followed as published and will be taught from infants to 6th class.
- All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school, the whole school plan for SPHE and the RSE policy.
- Each class teacher will teach the content for their class level each year as laid out in the curriculum and utilising the RSE manuals to complement their teaching.
- The strands Growing and Changing, and Taking Care of my Body are covered in the SPHE plan.
- The sensitive lessons are covered as part of these broad topics.
- Special consideration will be taken to ensure that the needs of children with SEN are met.
 1. Children may be pre-taught language or concepts in anticipation of whole class work
 2. Children may work in smaller groups or 1:1 on adapted and suitable material
 3. Any different or specific objectives related to the pupils own learning needs should be detailed in their IEP in consultation with parents/guardians.
- Taking into account the pupil's social and emotional development, instruction will be based on individual needs where possible.
- Parents will be informed around the learning and teaching of RSE by regular updates through the school newsletter.

Parental Involvement

- The school acknowledges that parents / guardians have the primary responsibility for educating their children about growing and changing.
- This policy informs parents / guardians about the sensitive areas of the RSE programme and details how we hope to include and foster a relationship to support parents / guardians in their RSE education of the children in the school.

- Parents / guardians will be informed that the school fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE programme including sensitive aspects of the programme during their induction .
- Open communication at various intervals is important. It will be essential to SPHE that parents and teachers find ways of listening to each other and taking the opinions and concerns of both home and school into account.
- It should be noted in line with the Education Act 1998, section 30 subsection 2 (e) shall not require any student to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parent of the student or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years. Therefore, parents have the right to withdraw their child out of the sensitive aspects of RSE if they so wish.
- As RSE is an integral component to SPHE, consent is not needed. However, with open communication and systems of dialogue, withdrawal can be avoided.
- The school will develop effective strategies for dialogue between teachers and parents.
- Parents / Guardians are advised to look at Appendix 2 and relevant class appendix for the SPHE yearly plan to view the curriculum and may speak to the relevant class teacher if they have any concerns at any time during the year.
- Following discussion with the Principal and Class Teacher, if a parent wishes to withdraw their child from the sensitive lessons it should be given in writing stating their reasons for doing so. Going Forward Together (Parents Booklet) states that – “As a parent, you are the first teacher of your child. You hand on values and attitudes to each new generation of children”.

Examples of strategies that could be considered are:

- creating structures for individual consultation with parents and with members of the community;
- arranging meetings at appropriate times ;
- creating a balance between class meetings (for example to introduce the curriculum and/or classroom strategies) and larger group meetings;
- ensuring clarity of language in any form of written communication from the school;
- 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 while in the playground.

Children will visit another class level appropriate to theirs in the event that they are being withdrawn from the sensitive RSE lessons. This will be arranged by class teachers of equivalent level eg the two/three 2nd class teachers will agree a day/time with each other.

Organisation and Curriculum Planning

RSE forms part of the national curriculum for SPHE by NCCA and will be taught from infants to 6th class.

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

- Myself Growing and changing
- Taking care of my body

The RSE programme is divided into two main parts:

1) The general programme which contains content covered through SPHE strands and strand units and compliment the aims and objectives of RSE

- Friendship;
- Self-identity;
- Family;
- Self-esteem;
- Growing up.

This part of the policy aids the teacher and parents to see how RSE is addressed through formal teaching in the school. It is important to note, that any areas of worry or concern of the teacher in relation to topics, the teacher should speak to the principal. It should be kept in mind that RSE is consistent with the SPHE primary curriculum and any topics covered in post-primary school must be discussed and agreed in advance if they are to be covered.

2) The second section will deal with any sensitive / specific content covered through RSE strands and strand units.

Topics covered up to 2nd include:

- Keeping Safe
- Bodily changes from birth (birth - 9)
- Making age-appropriate choices
- Appreciating the variety of family types and an 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 and anatomically correct dolls (Junior/ Senior Infants)
- Naming the parts of the male / female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions (1st / 2nd)

Topics from 3rd to 6th

include:

- Bodily changes
- Healthy eating, personal hygiene, 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
- Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb(3rd, 4th class)
- Introduction to puberty and changes (3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th class)
- Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (5th / 6th Class)
- Reproductive system of male / female adults (5th and 6th class)
- Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship (5th, 6th class)

Approaches & Methodologies

When implementing the programme, staff at St. Mary's P.S. will endeavour to display respect for and sensitivity towards the different cultural and family backgrounds experienced by the children.

The curriculum will be taught in an age-appropriate manner at all times.

The curriculum will be taught from Junior Infants to 6th class.

It will be taught through a spiral curriculum (key topics will be revisited in a developmental manner at regular intervals).

The materials taught will reflect the needs of the children.

The school policy indicates, when necessary, the approaches it uses to be sensitive to various cultural or contextual issues that may affect the inclusion of some children.

It addresses these in a child-centred manner, in line with the SPHE curriculum and other relevant policies and procedures.

The RSE curriculum will be taught through:

- stories and poems
- classroom discussion
- group work
- games
- art activities
- reflection
- circle time

Active Learning Methodologies are an integral part of teaching of SPHE and RSE. Any or all of the following techniques will allow the child to play an active part in the learning process:

- Discussion

- Role play
- Interviewing friends, or other school pupils, family members
- Surveys of attitudes
- Analysing and evaluating newspapers and magazines, agony columns, television schedules
- Hosting visitors
- Projects
- Modelling
- Designing advertisements
- Writing captions
- Ranking statements
- Describing photographs
- Viewing and discussing videos

Differentiation

Teachers use assessment and professional judgement to differentiate the programme and content to suit the needs of the class.

Some techniques used:

- ensuring that objectives are realistic for the students
- 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
- organising the learning task into small stages and ensuring that the language used is pitched at the student's level of understanding
- understanding of the activity using task analysis, outlining the steps to be learned / completed in any given task, posing key questions to guide students through the different stages / processes, and to assist in self-direction and correction
- having short and varied tasks creating a learning environment through the use of concrete, and where possible everyday materials, and by displaying word lists and laminated charts with pictures. Sometimes the stage of development in a class can vary widely and strategies to differentiate in class can support gradual and appropriate teaching
- group work and discussion
- higher and lower order questioning in groups
- moderated whole class discussions through use of a Question Box.

The very nature of RSE education, and the differing maturity and growth levels of children mean that some children will need more support to understand the concepts and content. The teacher must use their assessment techniques to determine how to manage this. Usually, some simple approaches can aid the teacher and children.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs

Adaptations 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 Student Support Files in consultation with parents / Guardians.

Language

The SPHE curriculum provides a context in which children are given opportunities to develop and enhance their language skills and to increase their 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 can hurt, diminish and demean. Children need to recognise and become sensitive to the ways in which they themselves use language in their relationship and their everyday interactions.

Language is a powerful tool and should be used with respect and integrity for the dignity of each person.

Appropriate vocabulary in formal teaching 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 language introduced in class will be consistent with RSE Materials Books.

Please see the updated Anatomical Terminology Guide [here](#)

Confidentiality

The school follows Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2023 and the Children First Act 2015. Where there is disclosure by a child of abuse, or a teacher has any concerns about a child, the school authorities will follow our Child Safeguarding Statement. The Principal, Mrs Mc Veigh is our Designated Liaison Person. Teachers will deliver lessons with respect for the rights of the children and their families concerning privacy and confidentiality. As previously stated, if a child is withdrawn from the teaching of sensitive issues, we cannot guarantee that the other children will not tell or inform him / her about the lesson content.

Assessment

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

The teacher uses;

- Observation and questions to assess the children's engagement and interest;

- Use of teacher-designed tasks such as worksheets, quizzes or games;
- Use of reflection or learning log.

Review

It will be reviewed every year. It may be reviewed at an earlier time should a need arise. As with all our plans and policies, parents have access to this policy.

It is available on our website under the 'Policies' tab.

Ratification

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting on 25th October 2023

Signatures

Barbara Anne J Callaghan

Date

25/10/23

Class	Strand /strand Unit	Content Objectives <i>Consult curriculum for complete objectives in Growing and changing and Taking care of my body</i>	Language	Pages in RSE Resource Materials Book	Pages in Walk Tall	Supplementary resources
Junior /Senior Infants	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing and changing Taking care of my body 	Growing and changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Become aware of new life and birth in the world Develop an awareness of human birth Taking care of my body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name parts of the male and female body using anatomical terms 	womb breastfeeding penis vulva	New Life p68 My Body p147 Caring for new life p137 At the beach or swimming pool p.153	Our Amazing Bodies p94 (Senior Infants book)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anatomically correct dolls Picture books of new baby Visit of baby to class
			Growing and changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin to understand that reproduction, birth, growth and death are all part of new life cycles Taking care of my body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name the parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions 	penis vulva vagina womb breastfeeding urethra	The Wonder of new life p59 /151 How my body works p67/ 161 Growing means changing p77/171 A Visit to the Doctor p.164	Our Amazing Bodies p37 (2 nd class book)
Third/ Fourth Class	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing and changing Taking care of my body 	Growing and changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the physical changes taking place in both the male and female body Realise that changes do not occur at the same time but nonetheless are predictable and natural and that being different is normal Taking care of my body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise and discuss how feelings and emotions are affected by the physical changes that take place during puberty Discuss the stages and sequence of development of human baby from conception to birth 	Revise above umbilical cord changes in puberty menstruation	Preparing for new life p69 The wonder of new life p169 As I grow and change p93 Growing and changing p195	As I grow I change p175 (3 rd class book) Changing and Growing p140 (4 th class book) The Wonder of New Life p.150	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Body Systems Picture books on Growing and Changing
			Growing and changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a loving committed relationship Taking care of my body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and discuss the physical 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 	Revise above wet dreams <u>Busy Bodies language</u> semen sexual intercourse	My body grows and changes p81 The wonder of new life p92 Caring for new life p103 Different kinds of love p141	My Amazing body p345 (5 th class book) Creation p121 (6 th class book)
Fifth/ Sixth Class	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing and changing Taking care of my body 					