

**RELATIONSHIPS &
SEXUALITY
EDUCATION
POLICY**

Introduction

Our Lady Queen of Peace National School is a co-educational school located in Janesboro, Limerick City. The school is a Deis 1 school which serves children from urban backgrounds.

There are sixteen classes with two streams of each.

The school has close links with the community and the pupils participate regularly in local religious, sporting and cultural events.

The teachers in the school make every effort to provide a broad curriculum for the pupils and they receive considerable support from the parents and from the Board of Management.

The mission statement of the school is as follows:

We believe that a stimulating and happy atmosphere is a great help to learning, so we endeavour through good communication to provide such in our school.

The implementation of the RSE Programme is seen as support to the work already being done in the pupils' homes.

All schools are required to have an RSE policy to detail how RSE is taught in the school including the sensitive aspects. This policy is an approved approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE both formally and informally.

1. CURRICULUM CONTEXT

R.S.E., as part of our school curriculum aspires to:

i) promote the overall development of the person and the integration of sexuality into personal life; ii) provide knowledge and information to which all students are entitled and clarify and reinforce knowledge students have already acquired; iii) raise students' self-esteem and confidence, especially in their relationships with others.

The R.S.E. programme in the school relates to other Policies already existing in the school e.g. Anti- Bullying Policy, Healthy Eating, Code of Behaviour Policy and the national guidelines for child Protection 'Children First'. Links between these programmes are provided in the document 'Making the Links' available in the school.

2. MORAL FRAMEWORK

The moral framework must be consistent with the overall school ethos, which encourages an environment in which pupils happily progress academically, religiously, culturally, physically, musically and technologically. In conclusion, the R.S.E. programme will reflect this school ethos by demonstrating and encouraging the following values:-

Respect for self;

Respect for others;

Taking responsibility for one's own actions;

Taking responsibility for one's family, friends, school and community;

Raise students' self-esteem and confidence, especially in their relationship with others.

3. Current Provision of RSE

Relationships and Sexuality Education is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. Parents of our school have the primary responsibility for delivering Relationships and Sexuality Education to their children, and the teachers, through a formal curricular programme, will provide support to parents in helping them to fulfil this obligation.

We recognise that this type of education is also delivered consciously and unconsciously by peers, teenagers, adults in the community and the general media.

Education for Relationships and Sexuality will be an integral part of the schools' Social, Personal and

Health Education (SPHE). In relation to the R.S.E. section, the school will adhere to the NCCA'S guidelines on curriculum content and Lesson Notes. All teaching staff have received in-service on SPHE. R.S.E. will incorporate respect, tolerance, support, initiative, creativity, religious and moral experience and the uniqueness of each individual in the context of the school motto.

The units within the SPHE Strand '**Myself**' encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes concerning issues such as children's self-esteem and self-confidence, their physical, emotional and sexual development, their understanding and expression of emotions and feelings, and their ability to make decisions and to keep themselves safe and healthy.

The Strand '**Myself and Others**' is concerned with the major relationships in children's lives: those with the family, within friendships and within groups. The Strand units seek to enhance children's understanding of these relationships as they develop for the acquisition of important personal and social skills. The portrayal of male and female roles, the exploration of relationships and sexuality in society and influences of the media are also included in this Strand. An Overview of the Content from Infants up to and including Sixth Class is included as an Appendix to this Document. Therefore, RSE is taught in the wider context of SPHE and while it may be cross curricular, discrete timetabling is also used.

In Our Lady Queen of Peace school, the class teacher in his/her classroom is best placed to take responsibility for implementing the school-based element of the programme. Sensitive issues such as conception, intercourse, physical changes at puberty will be dealt with by a visiting speaker to the Senior Pupils of fifth and sixth class every second year. Parents are invited to an evening meeting in the school.

Aims

The aims of R.S.E. are:-

- to enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being 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

When due account is taken of intrinsic abilities and varying circumstances the Relationships and Sexuality Education curriculum should enable the child 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 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 that help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships.
- develop some coping strategies to protect self 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 lifestyle and decision making.

The teaching methodology for the Relationships and Sexuality module will be based on the sound pedagogic principle of involving the child in the learning process. These methods will be child centred and appropriate to the age and stage of development of the pupil. In organising the learning environment, the teacher will be careful to create an atmosphere in the classroom, which respects the privacy of each individual student, and to treat all pupils with due sensitivity and care.

Community resources may be used to enhance the programme but each teacher will evaluate this material by asking the following questions:-

- (i) Is it appropriate to the age and stage of development of the target group, in terms of language and concepts?
- (ii) Does it contain information that is accurate?
- (iii) Is it relevant and related to the programme?
- (iv) Is it consistent with the core values and school ethos?
- (v) Is it sensitive to the child's family and cultural background?
- (vi) Is it free of sexual stereotyping and gender bias?

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, and television schedules
- hosting visitors
- projects
- modelling
- designing advertisements
- writing captions
- ranking statements

- describing photographs
- viewing and discussing videos

Through such active engagement in the learning process, children will have opportunities to assimilate, to understand and to consolidate what is being received. At the same time, they will acquire and develop skills, abilities and values concerning issues of sexuality and intimacy, and will be enabled to see how this learning can help them in real life situations.

4. SPECIFIC ISSUES

Training for Teachers

Additional in-service training must be given to provide the necessary skills and confidence to teachers especially in sensitive areas.

Moral framework of the school

The area of sexuality must stay within the moral, spiritual and values framework consistent with the overall school ethos.

Questions outside the scope of the R.S.E. programme

The type of questions to be answered in the classroom must relate directly to the content of the programme, as laid down by the NCCA. Children with questions on any other issues or aspects will be advised to ask their parents.

The R.S.E. programme promotes positive areas of relationships e.g. Love; Care; Respect; etc. Questions on the negative sides of relationships, are more appropriately answered by either the mother or father.

Opt-out clause for Parents or Children

- Our policy respects the rights of parents who hold conscientious or moral objections to the inclusion of the R.S.E. programme on the curriculum;
- The school will address this situation by the respective classroom teacher providing work for the child to be completed in another teacher's classroom.

Sensitive areas - notification of parents

- Parents will always be advised when sensitive issues, respective to a particular class, are to be taught.
- Sensitive areas will be dealt with within the last classroom period of the day. This facilitates parents if they wish to withdraw their child from school.

Feedback mechanism

A feedback mechanism will be available to parents to follow up on the development of the R.S.E. programme (e.g. homework, worksheets, etc).

5. CURRICULAR FRAMEWORK

Types of classes

The programme will be taught on a teacher to class basis. These classes include boys and girls. The class may be a single class of one grade or multi-graded ... that is a class of two consecutive grades.

Links with other subjects

Much of the R.S.E. programme has cross curricular links. This serves to teach the programme in a holistic manner and re-enforces learning. Examples of cross curricular links are:

(i) Stay Safe Programme

Many aspects of R.S.E. are covered in the Stay Safe Programme. There are four booklets which are graduated from Infants to Sixth class. Each booklet contains lessons on:-

- Safe and Unsafe Feelings
- Bullying
- Touches
- Secrets and Telling
- Strangers
- Friendships for 5th and 6th classes

(ii) Social, Personal and Health Education

Of all the programmes, the greatest links with R.S.E. can be found in this subject area:

- Nutrition
- Hygiene
- Safety
- Personal & Social Development
- Environmental Care
- Media Education

(iii) Art and Craft Education

Enhancing self-confidence, skills of co-operation and communication are part of the R.S.E.

Programme. Art provides a format for the child to express himself as an individual. Activities in the R.S.E. programme include:

- completion of worksheets

- drawing pictures
- printing with hands and feet
- making posters and models
- painting pictures

These are also part of the Art and Craft programme.

(iv) Music

Song - singing, listening to music, playing an instrument are part of the Music curriculum.

- Self-expression is developed through singing songs
- Listening to music provides a child with his/her own personal space
- Experimentation with percussion, wind or stringed instruments provides an opportunity for creative activity and a way to develop talents and pastimes.

(v) Physical Education

Objectives of the R.S.E. programme include the development of the physical body, awareness of bodily growth and change, a sense of belonging, tolerance and respect for others. Physical Education provides an opportunity for this development through:-

- Athletics
- Dance
- Gymnastics
- Skill Development
- Co-operative games

(vi) LANGUAGE

Oral Language

- Development of vocabulary to identify body parts and express feelings
- Develop social skills - making a telephone call - know your address - Ask questions
- Interview visitors
- Discuss stories and videos
- Describe photographs and pictures.

Reading

- Recognising words on worksheets

- Reading stories and poems

Written Language

- Writing stories and poems
- Completing worksheets
- Writing to a pen pal
- Expressing feelings and emotions through written work - Writing captions

(vii) DRAMA

Role - play will form an active part in the learning process of the R.S.E. programme, for example a child is being left out of a game.... role play the story extract.

(viii) GEOGRAPHY

Aspirations of the R.S.E. programme include the appreciation of how "people depend on each other in the family, school and wider community" and also the appreciation of differences between people. It includes:

- Study of the locality
- Animals, crops, products and industry
- Life in other lands
- Human rights

(ix) HISTORY

"Learn to respect cultures, beliefs, values and traditions of others." This is an objective of the fifth and sixth class R.S.E. programme.

Links with the history programme include:-

- Study of Local History
- Stories from mythology
- Life of the Celts, Greeks and Romans

(x) SCIENCE

- Five senses
- The Circulatory System
- The Digestive System
- The Respiratory System
- Components of Food

(xi) RELIGION

Religious Education addresses many aspects of the R.S.E. programme. The religion programme deals with the relationship between the child and his family, the child and others. It covers the area of making choices, physical development and respect for ourselves and others.

Teachers use assessment and professional judgment 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 every day 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.

Pupils with S.E.N.

Adaptions 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 IEP or IPLP in consultation with parents/guardians.

Questions

We use some simple principles when fostering discussion and questioning

- No personal questions of the teacher
- The Question Box will be availed of by the children
- The teacher will be mindful of their reaction to any questions
- Questions do not have to be answered straight away

Sample responses;

- I'll do my best to answer your questions but I may not be able to answer all of them
- That's something you'll 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 they used was slang language, what they meant to ask was...
- A question was asked, and we cannot talk about that particular topic but I think that question was about.

For older children a 'question box' will be used as part of a structured RSE lesson. Teachers can follow up on the written questions at a later date, thus allowing time to prepare suitable answers, consult with colleagues, etc.

Question Box

During the delivery of each section of the sensitive lessons– 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 the following week taking into account the following;

- Questions arising from 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/issue is not on the programme and they will be advised to talk with their parents
- Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents themselves 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 – but can share with teacher after the lessons.

If issues arise which might be seen to contravene Children First Guidelines, the teacher will notify the Designated Liaison Person in the school.

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.

Confidentiality

- The school follows Children First Guidelines 2011 and The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2011
- 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 what happened.

Resources

Relationships and Sexuality Education Resource Materials (DES) - Each class teacher has a copy of the appropriate manual or access to it in online / pdf format. Other resources that support the broader aims of RSE include:

- Stay Safe programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Busy Bodies DVD and Booklet. This DVD and booklet were developed to support the teaching of the 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th class component of RSE within the context of SPHE.
- Picture books across the 9 grounds of equality
- INTO Different Families, Same Love Poster
- RESPECT guidelines.

Provision of Ongoing Support

- Opportunities provided by Limerick Education Centre will be brought to the attention of staff members
- Teachers will be encouraged to attend CPD in RSE
- Staff meetings utilised as a platform for discussion and development of RSE materials
- Support from a PDST Advisor
- Promotion and communication of resources available from www.pdst.ie.

Review

This Policy will be reviewed, every two years, by the Board of Management, Principal and Staff of the school.

Ratification

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Our Lady Queen of Peace School

on _____

Signed: _____
(Chairperson, Board of Management)

Date: _____

Appendix 1

Topics Covered up to 2nd include:

- Keeping safe
- **Bodily changes from birth**
- Making age appropriate choices
- Appreciating the variety of family types and a 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 identify some of their functions (first/second)**

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 body in the womb (third/fourth class)**
- **Introduction to puberty and changes (third to sixth class)**
- **Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (fifth and sixth)**
- **Reproductive system of male/female adults (fifth and sixth)**
- **Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed relationship (fifth and sixth)**