

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

Introductory Statement

The school has a responsibility to put in place an R.S.E. policy as part of the wider, Social, Personal and Health Education curriculum. This policy statement is an approved approach to the teaching of RSE in Réalt na Mara School. The process was initiated in May 2011 when a policy committee (steering committee of 5 people) was formed and charged with setting guidelines for the organisation and management of R.S.E. in the school. It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE.

Rationale

The need for this policy arises from our schools obligation to provide for all the needs of the student body and respond appropriately to sensitive and emotive issues relating to emerging sexuality. 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.

Aims

- To help young people develop healthy friendships and relationships
- To promote a healthy attitude to sexuality and to relationships
- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child
- To foster and 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

Relationship to School Ethos

Réalt na Mara School is a Catholic school and therefore all policies developed are implemented in ways which are in keeping with this ethos ensuring that all our actions are characterised by the following:

- Sensitivity to the reality of our children's lives in a changing world
- Mutual respect between all partners in education
- Child-centeredness
- Aiming to ensure each child reaches full potential in the holistic sense
- The hope that children are equipped with high self-esteem to enable them to go to live happy and fulfilled lives

The school ethos affirms and supports close links between school and home. Parents will be informed in advance of these lessons being taught and samples of worksheets and an outline of the lesson content will be made available to parents prior to delivery of lessons, if they so wish. Parents also have the right to withhold their children from participating in R.S.E classes. It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the school in writing of their decision to withdraw and their willingness to cover sensitive issues with their child outside of school hours.

Strand Units

Myself: Self identity; Taking care of my body; Growing and changing; Safety and protection.

Myself and Others: Myself and family; Friends and Relating to other people.

Taking Care of My Body: Naming parts of the male and female body using appropriate terminology (Junior and Lower Middle classes). Identifying physical changes, Understanding puberty and the Reproductive System (Senior Classes)

Growing and Changing: The stages of development of a baby from conception to birth (Senior Classes).

Understanding sexual relations within the context of a committed loving relationship (Senior Classes).

- **Topics covered up to 2nd class include:**

- Keeping safe.
- Naming bodily parts using correct terminology.
- Bodily changes during growth and development.
- Making and keeping friends.
- Making age appropriate choices.
- Appreciating family life.
- Recognizing and expressing feelings.
- Self care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep (link with P.E. Healthy Eating Policy and S.P.H.E.)
- Expressing opinions and listening to others.

- **Topics covered from 3rd to 6th Classes include:-**

- Bodily changes.
- Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise.
- Keeping safe.

- Expressing feelings.
- Family relationships.
- Making healthy and responsible decisions.
- Forming friendships.
- Reproduction, conception (6th Class)

Methodology

Circle time is used extensively in Junior Classes to build confidence and address fears. Boys and girls are usually taught together in all classes. However, this school has decided that 5th class girls will receive separate instruction on menstruation. Some topics are only taught to fifth and/or sixth classes and in these instances the younger classes will be removed. When classes need to be split the other teacher will facilitate some aspect of the SPHE programme.

Dealing with questions

Pupils are encouraged to ask questions but in cases where students may feel embarrassed a post box to facilitate questions will be placed in the classroom. Appropriate questions will be answered during the lesson, or if written, in the following lesson. All questions answered will reflect the parameters of the curriculum. Certain topics will not be discussed i.e. abortion, masturbation, homosexuality, contraception. Children who ask questions in class, on content outside the curriculum, (as outlined in appendix) are told that we are not covering this topic at this time as it is not age appropriate. Students may be advised to discuss this with their parents. The school cannot guarantee confidentiality if a child asks a question of a personal nature to themselves or discloses personal information. Neither can the school be held responsible for inaccurate or misinformation that has its origins outside the school.

Senior pupils are treated in a mature way and are encouraged to discuss issues that arise with their parents. The Alive O 8 resource materials are used extensively in Senior Classes.

Resources

The following resources are available for use in the school. They are approved for use by the Department of Education and Science and are in keeping with the ethos of the school.

- SPHE curriculum documents
- Busy Bodies DVD and Booklet
- Relationships and Sexuality Education resources
- Alive O programme
- Prim Ed Health Books 1-7
- Walk Tall
- Stat Safe programmes
- Drumcondra EC website
- PPDS website

Guidelines for Management

Parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children in sexual matters. The school R.S.E. programme acts as a support only to parents, and parents retain the right to withdraw their children from classes. Where a parent decides to exercise this right, they must inform the Board of Management in writing of their decision and outline how they propose to deliver this aspect of the curriculum to their child. Arrangements will have to be made for the supervision of withdrawn children.

The programme is taught within the ethos of the school at a level appropriate to the age and stage of development of pupils within a moral and spiritual framework. Contemporary issues/topics are dealt with by the teacher as outlined above. With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom.

Child Protection

The school follows the D.E.S. child protection guidelines and has a Child Protection policy with the Principal as Designated Liaison Person. In cases of disclosure the D.L.P. will follow the procedures as set out in Children First.

Teacher Choice / Staff Development / Planning

The teacher's right to choose is enshrined in the policy and if teachers do not wish to teach specific aspects of the programme or require additional resources, a suitable speaker will be employed by

the B.O.M. The teacher may need to plan the specific material to be covered and should be present during the talk.

The staff have availed of training in:-

- The Child House Prevention Programme (Stay Safe)
- Relationships and Sexuality Programme (R.S.E.)
- Walk Tall Programme (S.M.P.P.)

The whole School Plan is available on a shared Resource file in both the Secretary's Office and the Principal's Office. Each teacher is responsible for his/her long term and short term planning comprising of a yearly and fortnightly scheme of work. A Cuntas Míosúil is retained in the Principal's Office.

School/Community Links

The school is involved in:-

- Athletics and Basketball inter-school competitions.
- Cumann na mBunscol – football, hurling and camogie.
- Choir for Church events.
- Recital every last term.
- Annual School Pantomime.
- Credit Union Quiz.

- G.A.A. Indoor Hurling.

Evaluation

- Teacher observation.
- Inventory of what needs to be changed.
- Ensuring all strands are covered.
- Teacher designed tasks and tests and self-evaluation.
- Community feedback.

Roles and Responsibilities

The whole school community of B.O.M., staff, pupils and parents play a key role in the formulation and implementation of the plan.

Ratification

This policy was ratified by the B.O.M. in XXXX.

Implementation

Implementation is on a phased basis from XXXX.

Review

This policy will be reviewed in XXXX.

Appendix 1

Content of RSE Programme

Infant Programme

- Name parts of the male and female body, using appropriate anatomical terms;
- Explore and discuss the different things the body can do – *move, feel, think, grow, heal*;
- Become aware of new life and birth in the world – *new growth in spring, baby animals being born*;
- Develop an awareness of human birth – *a baby grows and is nurtured in the womb until ready to be born*;
- Identify situations and places that are safe and those where personal safety might be at risk – *playgrounds, outings with family, unfamiliar places, feeling unsafe with people, keeping difficult secrets*;
- Realise how other people can persuade him/her to engage in unsafe behaviour;

First and Second Classes

- Explore the various things the body can do – *see, hear, move, breathe, feel, think*;
- Name parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions;
- Develop and practise basic hygiene skills – *discuss and explore effects of personal hygiene, learning about hygienic eating habits, effective dental care*;
- Begin to recognise the physical, emotional, social and spiritual factors that promote growth – *love, food, warmth, shelter, communication, friendship, sleep*;
- Realise that growth takes place in many different ways and is unique to each individual – *physical, (growing out of clothes and shoes), social, (making new friends, playing sport etc.) and spiritual (becoming more reflective, enjoying quiet time for longer periods etc.)*

- Realise that growing up brings increased responsibility for him/herself and others – *putting away school clothes, making own lunch, helping feed a younger child*;
- Begin to understand that reproduction, birth, life, growth and death are all part of a life cycle;
- Appreciate what is necessary in order to provide the care for new-born babies in both the animal and human world – *love, regular feeding, nappy changing, bathing, medical check-ups*;
- Recognising situations where they feel safe and those where safety might be at risk – *getting lost, being left alone, unsafe or unknown substances, people who make them feel unsafe, inappropriate or unsafe touches, keeping secrets that worry them or make them feel uncomfortable*;
- Appropriate strategies for dealing with these situations – *being assertive, trusted adults etc.*
- Explore how others might persuade him/her to engage in unsafe behaviour and how this may be counteracted;

Third and Fourth

- Understand the physical changes taking place in both the male and female body – *growing in height and weight, increasing in strength, growing from boy to man and from girl to woman*;
- Realise that changes do not occur at the same time but are predictable and natural and that being different is normal – *accepting body image, being sensitive to the patterns of growth and development in themselves and others*
- Recognise and practice good personal hygiene, know how it is maintained and understand its importance in social interaction;
- Understand and explore the relationship between health and hygiene – *the transmission of bacteria and viruses, the spread of infection and diseases*;
- Recognise the adverse effects of sexual stereotyping;
- Recognise and discuss how feelings and emotions are affected by the physical changes of puberty;

- Identify the care that needs to be taken while waiting for a baby to be born – *diet, rest, love, the support and role of other family members, medical interventions;*
- Identify people, places and situations that may threaten personal safety – *large gatherings, bullies, inappropriate touches, difficult secrets;*

Fifth and Sixth

- 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:
Female – hormonal changes, changing body shape, development of breasts, appearance of pubic hair, [onset of menstruation (periods) 5th class girls – boys and girls in 6th]
Male – hormonal changes, physical growth, enlargement of testicles and penis, appearance of pubic, underarm and facial hair, voice breaking, [sperm production, nocturnal emissions (wet dreams) 6th class only]
- Understand the reproductive system of both male and female adults; (6th class)
- Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby from conception to birth; (6th class)
- Become aware of some communicable diseases and explore how diseases and infections are spread – *chickenpox, rubella, HIV infection, hepatitis;*
- Infections are spread through – *air, body fluids, direct contact, poor hygiene and sanitation;*
- Identify and discuss the changes that are experienced in growing from a child to an adult – *changing interests and leisure activities, developing a widening circle of friends, increasing personal independence, increasing personal and community responsibility, coping with transfer from primary to post-primary school;*
- Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed, loving relationship; (6th class)
- Discuss the different types of love that exist and explore how love is portrayed and defined in music, films, books, magazines and other media;
- Identify situations and places that may threaten personal safety – *bullying, secrets, large gatherings, inappropriate touches, being with people who make me feel unsafe;*

Anatomical terms taught

Infants to Fourth: Breasts, vulva, vagina, penis, testicles, anus, nipples, womb, breast feeding;

Fifth Class: As above plus puberty, hormones, pubic hair, underarm hair, chest hair, facial hair, Adam's apple, voice breaking;

Fifth Class – girls only: menstruation, periods, fallopian tube, ovary, ovulation, ova, sanitary pad, tampon, period pains, PMT, pre-menstrual;

Sixth: Testosterone, oestrogen, progesterone, urethra, clitoris, labia, cervix, foreskin, scrotum, circumcision, semen, sperm, erection, ejaculation, sexual intercourse, masturbation, nocturnal emissions, conception, uterus, foetus, trimester, umbilical cord, placenta, amniotic fluid, ultrasound.

The content outlined above for girls only will be taught to boys and girls in sixth class.