

Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy

School Details:

Rath NS, Baltimore

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Co-educational, vertical school under the Catholic patronage

Introductory Statement

This policy is an approved approach to the teachings of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in Rath NS. It was developed by the staff of Rath NS, under the guidance of the PDST facilitator. It was discussed at both Parents Association and Board of Management meetings. It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE.

School Philosophy

This policy was developed and will be implemented in ways which are in keeping with the ethos of the school. The ethos of the school is characterised by the following:

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

Definition of RSE

Relationship and Sexuality education (RSE) aims to provide opportunities for children and young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way (Going Forward Together Parent's Information Booklet, page 4).

Relationship of RSE to SPHE

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) provides opportunities for pupils to learn basic personal and social skills which foster integrity, self-confidence and self-esteem while nurturing sensitivity to the feelings and rights of others.

- **Current Provision** Included in the school curriculum is :
 - SPHE lessons (provided through discrete curricular time and integration)
 - Use of the RSE Manuals and Busy Body resources
 - Stay safe programme / Walk Tall Programme
 - Religious Education

Aims of our RSE programme

- 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 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 – Fifth and Sixth Class
- To understand the physical changes taking place with the onset of puberty- Senior Classes
- 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 and oneself and others while growing and developing.

We support the aims on which RSE is modelled. We encourage good behaviour, open communication, understanding and tolerance of differences, and respect for self and others. We recognise that both pupils and staff have rights and responsibilities in our school. A sense of responsibility is fostered and attention is paid to the wellbeing of all of the members of the school community.

- **Policies which support SPHE/RSE**
 - Child Protection Policy
 - Code of behaviour and discipline
 - Anti- Bullying Policy
 - Enrolment Policy
 - Healthy Eating Policy

Child Protection

This policy is cognisant of all aspects of our current Child Protection Policy. The school follows the DES child protection guidelines and has a child protection policy with the Principal as Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and the deputy Principal as the Deputy DLP. Where a child protection concern is raised, the procedures outlined in the schools Child Protection Policy will be followed.

▪ **Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our school**

Curriculum Matters

- Curriculum Content – The curriculum by NCCA will be followed as published, and will be taught from infants to 6th class. All resources used will be 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.
- Where an outside speaker is used, the class teacher will remain in the classroom, as per circular 22/2010. The speaker will be made aware of the School's RSE Policy.
- The Stay Safe programme will be implemented throughout the school.
- The class teachers will coordinate the teachers of Stay Safe during the school year.

Topics covered up to 2ndclass include:

- Keeping Safe
- Bodily changes during grown and birth (birth to 9)
- Making age appropriate choices
- Appreciating family life
- 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 (1st/2nd)

Topics from 3rd- 6th include:

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

- Expressing safe
- Expressing Feelings
- Family relationships
- Making healthy and responsible decisions
- Forming Friendships
- Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (fourth class)
- Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (fifth and Sixth class)
- Reproductive system of male/female adults (fifth and sixth class)
- Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship. (Fifth and sixth Class)

Organisational Matters:

- Parents will be informed in advance of lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme.
- If children are withdrawn from the lessons pertaining to the sensitive elements of the RSE programme, they must give a notice in writing to the school that they are withdrawing their child. The child will be accommodated in another teacher's classroom in the school.
- Parents have a responsibility to become involved, to inform themselves of the programme content and to prepare children for the information they will acquire around the sensitive areas and discuss areas covered in RSE/ SPHE. Parents are invited /welcome to view the curriculum and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns.
- In the class situation children will be encouraged to recognise that certain information is for them only and it would be inappropriate to discuss this with younger siblings/ children for example.
- With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom.
- If a teacher has concerns about teaching the sensitive elements in RSE they should consult with the principal. Any teacher has the right to opt out of teaching the sensitive elements of RSE. It is the responsibility of the B.O.M. to ensure content is covered by another teacher or an outside speaker.
- Special consideration will be taken to ensure that the needs of children with SEN are met. Taking into account the pupil's social and emotional development, instruction will be based on individual needs where possible. Parents will be consulted around sensitive issues.

Dealing with Questions:

It is natural that children should wish to ask questions in the area of RSE.

All questions answered will reflect the parameters of the curriculum. Certain topics are not in the primary RSE/SPHE programme and will not be discussed i.e. abortion, masturbation, homosexuality and contraception.

Questions to the teacher may be oral or written within the group setting and answered within boundaries of the curriculum and school policy. If any questions asked by children are deemed to be inappropriate, the teacher will refer the child to their parents/ guardians, or state that this information may be available at a later stage of the curriculum, or in post-primary school. The school cannot guarantee confidentiality if a child asks a question of a personal nature or discloses personal information. With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom outside of the RSE lesson.

The following considerations will be made when responding to children's questions:

- Awareness of circumstances in which the question has arisen
 - Clarification of what information is required
 - Determination of whether the question is appropriate or relevant/ who it is relevant to
 - Provision of an age appropriate answer
 - Deferral of the question to be answered at home or in the future
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- **Parental Involvement**
 - Parents are welcome to view the curriculum and resources if they wish
 - Regular contact will be made with parents prior to the teaching of lessons involving the 'sensitive elements' of the RSE programme, in the form of the RSE manual home/school links pages or contact by letter etc.
 - Parents will be informed in advance when formal lessons on the sensitive areas of the programme and will be asked to discuss these issues with their child prior to the lessons in school. (Consider including this letter as an appendix)
 - The school acknowledges that parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children in sexual matters. The school RSE programme acts as a support to parents, and parents retain the right to withdraw their children from classes.

 - **Resources**
 - Relationships and Sexuality Education Manuals (DES). Each class teacher has a copy of the appropriate manual.

- Stay Safe programme
- Walk Tall programme.
- Busy Bodies DVD and booklet. This DVD and booklet were developed to support the teaching of the 5th and 6th class component of RSE within the context of the SPHE. It is available for download at www.healthpromotion.ie
- All resources are available for parents/ guardians to view if they so request prior to the delivery of the lesson.

▪ **Provision of Ongoing Support**

- Opportunities provided by our Education Centre will be brought to the attention of staff members. Teachers will be encouraged to attend CPD in RSE.
- Application for in-school support from PDST sought when necessary.
- Staff meetings utilised as a platform for discussion and development of RSE materials.

▪ **Review**

The policy will be reviewed after every two years. The policy may also be reviewed at an earlier time should a need arise. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made.

This plan was ratified by the Board of Management at meeting on:

Date: _____

Signed: _____

(Chairperson)

Date: _____

Signed: _____

(Principal)