

# Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy



## Introductory Statement

This policy statement is an approved approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in Templeorum NS. It was reviewed and amended in the 2012 school year. It was further developed in the school year 2019 by principal and class teachers. It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE.

## School Philosophy

We recognise that SPHE is intrinsic to the teaching and learning that occurs both formally and informally in school and in the classroom. All policies in our school are developed and implemented in ways which are in keeping with the ethos of the school. Through our SPHE programme and subsequently through RSE, we assist children to develop feelings of self-worth and self-confidence while encouraging their ability to relate to others in a positive way. The curriculum also encourages children to be aware of their rights as an individual while at the same time accepting responsibility for their actions as members of the school and the wider community. Our school values the uniqueness of all individual within a caring school community. Our ethos means that we value respect, tolerance and openness through the lived experience of the children and school community. Parents have the primary role in the social, personal and health education of their children so their involvement will be encouraged as much as possible. SPHE and RSE are key components in supporting our school and children to develop into healthy young adults.

## 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.

## **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.

SPHE:

- Is a lifelong process and consequently RSE is a continual process throughout primary school and is not confined to once off inputs or lessons
- Is a shared responsibility between family, school, health professionals and the community
- RSE education should include an input from all, and collaboration can be fostered through the teaching and delivery of materials
- Is a generic approach. It is not so much about the specific content of RSE but rather the relationship with a child's skills, attitudes, values and understanding relevant to a range of social, personal and health issues
- Is based on the needs of the child, therefore RSE education should prioritise the needs of the child and his/her environment, with appropriate adaptations made within the curriculum to suit individual requirements and individual school situations.
- Is spiral in nature. RSE is revisited at different stages throughout the child's time in school, this will provide opportunities to consolidate and build on previous learning. This allows for issues and topics to be explored and treated in a manner appropriate to the children's needs, abilities and levels of maturity.
- Engages children to be involved in activity based learning. RSE should provide a range of learning opportunities that include working together, learning about

one's own feeling and those of others, developing a sense of empathy and experience and supporting healthy relationships.

Through SPHE and RSE, members of the school community should be 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

The school has a responsibility to ensure that its curriculum is free of bias and that issue of inequality in any form are addressed and dealt with (SPHE Teacher Guidelines p25).

#### **Current Provision Included in the School Curriculum:**

- SPHE lessons
- Stay Safe Programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Use of the RSE Manual and Tom's Flower Power/Busy Bodies
- An outside speaker is currently invited to work with fifth and sixth classes. Prior to the programme for the children, parents are invited to a session which covers information on the programme as well as input on the area of adolescence and parenting the teenager. The outside speaker visits in the spring/summer term.
- Restorative Practice
- Special Education Teachers
- Access to Support Teacher (school based)
- Social skills training
- Religious Education
- Webwise resources
- Adapted resources for SEN from [www.pdst.ie](http://www.pdst.ie)

#### **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 of oneself and others while growing and developing

## **Broad Objectives**

When due account is taken of abilities and varying circumstances, the RSE education curriculum should enable the child to (in conjunction with the SPHE curriculum)

- 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

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.

### **Links to other policy areas**

- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Substance Use Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Enrolment Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- SPHE Policy
- Child Protection
- Anti-Bullying Policy

### **Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School**

Curriculum Content – The curriculum by NCCA will be followed as published. All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school and the policy and will reflect the developmental needs of the child. Each class teacher will teach the content for their class level.

When an outside speaker is used, the class teacher is responsible for making them aware of school policy and that teacher will remain in the class during the lesson.

### **Management of RSE**

- The strands of Growing and Changing, and Taking Care of my Body are covered in Year One of a 2 year SPHE plan
- The sensitive lessons are covered as part of these broad topics (as outlined in letter to be sent home see Appendix 2)
- Special arrangements exist for the delivery of the sensitive elements of the programme (see below)
- 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.

## **Parental Involvement**

- Parents/guardians will be informed prior to the teaching of the lessons involving sensitive issues
- Parents of children in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class are given the Busy Bodies booklet at the Parents Teacher meeting prior to the talk on the sensitive areas of the RSE Programme
- In the event of an outside speaker/s being used to deliver sensitive areas of the RSE programme to 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class pupils, parents/guardians will be notified in advance. A teacher will remain with the class during the lesson
- Where parents wish to take their child out of the lessons on the sensitive issues they must put this in writing with their reasons for doing so to the school principal. The child will be accommodated elsewhere in the school.
- Outside speaker/s will meet parents beforehand to inform them of the content of the sensitive areas of the RSE programme
- With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom.
- Any teacher has the right to opt-out from teaching the sexually sensitive issues in RSE. It is responsibility of Board of Management to ensure that the

curriculum will be taught to the children by another teacher or an outside speaker.

## Organisational and Curriculum Planning

RSE forms part of the national curriculum for SPHE by NCCA and will be taught. The 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
- 2) The second section will deal with any sensitive/specific content covered through RSE strands and strand units. The sensitive aspects are in **bold**.

- **Bodily changes**
- Healthy eating, personal hygiene and 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
- **Naming private body parts (Infants to second class)**
- **Discuss the stages and sequences of development of the human baby in the womb (3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup>)**
- **Introduction to puberty and changes (3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Class)**
- **Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty**

**(5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Class)**

- **Reproductive system of male/female adults (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Class)**
- **Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed, loving relationship (5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> Class)**

**Sensitive Content**

<b>Class</b>	<b>Strand/Str and Unit</b>	<b>Content Objectives</b> <i>Consult curriculum for complete objectives in <u>Growing and changing</u> and <u>Taking care of my body</u></i>	<b>Language</b>
<b>Junior Infants to second class</b>	<b>Myself -growing and changing -taking care of my body</b>	<b>Growing and Changing</b> -Help children become aware that growth involves change and the rates of growth are unique for each individual -to provide the children with opportunities to learn about the senses and their functions	At age appropriate classes: Womb, breast, vulva, vagina urethra, penis , naval, bottom
<b>3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> Class</b>	<b>Myself</b> -Growing and changing -Taking care of my body	<b>Growing and changing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand the physical changes taking place in both the male and female body</li><li>• Realise that changes do not occur at the same time but nonetheless are predictable and natural and that being different is normal</li></ul> <b>Taking care of my body</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recognise and discuss how feelings and emotions are affected by the physical changes that take place during puberty</li><li>• Discuss the stage and sequence of development of human baby from conception to birth</li></ul>	Revise Junior Infants – 2 <sup>nd</sup> class (womb breastfeeding penis vulva vagina urethra) umbilical cord changes in puberty menstration
<b>5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> Class</b>	<b>Myself</b> -Growing and changing - Taking care of my body	<b>Growing and changing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a loving committed relationship</li></ul>	Revise above wet dreams <u>Busy Bodies language</u> Semen



		<p><b>Taking care of my body</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Understand the reproductive system of both male and female adults</li> </ul>	sexual intercourse
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## Approaches and Methodologies

The curriculum will be taught in an age-appropriate manner at all times. It will be taught through a spiral curriculum (key topics will be revisited in a developmental manner at regular intervals). The material taught will reflect the needs of the children.

The RSE curriculum will be taught through:

- Stories and poems
- Classroom discussion
- Group work
- Games
- Reflection
- Circle time
- Guest speaker (The class teacher will stay in the room at all times in accordance with Circular 42/2018)

## Differentiation

Teachers use assessment and professional judgement to differentiate the programme and content to suit the needs of the class. Sometimes the stage of development in a class can vary widely and strategies to differentiate in class can support gradual and appropriate teaching.

## **Pupils with Special Educational Needs**

Adaption to the way in which the content is delivered will be made for children with Special Educational Needs. Children may be pre-taught language or concepts in anticipation of whole class work. Children may work in smaller groups of 1:1 on adapted and suitable material. Any different or specific objectives related to the pupils own learning needs should be detailed in their School Support (Plus) Plan.

The school follows the DES child protection guidelines and has a child protection policy with the Principal as Designated Liaison Person (DLP). In cases of disclosure, the DLP will follow the procedures as set out in Children First.

## **Language**

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. There are two areas where the use of language is applied in RSE lessons;

- The formal use and teaching of language generally throughout the school
- The use of language in discussion through your formal RSE lessons

## **Questions**

- All questions answered will reflect the parameters of the curriculum. Teachers should respond to such questions by saying that these are topics which they will learn about as they get older or to give the child a brief age appropriate response. A question box will be used in every classroom.
- When deciding whether it is appropriate to answer a question or not the teacher should consider

- The age and stage of development of the children
- The ethos the school
- The RSE policy
- The content objectives of the SPHE curriculum guidelines
- Suggested ways of setting limits are to say:
  - I'll do my best to answer your questions but I may not be able to answer all of them
  - Would you be able to talk to your mum or dad about that?
  - That's something you'll learn about as you get older.
- The strategy implemented by the school responding to children who have questions about sexual orientation or/and who are being taunted about being gay is as advised by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) (see Appendix 3)
- Homophobic insults are treated in exactly the same way as racist or other insults – the teacher can calmly explain to the child that such insults are hurtful to the other person and are not acceptable. The teacher, depending on the developmental age of the child can use an appropriate explanation (see Appendix 4).
- An integral part of RSE is learning to respect others; this will include respect for all families.
- The Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2015 provide protection against discrimination on nine grounds, one of which is sexual orientation. Templeorum NS is obliged to protect students and staff from discrimination or sexual harassment.
- Where appropriate children can write questions and place them in a question box. Should any questions be asked by the children that are judged to be inappropriate, the teacher will refer the child to their parents or will explain that this will be covered at second level school.
- Parents welcome to view curriculum if they wish
- Regular contact with parents prior to the teaching of lessons involving "sensitive issues" in the form of the home/school link page accompanying such lessons in the RSE Resource Books OR Contact will be made with parents prior to the address by the outside speaker. Parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children in sexual matters. The school RSE programme acts as a

support only to parents, and parents retain the right to withdraw their children from classes.

## **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 interests
- Use of reflection or learning log.

## **Confidentiality**

The school follows the Children First Guidelines 2017 and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017

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 online/PDF format. Other resources that support the broader aims of RSE include

- Stay Safe programme
- Walk Tall programme
- Story books
- Tom's Flowers (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>)
- Busy Bodies (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>)
- INTO Different Families, Same Love poster

## **Provision of Ongoing Support**

- PDST support
- Opportunities provided by our Education Centre will be brought to the attention of staff
- Teachers are encouraged to attend CPD in RSE
- Staff meetings utilised as a platform for discussion and development of RSE materials
- SEN advisor
- Promotion and communication of resources available from [www.pdst.ie](http://www.pdst.ie)
- **Review**

This policy will be reviewed in 2021 by the RSE Policy Committee, and every two years thereafter otherwise this policy will be reviewed should a need arise. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made to the policy by the RSE Policy Committee.

*The policy will be reviewed after every two years. The policy may also 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 a meeting*

## Appendix 1

### RSE TOPICS

- **Bodily changes**
- Healthy eating, personal hygiene and 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 sequences of development of the human baby in the womb**
- **Introduction to puberty and changes (3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th Class)**
- **Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (5th and 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)**

## Appendix 2

Dear...

Relationships and Sexuality Education is an integral part of the SPHE programme. The sensitive elements of the Relationships and Sexuality programme are covered under the Strand Units, 'Growing and Changing' and 'Taking Care of my Body'. We will be completing these Strand Units with all class levels in the forthcoming weeks.

Topics from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> Class include:

- **Bodily changes**
- Healthy eating, personal hygiene and 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 sequences of development of the human baby in the womb**
- **Introduction to puberty and changes (3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th Class)**
- **Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (5th and 6th Class)**  
Language taught at this level will be....
- **Reproductive system of male/female adults (5th and 6th Class)** Language taught at this level will be....
- **Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed, loving relationship (5th, 6th Class)** Language taught at this level will be....

The class teacher will send home appropriate home school links pages from the Relationship and Sexuality manual which will outline the material that will be covered in class and encourage further discussion of the topics at home.

If you have any questions, please make an appointment to see the class teacher.

Yours sincerely

## **PDST Advice for Primary Schools – Sexual Orientation**

### **General Points**

- Schools can foster a culture that is accepting of difference. This can be expressed where appropriate, rather than making the assumption that everyone understands it.
- An integral part of RSE is learning to respect others; this will include respect for families or individuals who are different from the norm.
- The Equal Status Acts 2000 and 2004 provide protection against discrimination on nine grounds, one of which is sexual orientation. The Acts oblige those who manage schools to protect students and staff from discrimination or sexual harassment.
- If children are using the word ‘gay’ in a negative fashion it is better not to ignore it in the hope that it will go away. The same advice for any instance of bullying
- Schools are advised to develop a strategy for responding to children who have questions about sexual orientation or who are taunting others about being gay. This should be done in the context of the school’s ethos and RSE policy and with the awareness that primary school children are probably too young to engage in any detailed discussion of sexual identity.