

Killeen NS

Killeen, Birr, Co. Offaly

**Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy**

The following policy is an agreed approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in our school. It was drawn up as a result of a consultation process between parents, teachers and the Board of Management. It outlines a number of issues relevant to the teaching of RSE. They are:

1. Our school philosophy
2. Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)
3. Relationship of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) to Social and Personal Health Education (SPHE)
4. Current provision in Social Personal Health Education (SPHE)
5. Aims of the RSE programme
6. Management and Organisation of RSE in our school
7. Ongoing Support, Training and Development

In general terms it should be remembered that the extent to which the content is treated will be dependent on the emotional and intellectual maturity of the children. Thus, a degree of flexibility is advisable. Some adaptations of the curriculum guidelines will be required where it is considered that pupils are not emotionally ready to deal with sensitive issues such as conception, reproduction and physical changes at puberty. However, it is envisaged that all these sensitive issues will be dealt with before the end of a child’s primary schooling.

1. ***Our School Philosophy***

As a Catholic school we provide a climate where we strive to help all our children to achieve their full potential in a happy and caring environment. In doing so we are sensitive to the reality of our children’s lives in a changing world. It is our ultimate aim and hope that the children who have experienced our care will leave with a pride in themselves and in everything they do and go on to live happy and fulfilled lives.

We wish our pupils to enjoy learning in an atmosphere of mutual respect, co-operation and positive affirmation.

We commit ourselves to enabling each child achieve their full potential – spiritual, moral, physical, emotional and academic so that they may live a happy and contented life in harmony with themselves, others and the environment.

1. ***Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)***

RSE 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. It is the process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, intimacy, sexual and personal identity.

RSE is an integral part of Social and Personal Health Education (SPHE) and deals with aspects such as human growth and development, human sexuality, parenting, personal and social skills and relationships. It provides children with opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of these areas through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework.

1. ***Relationship of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) to Social and Personal Health Education (SPHE)***

SPHE explores issues such as relationships both at home and in school, building self-esteem, communication skills, decision making and appropriate expression of feelings. It includes information on healthy eating, alcohol, drugs, personal development, safety and social responsibility and environmental issues.

SPHE provides opportunities for pupil 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.

RSE will be taught as a component part of modules within the SPHE programme.

Sexually sensitive issues will be covered within the strand units:

Taking care of my body

Growing and Changing

Safety and Protection

1. ***Current Provision in Social Personal Health Education SPHE***

**A climate of care:**

Traditionally we have been a child centred school. The educational and emotional needs of the children in our care are central to our planning and policy making processes. We have always and will always continue to put the welfare of the children first.

**Policies which support SPHE/RSE**

A code of Behaviour has been drawn up for the school with the co-operation of teachers, parents and Board of management. In keeping with the sentiment and spirit of this policy, the school informally supports many of the aims on which SPHE/RSE are modelled. It encourages good behaviour, open communication, understanding and tolerance of difference and respect for self and for others. It recognises that both the pupils and teachers have rights and responsibilities in our school. A sense of responsibility is fostered, and attention is paid to the well-being of all members of the school community.

**Grow in Love Programme**

The programme is used in all classes, Junior infants to Sixth class. This programme extensively covers many of the topics of the SPHE and RSE programmes. The topics, particularly as they relate to self-esteem and inter-personal relationships, are dealt with as they arise in the programme.

**Health Education**

Topics related to hygiene, care of the body, diet, adequate sleep, etc. are all dealt with in the context of Physical Education and on formal and informal basis at appropriate levels in the classroom.

**Stay Safe Programme**

Children in the school are taught the programme every 2nd year.

1. ***Aims of the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Programme***
* To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child.
* To foster in the child a sense of care and respect for themselves and others and an appreciation of the dignity of every human being.
* To promote the health of the child and provide a foundation for healthy living in all its aspects.
* To help the child 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 and reproduction.
* To enable the child to be comfortable with the sexuality of oneself and others while growing and developing
* To enable the child to make informed decisions and choices about the social, personal and health dimensions of life both now and in the future.
* To develop in the child a sense of social responsibility, a commitment to active and participative citizenship and an appreciation of the democratic way of life.
* To enable the child to respect human and cultural diversity and to appreciate and understand the interdependent nature of the world.
1. ***Management and Organisation of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in our School***

It is necessary to make specific arrangements to deal with a number of issues related to the management and teaching of RSE. These issues will generally be dealt with in ways outlined below. However, should circumstance prevail where the principal and teachers find it necessary to make alterations this will be done with due regard to the spirit of the policy.

**A Developmental Approach**

The programme will be available in the school in order that parents may familiarise themselves with the content.

The programme reflects a spiral approach, where similar aspects are revisited in different ways according to the age, stage of development and readiness of the child.

In addressing sensitive issues, it will be necessary to take into account the different levels of emotional and physical development of the children and to adapt the programme accordingly.

All content objectives will be covered by the time the children leave 6th class.

**Vocabulary / Terminology used in each class relating to the sexually sensitive content of the RSE Programme**

***Junior Infants:*** “womb” as a special place where the baby grows

***Senior Infants:*** “penis” and “urethra” in the context of going to the toilet

 “bottom”

 “vagina”

 “breast” in the context of feeding

 “navel” where baby is joined to mother

***First Class:*** No new biological terms introduced

 Revision of infant terminology

***Second Class:*** “vagina” in the context of the opening through which the baby leaves the mother’s womb

***Third Class:*** Revision of term previously introduced.

***Fourth Class:*** The female body – Identify and explore physical changes at the onset of puberty

 Periods – in the context of personal hygiene and growth from girl to woman

 New life – Development of the baby in the womb from conception to birth

***Fifth Class:*** The Male body – Identify and explore physical changes at the onset of puberty.

***Sixth Class:*** Understand how conception to birth takes place. Building on the programme already covered.

The manner in which all issues are discussed will be with sensitivity, professionalism and an awareness of varying group dynamics within a class.

***The DES Teacher Guidelines state*** –

SPHE is spiral in nature. Similar content is revisited at different stages throughout the child’s time in school. This provides opportunities to consolidate and build on previous learning and allows for issues and topics to be explored and treated in a manner appropriate to the children’s needs, abilities and levels of maturity.

**Parents / Guardians**

Parents are the primary educators of their children and the school works in a supportive role.

A parent’s/guardian’s right to withdraw a pupil from the lessons dealing with sexually sensitive issues will be respected on the understanding that the parent/guardian is taking full responsibility for this aspect of their child’s education themselves. It is the responsibility of the parents/guardian to inform the school of this decision in writing. Should a child who is withdrawn from the sexually sensitive classes receive inappropriate information from others, it will be the responsibility of their parents/guardians to address the issues.

**Information regarding forthcoming lessons**

RSE lessons will be taught early in the second term. Beforehand, parents will be informed of the content of these lessons in summary. More detailed content of the lessons is available should they be required.

**Teachers**

Where a teacher is not delivering the sexually sensitive lessons of the programme, provision will be made by the Board of Management for those lessons to be delivered by a colleague or suitable visiting speaker. The name of the person delivering these lessons will be included. The principal/class teacher will brief that person to ensure that she/he is fully aware of the school policy in this area. The class teacher will be present during the lessons where a visiting speaker is present.

**Dealing with Questions**

It is normal that children should wish to ask questions in the area of RSE as they do in other subject areas. However, this area of the curriculum is treated somewhat differently from other subjects in that certain topics are regarded as sensitive. These are generally regarded as the areas which deal with growth and development and reproduction.

Where these topics are concerned, there can be quite a range of understanding and often misunderstanding, in the same class level. In order to preserve an attitude of respect and to ensure that parents are confident that only the matters agreed in the policy are dealt with in the various class levels we recommend that teachers emphasise that questions dealt with in the classroom setting will be confined to material covered in that or previous years.

Should a pupil require information that is not in line with the curriculum content?

* That information will not be given by the teacher
* Teacher may refer the question to parent/guardian
* Suggest that this information may be available at a later stage of the Curriculum

**Confidentially**

The private lives of pupils, teachers and parents/guardians will be respected.

**Sources and Resources**

The Principal, in consultation with the staff, will make provision for the delivery of the RSE programme. Lesson plans from the Department of Education and Skills will be assesses and where necessary amended by the school staff in line with this agreed Policy. Pupil maturity and readiness for the different stages of the Programme will be one of the criteria on which this assessment will be based. The Grow in Love Programme, Stay Safe Programme and selection of appropriate resources will also be used.

All resources will be available in the school for parents to view if they wish.

1. ***Ongoing Support and Development***

 In line with our policy of continuous professional development for our staff we will invite quest speaker or arrange workshops to deal with issues relevant to RSE from time to time.

At review, needs of teachers and other staff members will be assessed, and the resources of the Local Education Centre (Laois Ed. Centre), Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP) office and Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) office will be used to access further training and staff development. Opportunities provided by our Local Education Centre will be brought to the attention of staff members.

The Parents Association will be encouraged to continue their very valuable role in providing opportunities for parents to up skill on this aspect of parenting and to share resources they have found useful.

This policy was reviewed by the Board of Management on the 20th January 2022.

Jessica Whelahan Principal

Mark Mc Dowall Chairperson