

# RSE Policy

## School Philosophy

Scoil Mhaoiliosa NS is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Bishop of Cork & Ross. It is managed by a Board of Management, elected according to the procedures agreed by the Partners in Education. The school has a Catholic ethos and this ethos is a guiding principle in the formulation and implementation of this RSE Policy. This ethos recognises the value and dignity of each pupil and all those working in the school community, and aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person, including:

- a) relationship with God
- b) relationship with family
- c) relationship with teachers
- d) relationship with self
- e) relationship with others
- f) relationship with the environment.

This ethos also acknowledges the cultural and religious values of all the pupils attending the school. The school recognises that the parents are the primary educators of their children and we support them in that role.

In the area of RSE, above all, the schools' role is subsidiary to that of the parents. We support and compliment their work.

## Definition of RSE

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. (p. 5 NCCA curriculum and guidelines for RSE). RSE is the formal approach to educating children in:

- Relationships with others - parents, siblings, friends and the community in general
- Respect for themselves and others
- Physical development - bodily functions and changes, and personal hygiene
- Emotional development - maturing in society
- Parenting, personal and social skills and relationships
- Sexuality in context - part of a loving relationship.

## Relationship of RSE to SPHE and Religion

Social, Personal and Health Education contributes to developing the work of the school in promoting the health and well-being of children and young people. This happens in the context of their emotional, moral, social and spiritual growth, as well as their intellectual, physical, political, religious and creative development. (p.5 Going Forward Together Parents Information Booklet).

The key characteristics of this programme are that SPHE is a lifelong process and is a shared responsibility between family, school, health professionals and the community. The main strands of the

SPHE programme are:

- Myself
- Myself and Others
- Myself and the Wider World

It is clear that the Relationships and Sexuality Programme is correctly defined as being an integral part of the programme outlined above. Sexually sensitive issues will be covered within the strand units:

- Taking care of my body
- Growing and changing
- Safety and protection.

As stated previously, the content of all lessons will be governed by the schools' Catholic ethos as taught in the Grow in Love & Alive-O Religion programme.

### **Current Provision**

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.

Included in the school curriculum in \_\_\_\_\_ School is:

- Religious Education (Grow in Love/Alive-O)
- SPHE
- Stay Safe Programme
- SALT Conflict Resolution Programme- Restorative Justice
- Walk Tall Programme

### **Policies which support SPHE/RSE**

- Code of behaviour and discipline policy
- Headlice Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child protection policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Mobile phone policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- School Tour Policy
- School Visitors Policy
- Internet Safety Policy
- Administration of Medicines Policy.

In keeping with the sentiment and spirit of these policies, we informally support many of 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 well being of all of the members of the school community.

### **Aims of our RSE programme**

When due account is taken of intrinsic abilities and varying circumstances, the Relationships and Sexuality Education curriculum should enable the child to:

- 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, change and understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity
- Develop personal skills, which will help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships
- Develop some coping strategies to protect themselves 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 lifestyles and decision making.

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

### **Curriculum Matters**

The curriculum as published by the NCCA will be followed. All content objectives will be covered by the time each pupil leaves 6<sup>th</sup> class - (see Appendix A for further details). The curriculum will be taught from Infants to 6<sup>th</sup> class. It will be ideally be taught by the teaching staff. All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school and this policy.

- Sensitive issues classes are generally taught from infants to 4<sup>th</sup> during the months of March/April during alternate years and each year for 5/6<sup>th</sup> classes. (See Timetable)
- In a multi class situation, the younger class will be withdrawn when topics being taught are not age-appropriate
- When an outside speaker is used, the SPHE coordinator/principal will make them fully aware of school policy. Parents/guardians will be notified of the name of this speaker in advance of the lesson. The class teacher will remain with the class during the lesson.

### **Organisational Matters**

- Prior to the teaching of lessons involving "sensitive issues", parents will be informed by letter with an accompanying outline of the lesson (including vocabulary to be used) One week beforehand for Junior Infants to 4<sup>th</sup> class and 3 weeks prior to the lesson for 5/6<sup>th</sup>. A copy of the Busy Bodies Booklet will be accompany the letter for 5/6<sup>th</sup> class parents who will be encouraged to discuss the upcoming issues with their child prior to it being taught in class.
- It is a parents/guardians right to withdraw a pupil from these lessons. This request for withdrawal must be made in writing.
- If parents/guardians request the withdrawal of a child from RSE lessons, provision will be made for them to leave the classroom at that time. Supervision will be provided. With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom. Should a child who is withdrawn from the sexually sensitive classes receive inappropriate information from others outside of these classes, it will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian to address the issues.
- 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 delivered to the children, by another teacher.
- Parents are welcome to view the curriculum and may speak to the class teacher if they have any

concerns.

### **Dealing with Questions**

It is natural that children should wish to ask questions in the area of RSE. However, this area is treated somewhat differently from other subjects due to its sensitive nature.

All questions answered will reflect the parameters of the curriculum. Certain topics will not be discussed i.e. abortion, masturbation, homosexuality, contraception. Questions to the teacher may be written (Communication Box) and answered within the boundaries of the curriculum and school policy. No oral questions will be answered in the older classes. If any questions asked by the children are judged to be inappropriate, the teacher will refer the child to their parents, or state that this information may be available at a later stage of the curriculum. The school cannot guarantee confidentiality if a child asks a question of a personal nature or discloses personal information.

***At all times the child's and teacher's right to privacy will be maintained***

### **Parental Involvement**

Parents/Guardians are the primary educators of their children and as such the school supports them in this role. **As stated parents/guardians will be given the option of withdrawing their child from a particular lesson if they so wish.** The Parents' Council may on occasion arrange for speakers/meetings to help them in the task of communicating with their children on aspects of their development. Parents/Guardians may access copies of the policy from the school office, or school website.

### **Resources**

Lesson plans from the DES have been assessed and amended where necessary in line with this school policy. These lesson plans are available in the SPHE press for each class grouping. The Grow in Love, Alive O programme, the Stay safe programme, the Walk Tall Programme and a selection of other appropriate resources will also be used. All resources are available for parents/guardians to view if they so request prior to the delivery of the lesson.

### **Provision for Ongoing Support**

- Parents are welcome to view curriculum if they so wish.
- Funding will be sought for the provision of suitable materials when deemed necessary.
- Opportunities provided by our Education centre will be brought to the attention of staff members. Career development will be sought for staff when required, or as requested.

### **Review**

The staff, under the guidance of the Principal and teachers will review this policy every two years. This policy will also be reviewed should the need arise.

**Ratification and Communication**

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhaoilíosa School ratified this amended plan on \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_.

**Signed:**

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Mary Mc Carthy  
Chairperson BOM

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Orla O' Shea  
Principal

## **Appendix A**

### **RSE - Sensitive Areas**

#### **Junior Infants**

New Life - mention of baby in the womb.

#### **Senior Infants**

My Body - specific names for male and female sex organs - vagina, penis, womb.

#### **First Class**

New Life - New baby. Baby joined to mother by umbilical cord - mention breast feeding.

#### **Second Class**

Birth of baby through vagina. Mention umbilical cord and breast feeding.

#### **Third Class**

As for second class, but in more detail.

#### **Fourth Class**

Language around baby's development in womb, i.e., fertilised egg, cord. Pictures of foetuses (in RSE manual) to be used.

#### **Fifth and Sixth Classes**

Menstruation in the context of hygiene and growth from a girl to a woman.

Boys and girls development - puberty.

How does new life begin? ( 6<sup>th</sup> class only)

Biological facts as follows: ( 6<sup>th</sup> class only)

- What journey does the egg make?
- What journey does the sperm make?
- Where do they meet?
- What happens when they meet?
- Optional videos : Fifth class - Growing
- Sixth class - Busy Bodies.

## SPHE Whole School Plan

YEAR 1	YEAR 2
<b>Myself</b>	<b>Myself</b>
Safety and Protection (Jan-Feb) STAY SAFE	
Making Decisions (Mar-Apr) STAY SAFE	
	Self-Identity (Sept-Oct) RSE
	Taking Care of My Body (Jan-Feb) RSE
	Growing and Changing (Mar-Apr) RSE
<b>Myself and Others</b>	<b>Myself and Others</b>
Relating to Others (Sept-Oct) WALK TALL	
My Friends and Other People (May-June) WALK TALL	
	Myself and my Family (Nov-Dec) WALK TALL
<b>Myself and the Wider World</b>	<b>Myself and the Wider World</b>
Media Education (Nov-Dec) WALK TALL/RSE	
	Developing Citizenship (May-June) WALK TALL/RSE

- Growing and Changing will be taught each year in 5<sup>th</sup> (Busy Bodies); 6<sup>th</sup> (Babies)
- It is recommended that the teacher would choose some content from each of the three major strands in any one year. It is essential that a balance is achieved between skill development, the fostering of attitudes and the acquisition of information.
- From Junior Infants to Second Class *Making Decisions* is incorporated in the Strand Unit *Self Identity*. From Third Class upwards *Making Decisions* is a Strand Unit.
- Stay Safe will be taught each year in Junior and Senior Infants