

### **School Details**

- **Name:** St Philomena's National School
- **Address:** Convent Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly
- **Phone Number:** 05793 21983
- **Category:** Catholic, 10 teacher, urban
- **Enrolment:** 162 (2017/2018)

### **Introductory Statement & Rationale**

This policy statement is a record of whole school decisions in relation to the teaching of RSE in St Philomena's N.S. It was developed in 2013/2014 following a review of the 2007 RSE Policy. Its purpose is to:

- guide the teachers in adopting a consistent and coherent approach to the teaching and learning of RSE in our school
- inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE.
- guide teachers in their individual planning for RSE to ensure appropriate coverage of all aspects of the curriculum from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> Class

### **School Philosophy**

St Philomena's is a Catholic school and therefore all policies developed are 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 the 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
- Fosters in each child a sense of confidence and high self-esteem to enable them to live happy and fulfilled lives

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 complement their work.

## **Definition of RSE**

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy.

At primary level, RSE aims to help children learn about their own development and about their friendships and relationships with others. This work will be based on developing a good self-image, promoting respect for themselves and for others, and providing them with appropriate information.

This approach gives opportunities to children and young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible manner. (p.4 Going Forward Together, RSE Policy Guidelines)

## **Relationship of RSE to SPHE**

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 RSE Parents Information Booklet)

Social, Personal and Health Education looks at issues such as relationships at home and in school, building self-esteem, and learning skills of communication, decision-making and expressing feelings in an appropriate way. It also includes giving clear information on a range of topics, including healthy eating, alcohol, drugs, human growth and development, safety and social responsibility, and environmental issues.

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.

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

- Code of behaviour and discipline policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child protection policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Mobile phone policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- Supervision Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy

In keeping with the sentiment and spirit of these policies, we support informally 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.

### **The RSE programme**

RSE is a life long process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. In a school situation RSE, provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire a knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality through processes which enable them to form values and to establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework, appropriate to their age.

RSE will be taught in accordance with the Department's directives and within the ethos of the school.

The teaching methods used in the school are child centred and reflect the age and stage of development of each child. Sensitive issues will be dealt with appropriately.

The development of relationships is an integral part of all curriculum subjects. Aspects of RSE are taught during SPHE, Religion, Science, implementation of the Code of Behaviour etc. An integrative approach towards RSE ensures that the children encounter RSE in a holistic manner rather than in isolation.

### **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 and will be taught from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class. All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school and this policy.

RSE forms part of the SPHE curriculum. The lessons which address the 'sexually sensitive issues' (stages of development of baby in the womb, puberty, the reproductive system, conception, birth, sexual intercourse ) form part of the Strand Units 'Taking care of My Body' & 'Growing and Changing'

- **3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> classes**  
Name parts of the body including parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms.  
Sequence of development of the human baby from conception to birth.
- **5<sup>th</sup> class**  
Changes in male and female bodies as they grow  
Puberty  
Reproductive system of male and female
- **6<sup>th</sup> class**  
Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth

- Sensitive issues classes are generally taught to 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Class during the month of March/April. Topic 1 on the fifth class programme (menstruation) is generally delivered in October, with Topic 2 (puberty) in March/April. The sixth class programme is delivered during the child's final term in school
- In a multi class situation, the younger class will be withdrawn when topics being taught are not age-appropriate

Organisational Matters:

- Guidelines as laid down by the DES and as discussed in this document will be followed. It is recognised that during any year a special teacher/pupil relationship develops within a class. A trust and understanding of each other is acquired and having regard to this special relationship we recognise the need to allow the teachers flexibility/discretion as the need may arise when dealing with certain areas of the curriculum.
- It is envisaged that the programme will be taught in an integrated manner where possible
- Parents will be informed in advance when formal lessons on the sensitive areas of the programme e.g. puberty will be covered in the school
- If a parent wishes their child to be withdrawn from a formal RSE class, they must first discuss this with the teacher involved and the principal and then inform the principal in writing. Every effort will be made to withdraw the child with the minimum of fuss. Recognising that the DES do not allow a child to stay away from school, while RSE is being taught the child will be accommodated in another classroom.
- Parents have the responsibilities to become involved, to inform themselves of the programme content, to prepare children for the information they will acquire around the sensitive areas and to discuss areas covered in school in RSE/SPHE with their children
- In the class situation children will be encouraged to recognise that certain information is for them only i.e. that it is inappropriate for them to discuss information received about puberty, intercourse and birth with younger siblings, friends from outside school etc. It will be explained that other children will be given this information by their own parents and teachers when they reach the appropriate age.
- Children will be encouraged to discuss the materials being covered with their parents, guardians or older siblings. Where possible hand outs, worksheets etc will be provided to facilitate this
- Children will also be taught to recognise that certain personal disclosures are inappropriate in a class situation. Teachers will neither give nor request personal information. A respect for personal information/privacy will be emphasised
- 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.

- Parents will be informed if the teacher feels a particular child would benefit from more in depth discussion at home of a topic covered
- If a parent has a particular concern/issue which has arisen as a result of an RSE discussion in school they would be encouraged to discuss this with the teacher or principal
- As always parents are requested to inform teachers of special family situations. These will be dealt with in confidence. It is the experience of the teachers that it is to everyone's benefit if they are kept informed.
- 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.
- Parents are invited/welcome to view the curriculum, the materials and resources and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns.
- Student with GLD – Taking into account students' social and emotional development, instruction will be based on individual needs. Parents will be consulted around sensitive issues before they are included in the student's IEP

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 are not in the primary RSE/SPHE programme and will not be discussed i.e. abortion, masturbation, homosexuality, contraception.

Questions to the teacher may be written or oral within the group setting and answered within the boundaries of the curriculum and school policy. 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**

Children's questions will be dealt with, taking into account the following criteria, when relevant

- by being aware of circumstances in which the question has arisen
- by clarifying what information is required
- by deciding if the issue is relevant/who it is relevant to
- by giving an age appropriate response
- by deferring the question as one which will be answered in the next lesson, one which should be answered at home or one which will be answered more fully in the future

### **Parental involvement**

- Parents are welcome to view the curriculum & resources if they wish
- 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 (Appendix 1)
- Use of the home/school link page accompanying such lessons in the RSE Resource books
- The School/Parents' Association may on occasion arrange for speakers/meetings to help them in the task of communicating with their children on aspects of their development.

### **Resources**

- Lesson plans from the DES 'Resource Material for Relationships & Sexuality Education'. Each class teacher has a copy of the appropriate manual.
- 'Busy Bodies' DVD & Booklet. This DVD & Booklet were developed to support the teaching of the 5th and 6th class component of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) within the context of Social Personal and Health Education. It was produced by the Health Service Executive South working in partnership with the RSE Support Service, the National Parents Council (Primary) and the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme. It is available to download at [www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie)
- The 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**

This policy will be reviewed bi-annually. The partners will be given an opportunity to make comments and suggest amendments as appropriate. It is intended that the senior pupils' opinions will be included in this review. This policy may also be reviewed should a need arise.

*Policy adopted by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_*

*Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson*