

# **APPENDIX 1**

## **Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy**

**St. Joseph's BNS**

**Mar 2013**

## **Introductory Statement**

RSE is taught in schools as part of the SPHE curriculum. RSE begins long before the child attends school and continues after the child has left Primary school. Parents, therefore as the primary educators of children have a significant role to play in this part of their child's development. However, research has shown that very little sex education at home is planned or clearly thought through. The RSE curriculum aims to provide structured opportunities for young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them to think and act as moral, caring and responsible way. The DES material for RSE points out that schools support families so that children develop as well-rounded individuals. RSE is therefore a partnership between parents, teachers and management.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) encompasses the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, sexual identity and intimacy. In St. Joseph's we seek to promote the overall development of the child which involves the integration of Relationships and Sexuality into personal understanding, growth and development within the context of our Catholic ethos.

RSE is a partnership involving parents, teachers and management. The school has a responsibility to put in place an RSE policy as part of the wider, Social, Personal and Health Education strand of the curriculum.

## **Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education**

Relationships and Sexuality Education seeks to provide children with opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of relationships and human sexuality, through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework.

## **Rationale**

It is the responsibility of the BOM to ensure that St. Joseph's has an RSE Policy. There have been many changes in society requiring us to review our 2001 RSE policy.

- Earlier maturation of children;
- Evidence of earlier sexual activity;
- Health issues related to sexual practices;
- The informal and unsupervised contexts within which children acquire information about sexuality;
- Young people becoming aware through travel, the media and the revolution in communications of different traditions and cross cultural influences on sexual norms and behaviour.

The need for this policy arises from our schools obligation to provide for all the needs of the student body and respond appropriately to sensitive and emotive issues relating to emerging sexuality.

There is a great deal of power in language and not being familiar with the biological terms for the body can put children at a disadvantage. To give the children this vocabulary the teacher uses everyday situations to include words for the body and bodily functions, naturally and without undue emphasis.

The programme is taught within the Catholic ethos of the school and contemporary issues/topics are dealt with by the teacher at a level appropriate to the age and stage of development of pupils within a moral and spiritual framework. All content objectives will be covered by the time children leave 6th class.

### **Aims**

- To enhance the personal development, well being and self-esteem of each child.
- To enable each child to gain an understanding of and respect for human love, reproduction and sexual activity in a sensitive and measured way.
- To enable the child develop healthy friendships and relationships.
- To develop and promote a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life.

### **Relationships to School Ethos**

The school ethos affirms and supports close links between school, home and the Catholic Church. To this end parents were encouraged to play a meaningful role in the RSE policy formation through discussion, feedback through the B.O.M. and Parents' Council and the ratification of the finished product. Parents should involve themselves in the worksheets and activities that are associated with the programme. Parents also have the right to withhold their children from participating in RSE classes.

### **Outline of Content of the RSE Programme**

RSE will be provided throughout primary school from Infants to Sixth class, **each year**. It is a spiral curriculum which means that it will return to similar topics each year. It will develop them to suit the age and maturity of the children.

### **4 Strand Units: Myself, Myself and others, Taking care of my body and Growing and changing.**

**Myself** : Self identity, taking care of my body, growing and changing, safety and protection.

**Myself and Others**- Myself and family, friends and relating to other people.

**Taking Care of My Body**: Naming parts of the male and female body using appropriate biological terminology from Senior Infants upwards i.e. penis, vagina and breasts. Identifying physical changes, Understanding puberty and the Reproductive System (5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>)

**Growing and Changing** - The stages of development of a baby from conception to birth (4<sup>th</sup> class)  
Puberty and changes in my body (5<sup>th</sup> class). Understanding sexual relations within the context of a **committed loving relationship** (6<sup>th</sup> class).

### **Methodologies: Best Practice Approaches as in the SPHE Programme**

The following approaches represent best practice in the implementation of RSE:

- A whole school approach to the consistent implementation of RSE is essential.
- The classroom teacher is responsible for the implementation of RSE curriculum.
- The teaching of RSE is founded on ongoing relationships between pupil and teacher based on trust, understanding, mutual respect and consistency of implementation.
- The RSE curriculum is developmental and aims to foster the growth of pupils' social and personal skills in a holistic way.
- RSE must include a substantial skills development element in addition to fostering health promoting values and attitudes using age appropriate information.
- Active Learning is the principal teaching and learning approach recommended for the implementation of RSE.
- Individual themes such as RSE, Substance Misuse Prevention, Bereavement, Racism and Child Abuse Prevention should not be treated in isolation but rather in the context of the overall SPHE curriculum.

Research findings indicate that the following teaching approaches have limited effect and are counterproductive to the effective implementation of SPHE. In light of this we avoid the following approaches:

Scare tactics: information that intices fear, exaggerates negative consequences;

Sensationalist interventions: interventions that glamorise or portray risky behaviour in an exciting way;

Testimonials: stories focussed on dangerous lifestyles, creating heroes/heroines of individuals who give testimony;

Information only interventions such as ACCORD or district nurse

Information that is not age appropriate

Once Off/short term interventions

Normalising young people's risky behaviour: giving the impression that all young people engage in risky behaviour;

Didactic approach

These approaches will be explored using the following methodologies:

**Classroom discussion, Group work, Quiet time, DVD's, Circle Times, The Alive O 8** resource materials may be used in Senior Classes etc.

The teachers in the school follow a whole school plan on RSE which ensures all strands/strand units are combined at each class level. Guest speakers from 'ACCORD' or the District Nurse are invited to speak to Senior Classes where issues such as physical and emotional development,

bodily changes and sexual awakening can be explored. The cost of the lectures is borne by the BOM. (See guidelines re Visiting Speakers later)

**Content** (See Appendix 4 for specific details or [www.ecdrumcondra.ie](http://www.ecdrumcondra.ie))

The content as outlined in the RSE programme will be covered as it is provided by the Department of Education, with one exception - in the section 'The beginning of Puberty', menstruation will not be included in the 3rd and 4th class content. It will instead be taught in 5th and 6th class. *Sensitive issues to be taught in Term 3 are in Italics..*

Topics covered from Infants to 2nd class:

- Making and keeping friends
- Making age appropriate choices
- Appreciating family life and developing an understanding that reproduction, birth, life, growth and death are all part of the circle of life
- Recognizing and expressing feelings
- Self care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep (link with PE Healthy Eating Policy and SPHE)
- Expressing opinions and listening to others
- Keeping safe
- *Naming bodily parts using correct terminology from senior Infants upwards*
- *Bodily changes during growth and development.*

Topics covered in 3rd and 4th Classes include:

- Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise
- Keeping safe
- Expressing feelings
- Family relationships
- Making healthy and responsible decisions
- Forming friendships
- *Bodily changes*
- *The beginning of Puberty (Menstruation not to be included)*
- *The stages and sequence of development of a baby from conception to birth*

Topics covered in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Classes include-

- Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise
- Keeping safe
- Expressing and coping with changes in feelings
- Family relationships including the responsibilities of being a parent
- Making healthy and responsible decisions
- Different types of love
- *Bodily changes*
- *Puberty and Menstruation (from 3&4 Curriculum content)*
- *Reproduction, sexual intercourse and conception.*

## **Guidelines for Management, Organisation and communication of the RSE Programme**

Relationships and Sexuality Education is an on-going process throughout life. A child's first experience of love, of intimacy and of relationships takes place in the family. Parents and the family are acknowledged as the primary educators of their children. We work in a supportive role with the parents of our school, by complementing their role with a school based programme in RSE. The programme is taught within the ethos of the school and contemporary issues/topics are dealt with by the teacher at a level appropriate to the age and stage of development of pupils within a moral and spiritual framework.

- The sections within the RSE programme which have been identified as sensitive issues will be taught **in Term 3, each year, in each class**. **All the content objectives** of the RSE Programme will be covered by the time children leave sixth class.

The **teachers' right to opt out** will be honoured which will not affect the teaching of the subject. A teacher wishing to withdraw from the teaching should inform the Principal directly, well in advance of Term 3, to allow for time to organise someone else to teach the lessons.

If a visitor or guest speaker is invited to a class to enhance the delivery of the RSE programme, the BOM has to approve the speaker initially and are guided by DES Circulars in relation to RSE Speaker as follows:

1. The class teacher plans the specific material to be covered guided by the Curriculum and school Policy.
2. The visitor is always under the guidance and supervision of the class teacher who is always in attendance
3. Must only use material that has been approved by the BOM and the Principal as being age and stage appropriate
4. Parents must be made aware that a visitor will engage with the class.

- **Parents will be informed by letter (Appendix 2) two weeks prior to the teaching of sensitive issues.** This will allow time for parents to discuss topics with the child and meet the teacher, if required, and/or follow the appropriate procedure for opting out of the RSE programme. Parents are encouraged to use this opportunity to discuss these topics with their children beforehand. Parents are advised to inform child-minders etc. that the sensitive topics are going to be discussed.

- 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. A **parent's right to withdraw** a pupil from the sensitive issues process will be honoured on the understanding that the parent(s) is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves. Parents are obliged to ***inform the school in writing*** of their decision to withdraw the child from the sensitive issues classes. However parents who opt to withdraw their child from discrete RSE lessons should be

aware that the teacher or other pupils may use language from the RSE lessons in other areas of the curriculum, in keeping with the overall climate and atmosphere of the school. Any parent who wishes to withdraw their child are asked to discuss with the principal how this may be facilitated.

- **Multi-Grade Classes:** When a topic being taught does not apply to a particular class present Support Teachers will take the 'extra' class in their room, allowing the class teacher to deliver the RSE lesson in an age appropriate manner.
- **Teachers do not cover certain topics** such as artificial contraception and same sex unions. While our school and the Catholic Church respect the right of every individual and their sexuality, the Church does not give its blessing to the unions of same sexes. Questions arising from curriculum content will be addressed by the teacher or by the visitor in a sensible, sensitive and age-appropriate manner. Questions arising outside of the curriculum will be referred back to the parent(s). Children who ask questions in class on content outside the designated curriculum are encouraged to discuss the issue with their parents. Parents are informed and asked to talk to their child. Support is offered to the parent in the form of information, support agencies, to assist a parent to inform their child in an accurate and suitable way. The school has no responsibility for any information which the pupil may receive outside the direct teaching of the RSE lessons
- **Curriculum books and resource materials** are available in the school and parents are welcome to borrow them if desired.

### **Child Protection**

The school follows the DES Child Protection guidelines and has a **Child Protection policy with Ann McQuillan as Designated Liaison Person and Eamonn Costello as Deputy DLP**. In cases of disclosure the DLP will follow the procedures as set out in Children First.

### **Special Needs Pupils**

Children with SEN will receive RSE after consultation and negotiation with their parents. These pupils will be taught on a need to know basis and the depth of knowledge given will be dependent on their level of disability

### **Teacher Choice/Staff Development**

The teacher's right to choose is enshrined in the policy and teachers may wish not to teach specific aspects of the programme or require additional resources. In this case team teaching will apply whereby teachers will swap classes for specific lessons to cover the content as outlined by the class teacher. A suitable speaker from Accord may also be employed by the B.O.M, if deemed necessary. The teacher may need to plan the specific material to be covered and should be present during the talk.

The staff will be encouraged to engage in training in:

- The Child House Prevention Programme (Stay Safe)
- Relationships and Sexuality Programme (RSE)
- Walk Tall Programme (SMPP).

This will be funded by the Board of Management, as appropriate.

The whole School Plan for St. Joseph's is available on the server in school and hard copies in the Staffroom. Each teacher is responsible for his/her long term and short term planning comprising of a yearly and fortnightly scheme of work. A Monthly Report is retained in the Principals Office.

The resource book, '**Making the Links**,'(Appendix 4) will be used to integrate the three programmes relevant to RSE, Stay Safe, Walk Tall and RSE.

### **Evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed regularly with latest review in Sept 2012. Teachers' observations, community feedback and parents' questionnaires will be used to gather feedback prior to this review.

### **Ratification**

This policy was initially ratified by the BoM at a meeting on the September 2003.

### **Implementation**

Reviewed in context of circular 22/10 SPHE – Best Practice Guidelines for Primary Schools

*Last reviewed at Staff Meeting Mar 2013 and subsequently by the BOM.*

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



## Appendix 2: RSE letter for Parents.

Dear Parent/Guardian,

**Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE)** is a very important element of the school curriculum. SPHE covers a wide range of topics such as **self-identity, making decisions, citizenship and relationships**, which equip children with many of the skills and knowledge needed in today's world. The Curriculum is very often sub-divided into 3 further programmes called **Walk Tall, Stay Safe and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)**. We teach one programme each term and this term it is the **RSE Programme**. Full information about the content of each of these programmes is available from their relevant websites or via Department website.

The **Relationship and Sexuality Education** programme (**RSE**) includes the learning, understanding and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, sexual identity and intimacy.

The main aims of the RSE programme are:

- To enhance the personal development, well-being and self-esteem of each child
- To enable each child to gain an understanding of and respect for human love, reproduction and sexual activity in a sensitive and measured way
- To enable the child develop healthy friendships and relationships
- To develop and promote a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life.

Relationships and Sexuality Education is an on-going process throughout life. A child's first experience of love, of intimacy and of relationships takes place in the family. Parents and the family are acknowledged as the primary educators of their children. We work in a supportive role with the parents of our school, by complementing their role with a school based programme in RSE. The programme is taught within the ethos of the school and contemporary issues/topics are dealt with by the teacher at a level appropriate to the age and stage of development of pupils within a moral and spiritual framework.

The **content of the programme** falls under the following headings:

- **Myself** - Self identity, taking care of my body, growing and changing, safety.
- **Myself and Others** - Myself and family, friends and relating to other people.
- **Taking Care of My Body** - Naming parts of the male and female body using appropriate terminology (from Senior Infants upwards). Identifying physical changes. Understanding puberty and the Reproductive System (Fifth & Sixth Classes only)
- **Growing and Changing** - The stages of development of a baby from conception to birth (Middle Classes). Understanding sexual relations within the context of a committed loving relationship (Senior Classes).

Within this content, there are a number of sensitive issues such as conception and reproduction and that these lessons will take place in the coming weeks. We encourage you to talk to your son about what he will learn through RSE in a mature and respectful way.

The following guidelines have been put in place to ensure everyone is happy with the delivery of the RSE programme. These are taken from our RSE policy, which, along with all other school policies, is available to parents on request from the office and our website – [www.stjosephskilcock.com](http://www.stjosephskilcock.com). Please read through the guidelines on the respective websites and if you still have concerns please contact me.

**Parents will be informed by letter 2 weeks prior to the teaching of sensitive issues from the RSE Programme.** In 5<sup>th</sup> & Sixth classes, parents will be informed if a visitor from 'ACCORD' will be visiting their son's class and the content being addressed will be issued in advance of the visit. This will allow time for parents to discuss topics with the child and meet the teacher, if required, and/or follow the appropriate procedure for opting out of the RSE programme. Parents are encouraged to use this opportunity to discuss these topics with their children beforehand. Parents are advised to inform child-minders etc. that the sensitive topics are going to be discussed.

A **parent's right to withdraw** a pupil from the sensitive issues process will be honoured on the understanding that the parent(s) is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves. This **PROGRAMME is MANDATORY for ALL children** in Ireland and we are obligated to deliver it, in full, to each child **under Child Protection**. Parents are *obliged to inform the school in writing should they wish to withdraw their child from the 2 sensitive lessons AND assure the school that they will deliver the programme themselves.* Any parent who wishes to withdraw their child are asked to discuss with the principal as to how this may be facilitated.

**Teachers do not cover certain topics** such as artificial contraception and same sex unions. While the Catholic Church respects the right of every individual and their sexuality, the Church does not give its blessing to the unions of same sexes. Questions arising from curriculum content will be addressed by the teacher or by the visitor (in senior classes) in a sensible, sensitive and age-appropriate manner. Questions arising outside of the curriculum will be referred back to the parent(s). Children who ask questions in class on content outside the designated curriculum are encouraged to discuss the issue with their parents. Parents are informed and asked to talk to their child. Support is offered to the parent in the form of information, support agencies, to assist a parent to inform their child in an accurate and suitable way. The school has no responsibility for any information which the pupil may receive outside the direct teaching of the RSE lessons

**Curriculum books and resource materials** are available in the school and parents are welcome to borrow them, if desired. They are also available online by inputting into a search engine under their particular titles. **If we do not hear from you we assume you are happy for your son to participate in the programme.**

We are very aware of the importance and sensitivity of teaching the RSE programme to our pupils and we thank you for your on-going support in ensuring your son will have received a balanced education in St. Joseph's, which will prepare them not only for secondary school, but for life.

*Yours sincerely,*

**Ann Mc Quillan. Principal teacher**