

Relationships & Sexuality Education RSE Policy

April 2018
(Reviewed 18/01/2022)

This policy, in accordance with the provisions of the Child Care Act (1991), Education Act (1998), Education (Welfare) Act (2000) and the revised 'Primary School Curriculum Guidelines' (1999), details the aims and the content of the agreed programme for the provision and the delivery of '*Relationships & Sexuality Education (RSE)*' in Scoil Mhuire na nGrást.

We trust that by detailing these procedures, it will assist all parties in relation to the content of this important subject area. The Chairperson / Principal will be happy to clarify any matters arising from this policy, should it be required.

School Ethos

Scoil Mhuire na nGrást, as an inclusive primary school, under Patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Cork & Ross, is committed to the education and development of each pupil. We welcome pupils of all denominations and from every culture and social background. We strive to foster each child's physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual development. We recognise that every child has a right to equal opportunity in education and have special concern for children in difficult circumstances and with special needs. We promote self-worth, love of learning, personal responsibility and the belief that we can make our world a better place.

The school, in partnership with pupils, parents, teachers and the wider parish community endeavours to:

Create a happy and secure environment in which to educate each child

Foster and develop their gifts and talents

Enable them to grow into happy, well integrated young people respecting themselves and others

Our school plays an active part in developing a sense of community in Scoil Mhuire na nGrást.

Our school prides itself on being an environment that is warm, friendly, safe, supportive, inclusive and inviting. We strive to maintain this positive climate for the entire school community. In this space the child is encouraged to reach his/her full potential on a holistic level.

Definition of RSE

RSE aims to help children learn, at home and in school, 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 others and providing them with appropriate information. RSE also aims to provide opportunities for children and young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

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.

Current Provision

- SPHE curriculum followed as per DES recommendations.
- Use of RSE Manuals, relevant HSE booklets (in 3rd class – *Tom's Flower Power* & Parent booklet & in 6th class – *Busy Bodies* booklet), Busy Bodies DVD and Busy Bodies booklets
- Religious Education taught through the *Grow in Love* programme
- Currently, the teachers cover all aspects of RSE with their classes every second year.

Aims of our RSE programme

- To help young people develop healthy friendships and relationships
- To foster an understanding of and healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework
- To promote knowledge of and respect for human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction
- To understand the physical changes taking place with the onset of puberty
- To promote a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life
- To enable the child to feel comfortable with his/her sexuality and that of others

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School

[1] Organisational Matters

- Guidelines as laid down by the Department of Education and Skills and as discussed in this document will be followed.
- It is envisaged that the programme will be taught in an integrated manner where possible.
- Curriculum Content –The curriculum by NCCA will be followed as published, and will be taught from infants to 6th class. All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school, the whole school plan for SPHE and the RSE policy. Each class teacher will teach the content for their class level each year as laid out in the curriculum, and will utilise the RSE manuals to complement their teaching.
- Management of RSE
 - The strands *Taking Care of my Body* & *Growing and Changing* are covered in 'Year 1' of a two-year SPHE plan.
 - The sensitive lessons are covered as part of these broad topics (as outlined below and see appendix 1)
 - Special arrangements exist for the delivery of the sensitive elements from 4th class up (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. Parents will be consulted around sensitive issues (See below)

Parents

- Parents are to be informed in advance of the programme content by class teacher. *(See Appendix 2 for sample letter)* They will also be informed in advance of the formal lessons on the sensitive areas of the programme e.g. Puberty, sexual intercourse. *(See Appendix 3 for sample letter)*
- Parents will be given weblinks to any DVDs being used in the teaching of RSE e.g. Busy Bodies
- Parents have the responsibility 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.
- If a parent has a particular concern/ issue in relation to the teachings of the RSE programme, they are encouraged to discuss same with the teacher or the 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.

[2] Curriculum Matters

- The Curriculum by NCCA will be followed as published and will be taught in Infants to 6th class. All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school and the policy. Each class teacher will teach the content for their class level.
- Children will be encouraged to discuss material being covered in class with their parents or guardians. Where possible handouts, worksheets etc. will be provided to facilitate this; e.g. Home-School Links pages of the RSE manuals.
- In a 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 et. It will be explained that other children will be given this information by their own parents and teachers when it is developmentally appropriate for them to receive it. However, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed outside of the school or on the yard.
- A respect for personal privacy and information will be emphasised. Teachers will neither give nor request personal information. Children will also be taught to recognise that certain personal disclosures are inappropriate within a group setting.

Topics covered up to 2nd class include:

- Keeping Safe
- Bodily changes during growth and birth
- Making age-appropriate choices
- Appreciating family life
- Recognising and expressing feelings
- Self-care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep
- Expressing opinions and listening to others
- *Naming the parts of the male/female body using appropriate anatomical terms (Junior/ Senior Infants) *See Appendix 1 for details*
- *Naming the parts of the male/female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions (1st/ 2nd) *See Appendix 1 for details*

Topics covered up to sixth class include:

- Bodily changes
- Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise
- Keeping Safe
- Expressing feelings
- Family relationships- Same Love/ Different Families (INTO Resource)
- Making healthy and responsible decisions
- Forming friendships
- *Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (Fourth class)*
- *Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (Fourth class)*
- *Reproductive system of male/female adults (Fifth & Sixth Class) *See Appendix 1 for details*
- *Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a loving, committed relationship. (Sixth Class) *See Appendix 1 for details*

- Sensitive issues (in italic above) may be dealt with in the following class groupings;

Puberty:

Boys and girls mixed together in fourth class for main lessons.

Mini separate lessons for girls and the boys in the following days to allow them additional time to answer more specific questions / concerns

Puberty, Intercourse & Birth:

Separate lessons for girls and the boys

[3] Dealing with Questions

- A question box may be used throughout lessons where appropriate
- Teachers will previously decide upon specific language and concepts for each class level in line with the SPHE curriculum and school ethos. **See Appendix 1 for details*
- 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 is it relevant to
- By giving a developmentally or age- appropriate answer
- 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

[4] Students with SEN

- Taking into account student's cognitive, social and emotional development and their class level (4th, 5th & 6th Class), instruction on the sensitive aspects of RSE, will be based on individual needs and decided together by parents, mainstream teachers and SETs during the child's IEP meeting. The SETs will aid the mainstream teacher with the facilitation of appropriate and agreed RSE provision for the child with SEN. Careful consideration will be given to the NCCA Guidelines for Moderate and Severe and Profound General Learning Disabilities for RSE provision.
- There will be ongoing assessment of the programme through observation by and feedback from parents, teachers and pupils.

Provision of Ongoing Support

- Parents are welcome, by appointment, to view the curriculum and resource materials if they so 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. 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. Should a parent decide to withdraw their child from RSE lessons in school, they will be asked to put this in writing with reasons for doing so. They will also be asked to include a sentence stipulating that they will take full responsibility to teach RSE to their child instead.

Links to other Policy Areas

- Child Safeguarding Policy
- SPHE Policy

Child Protection: The school follows the DES child protection guidelines and has a child protection policy with the Principal as Designated Liaison Person. In cases of disclosure, the DLP will follow the procedures as set out in Children First 2017.

Review

- This policy will be reviewed after the initial twelve-month period has passed by the RSE Policy Committee, and every two years thereafter. This policy will be reviewed should a need arise. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made by the RSE Policy Committee.
- This policy was reviewed during 2021/2022 (Term 1)

■ Implementation

(a) Roles and Responsibilities:

Scoil Mhuire na nGrást believes that the school community must be involved to successfully implement SPHE. Therefore, the teaching staff will implement this plan with the support of the Board of Management, Parents and the Local Community.

(b) Timeframe:

The plan will be implemented by September 2018.

■ **Review**

This policy was reviewed during Term 1 (2021/2022).

■ **Ratification and Communication**

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire na nGrast ratified this policy on 10/04/2018. Following review, revisions were ratified by the BOM on 18/01/2022.

Parents may view this policy on the school website.

Signed:



Chairman, BoM




Principal

Date: 18/01/2022

Appendix 1

Lesson Content – Sensitive Issues

Class	Lesson	Strand Unit	Language	Date	Home/School
J.I. S.I.	Theme 6 Caring for new life p.137 Theme 7 My Body p.147	Growing and changing Taking care of my body	Penis/Vagina or Vulva Naming parts of male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms	Term 2 every second year	S.I. RSE Manual p. 145 S.I. RSE Manual p. 156
1 st 2 nd	Theme 6 The wonder of new life p.59/p.151 Theme 7 How my body works p67 When my body needs special care p.161 Theme 8 Growing means changing p. 77/p.171	Growing and changing Taking care of my body	As above: introduce womb, breast, breast feeding, urethra. Naming as above and identify some of the functions.	Term 2 every second year	RSE Manual p. 65, 160, 169
3 rd 4 th	Theme 6 Preparing for new life p.69 Theme 6 from 4th class The wonder of new life p.169 Theme 8 As I grow, I change p.93 Theme 8 (girls only in 4th class) Growing and changing p.195	Growing and changing	Discuss the stages and sequence of development of human baby in the womb. Umbilical cord. Any questions as to how the baby got there cannot be answered by the teacher.	Term 2 every second year 4 th class will cover content every year	RSE Manual p. 181 <i>HSE Booklets – Tom’s Flower Power</i> for pupils & related parent booklet (annually)
5 th 6 th	Theme 6 My body grows and changes p.81 Theme 7 The wonder of new life p.93 Theme 8 Caring for new life p.103 Theme 2 Different kinds of love p.141	Growing and changing Taking care of my body	Changes that occur in boys and girls at the onset of puberty. Reproductive system of male/female adults. Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within context of a loving, committed relationship.	Term 2 every second year 6 th class will cover content every year	RSE Manual p. 92,101,112,149 Busy Body Booklets and DVDS 

Appendix 2

Dear Parent/ Guardian,

Date: _____

Relationships and Sexuality education is an integral part of the Social, Personal, and Health Education (S.P.H.E) curriculum as per Department of Education & Skills guidelines. The sensitive elements of the Relationships & Sexuality education programme that will be covered with your child in the forthcoming weeks are summarised in the box below. It is important that you talk to your son/daughter about these topics so your child will feel prepared for the content of the programme. During all lessons the anatomically correct names for body parts will be used.

JUNIOR INFANTS TO SECOND CLASS

MYSELF:

Taking Care of My Body: Caring for one's body, respect for one's body and that of others, diet, hygiene, being able to name parts of male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms. (penis/ vagina)

Growing and Changing: Understanding growth and change, exploring feelings, becoming aware of new life and birth, understanding a baby's needs.

THIRD CLASS TO SIXTH CLASS

Taking Care of My Body: Understanding health, dangers of substance misuse, personal hygiene, nutrition. For 4th Class: understanding physical changes for boys and girls (puberty). For 5th/6th class children: understanding physical and other changes at puberty, understanding the male and female reproductive system.

Growing and Changing: Identifying and discussing feelings, having a positive sense of self. For 3rd/4th class children: recognising how feelings are influenced by puberty, being able to discuss the development of the human baby during pregnancy, For 6th Class children: understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth in the context of a committed, loving relationship.

If you have any questions/ queries please schedule an appointment with the class teacher who will be happy to meet with you. Our RSE policy is also available on our school website:

Thank you,

Class Teacher

*Scoil Mhuire na nGrást,
Béal Guala,
Co. Chorcaí.*

*Principal: Diarmuid Hennessy
Deputy Principal: Ms. Catherine Murphy*

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APPENDIX 3 - SAMPLE LETTER

Date - September

Dear Parent/Guardian,

RELATIONSHIP & SEXUALITY EDUCATION PROGRAMME (RSE) – 6th CLASS

*RSE is part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and provides children with structured opportunities to develop the knowledge, attitudes, values, beliefs and practical skills necessary to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships as children and, subsequently, as adults. RSE is taught in partnership with parents and guardians. In order to support parent involvement in this process, we are enclosing an information booklet, *Busy Bodies*, from the HSE. Aspects of the booklet deal with the strand units 'Growing & Changing' & 'Taking Care of My Body'. A suite of related videos to support the booklet can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/user/96707063/folder/729017>. It is hoped that this information will be of support and guidance when discussing this topic with your child. It is suggested that you retain the booklet as it may prove a useful resource at various other stages in your child's adolescent journey. Additional HSE resources in this area may also be accessed at <https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/for-parents/resources/>*

*Sixth class pupils will be shown the *Busy Bodies* above-mentioned suite of videos by their class teacher in November. These video clips were produced by the HSE for children between the ages of approximately 10 –14 years old and were developed to complement the teaching of RSE (<https://pdst.ie/node/811>) in the school setting. It is fully animated and presents information in a safe, fun and easily understood format.*

Yours faithfully,

Class Teacher

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