

# **Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy**

## **Social, Personal and Health Education**

**Note : Please read this policy in conjunction with other school policies**

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### **Contents**

- **Our School's Philosophy/ Mission statement**
- **Rights and responsibilities of Parents/Guardians**
- **Rights and responsibilities of Teachers**
- **Definition of Social, Personal and Health Education**
- **Definition of RSE and relationship to SPHE**
- **Management and Organisation of RSE in our school**
  - ❖ Content, Language, Sensitive issues
  - ❖ Co-education
  - ❖ Answering questions
  - ❖ Other curricular areas
  - ❖ Sources and resources
- **Provision for ongoing support, development and review**

## **Our School's Philosophy/ Mission statement**

Our school is a primary school under the patronage of Educate Together. We are co-educational, multi-denominational, child-centred in our approach and democratically run.

Our school is committed to the motto of “Learn together to live together” through the ethos, stated values and the day-to-day relationships both within the school and with the extended community. These principles underpin the delivery of the school curriculum as specified by the Department of Education and Science. We recognize the statutory nature of the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education as a component of the subject Social, Personal and Health Education.

## **Rights and responsibilities of Parents/Guardians**

In SPHE and RSE parents are acknowledged as the primary educators of their children and the school will work in a supportive role. On enrolment parents will be provided with an overview of the SPHE/RSE programme and the list of possible sensitive issues. An outline of the lessons / sensitive issues will be available to parents before they are taught, so that they can prepare the child before it is dealt with in school, if they so wish. A parent's right to **withdraw** a pupil from the process will be honoured on the understanding that the parent is taking full responsibility for this aspect of the child's education.

It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the school in **writing** of this decision. If a child is withdrawn for the teaching of sensitive issues we cannot guarantee confidentiality i.e. that the other children will not tell inform him/her about what was taught.

## **Rights and responsibilities of Teachers**

Each class teacher will teach the SPHE programme. A teacher's right to opt out from teaching the sensitive issues will be honoured. If a member of staff is unavailable to teach the sensitive issues, provisions for the teaching of these lessons will be made by another member of the teaching staff, as organised by the principal.

### **Definition of Social, Personal and Health Education**

SPHE is the process that enables pupils to develop an understanding of themselves. It provides particular opportunities to foster personal development, health and the well being of the individual child, to help him/her to create and maintain supportive relationships and become an active and responsible citizen in society. The curriculum is presented in three strands: Myself, Myself and Others and Myself and the Wider World.

### **Definition of RSE and relationship to SPHE and our ethical education curriculum**

RSE is an integral part of 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. This framework is closely linked to the four strands of the ethical education curriculum namely: the moral and spiritual strand, equality and justice, belief systems and ethics and environment. The aim of these strands is to nurture and develop in the children a caring and responsible approach to society.

### **The Aims of Relationships and Sexuality Education**

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

## Management and Organisation of RSE in our school

- **A developmental approach**

Teaching about relationships and sexuality will be delivered in the context of S.P.H.E. All content objectives will be taught developmentally by the time the children leave 6<sup>th</sup> class. All issues will be discussed with sensitivity, professionalism and awareness of the varying levels of development within a class

- **RSE Content**

This section is an outline of the content of the programme, listing the themes, aims and with brief descriptions of how the possible sexually sensitive issues are to be taught. The material that will be taught is contained in four manuals, which parents may view upon request. Opportunities will be afforded to parents /guardians to engage with their children on the content at various stages throughout the programme. Each set of activities invites the participation of parents/ guardians. There is also a home-school links page for each theme. It is envisaged that a variety of the following methodologies will be used in the teaching of the programme

Stories and poems	Classroom discussion	Group work
Educational Drama	Games	Art activities
Quiet time	Circle time	

- **Language**

In the RSE Booklet for Parents ,”Going Forward Together”, the following rationale is given for the use of correct terminology for body parts.

*“It is important that children learn the appropriate vocabulary for discussing aspects of life related to sexuality, growing up and their bodies physical changes so that they can communicate confidently about themselves. When children begin school, it is not unusual, indeed it is quite normal, for them to have other names for their genitals. However, the use of proper terms for parts of the body and bodily functions should be encouraged from the earliest stage, so that these terms are given a status and an acceptability. As children grow older and become more comfortable with these words, they can discuss aspects of*

*their growth and development with greater ease. They are also less likely to resort to inappropriate or vulgar language when referring to the body or bodily functions.”*

In order to give children the vocabulary, the teacher will use everyday situations to include words for the body, and bodily functions, **naturally and without undue emphasis**, in particular lessons and if an opportunity arose to give a child the correct vocabulary. The following list is a summary of the sexually sensitive issues, which are detailed in the following pages and can be viewed in full through the office.

- **Language Summary**

**Senior infants:** womb, breast-feeding, penis, vagina

**1<sup>st</sup> class:** Urine passes through the penis in boys and the urethra in girls, baby in womb for 9 months

**2<sup>nd</sup> class:** penis and urethra, vagina, ( revised) navel, breast

**4<sup>th</sup> class:** developing foetus, changes in puberty: body shape, voice changes, mood changes, skin changes, increases in body hair, menstruation\*

(menstruation will be taught to fourth class girls only)

**5<sup>th</sup> class:** puberty (revised), menstruation, physical changes in boys and girls; reproduction

**6<sup>th</sup> class:** sexual intercourse in the context of a loving, committed relationship

- **Co-education**

Le Cheile is a co-educational school. We will teach the boys and girls together except for the following lessons.

- ✓ Fourth class girls will be taught the lesson on menstruation separately to boys
- ✓ Fifth and Sixth class boys and girls will be taught the lessons on reproduction separately, giving each group exactly the same information and lesson. The two groups will then be brought back together for discussion and follow-up lesson.

- **Answering Questions**

Should a pupil require information that is **not** in line with the curriculum content, as specified in the policy and **not** considered to be age-appropriate for the general body of pupils, the school will not answer the question but will refer the child to his/her parents. Teachers will not answer personal questions about themselves nor require the child to give information of a personal nature, which they do not wish to share. Teachers will never invalidate a question, a suitable answer would be “ I hear your question but I cannot answer it for you. I would suggest you talk to your parents about that.”

- **RSE policy and other curricular areas**

Our policy on R.S.E. will also inform the teaching of the Strand "Living Things" in Science. There is also some overlap with Arts education, English and the ethical curriculum as previously discussed.

- **Sources and Resources**

We will use the four RSE manuals as prepared by the Department of Education and Science and the National Council Curriculum and Assessment (1998)

- **Provision for ongoing support, development and review**

- ✓ Where necessary or if opportunities arise the Board of Management may be requested to fund/support in-career development for teachers.
- ✓ Implementation began in November 2005.
- ✓ This policy and the RSE programme is reviewed every four years it was last reviewed in autumn 2016.
- ✓ R.S.E. resources will also be reviewed to ensure they are kept up to date.