



St Laurence's National School, Chapelizod

Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy

April 2018

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

School Details

St. Laurence's National School is a vertical, co-educational school in Dublin 20. The school is under the patronage of the Church of Ireland. There are 2 classrooms with multi-grade classes in each.

Introductory Statement

All schools are required to have an RSE policy to detail how RSE is taught in the school, including the sensitive aspects. This policy is an approved approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE both formally and informally. This is the first draft of a stand-alone RSE Policy, having previously been included in other policy documents.

School Philosophy

We recognise that SPHE is intrinsic to the teaching and learning that occurs both formally and informally in school and in the classroom. Through our SPHE programme and subsequently through RSE, we wish to assist children to develop feelings of self-worth and self-confidence while encouraging their ability to relate to others in a positive way. The curriculum also encourages children to be aware of their rights as an individual while at the same time accepting responsibility for their actions as members of the school and the wider community. Our school values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. Our ethos means that we value respect, tolerance and openness through the lived experience of the children and school community. Parents have the primary role in the social, personal and health education of their children so their involvement will be encouraged as much as possible. SPHE and RSE are key components in supporting our school and children to develop into healthy young adults.

Definition of RSE

Relationships and Sexuality Education is an integral part of SPHE 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. In particular, it addresses the meaning of human sexuality, relationships, growth and development, relevant to personal and social skills.

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.

SPHE:

- Is a lifelong process and consequently RSE is a continual process throughout primary school and is not confined to once off inputs or lessons.
- Is a shared responsibility between family, school, health professionals and the community. RSE education should include an input from all, and collaboration can be fostered through the teaching and delivery of materials
- Is a generic approach. It is not so much about the specific content of RSE but rather the relationship with a child's skills, attitudes, values and understanding relevant to a range of social, personal and health issues
- Is based on the needs of the child, therefore RSE education should prioritise the needs of the child and his/her environment, with appropriate adaptations made within the curriculum to suit individual requirements and individual school situations
- Is spiral in nature. RSE is revisited at different stages throughout the child's time in school, this will provide opportunities to consolidate and build on previous learning. This allows for issues and topics to be explored and treated in a manner appropriate to the children's needs, abilities and levels of maturity
- Engages children to be involved in activity based learning. RSE should provide a range of learning opportunities that include working together, learning about one's own feelings and those of others, developing a sense of empathy and experiencing and supporting healthy relationships.

Through SPHE and RSE, members of the school community should be enabled to enhance their self-esteem and wellbeing through:

- A sense of identity
- A sense of purpose
- A sense of belonging
- A sense of security
- A sense of competence.

In an ever-changing world, RSE encourages children through consistent messages that are taught in line with SPHE. The school has a responsibility to ensure that its curriculum is free of bias and that issues of inequality in any form are addressed and dealt with (SPHE Teacher guidelines, p25). In learning about cultures and traditions of others, children can develop a sense of respect for difference and appreciate the contribution that such has to offer. It will encourage children to be inclusive with each other, challenge prejudice and learn how to live in an intercultural society.

Current Provision Included in the School Curriculum is:

- SPHE lessons (provided through discrete curricular time and integration)
- Use of the RSE Manuals and Busy Bodies resources
- Stay Safe Programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Webwise resources
- All Together Now – Homophobic and Transphobic bullying lessons
- RESPECT Guidelines (suggested approaches to teaching about different families)
- Adapted resources for SEN from www.pdst.ie
- Religious Education
- ACCORD Lessons.

Aims of our RSE Programme

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and wellbeing of the child
- To help the child to develop healthy friendships and relationships
- To foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework
- To enable the child to acquire an understanding of, and respect for human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction
- To develop and promote in the child a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life
- To enable the child to be comfortable with the sexuality of oneself and others while growing and developing.

Policies which support SPHE/RSE:

- Child Protection Policy
- Substance Use Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- Parent/Staff Communication Policy
- Data Protection

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School

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 utilising the RSE manuals to complement their teaching.

Management of RSE

- The strands Growing and Changing, and Taking Care of my Body are covered in Year 1 of a 2-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.

Parental Involvement

- Parents will be informed that the school fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE programme, including sensitive aspects of the programme at enrolment.
- Parents will be informed in advance of lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme, with a letter relevant to what will be taught at their child's class level, example of letter see Appendix 2.
- The letter will be issued at the beginning of the year, giving parents an opportunity to meet with relevant class teachers if they so wish, to discuss or clarify what is covered and to prepare their children, it also gives parents an opportunity to become involved, to inform themselves of the programme content and to prepare children for the information they will acquire around the sensitive areas and discuss areas covered in RSE/SPHE.
- Parents are invited/welcome to view the curriculum and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns at any time during the year. The school acknowledges that parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children about growing and changing.
- Following discussion with Principal and Class Teacher, if a parent wishes to withdraw their child from the sensitive lessons it should be given in writing stating their reasons for doing so and pledging to cover this material themselves. This will be centrally filed.
- If a child has been withdrawn from the sensitive RSE lessons, the school takes no responsibility for what the child may hear following on from the teaching of the lessons. eg. what they may hear on yard.

Organisation and Curriculum Planning

RSE forms part of the national curriculum for SPHE by NCCA and will be taught from infants to 6th class. RSE will be covered under the following strands and strand units of the SPHE curriculum: - Myself; Growing and changing, Taking care of my body.

The RSE programme is divided into two main parts:

1) The general programme which contains content covered through SPHE strands and strand units and compliments the aims and objectives of RSE

- Friendship
- Self-identity
- Family
- Self-esteem
- Growing up

2) The second section will deal with any sensitive / specific content covered through RSE strands and strand units. The sensitive aspects are outlined in the table attached.

Approaches & Methodologies

When implementing the programme, staff at St. Laurence's National School will endeavour to display respect for and sensitivity towards the different cultural and family backgrounds experienced by the children. The curriculum will be taught in an age-appropriate manner at all times. The curriculum will be taught from Junior Infants to 6th class. It will be taught through a spiral curriculum (key topics will be revisited in a developmental manner at regular intervals). The materials taught will reflect the needs of the children.

The RSE curriculum will be taught through: stories and poems, classroom discussion, group work, games, art activities, reflection, circle time, guest speaker (the class teacher will stay in the room at all times in accordance with Circular 22/2010).

Differentiation

Teachers use assessment and professional judgment to differentiate the programme and content to suit the needs of the class. Techniques include by task, outcome, resources, dialogue, support, pace and choice, as per NCCA guidelines.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs

Adaptions to the way in which the content is delivered will be made for children with Special Educational Needs. Consultation with parents/ guardians in advance and anticipation of the children's needs will be central to ensuring learning is meaningful.

- Children may be pre-taught language or concepts in anticipation of whole class work
- Children may work in smaller groups or 1:1 on adapted and suitable material
- Any different or specific objectives related to the pupils own learning needs should be detailed in their support plan, in consultation with parents/guardians.

Assessment

Assessment in RSE is important to enable the teacher to pitch the lessons correctly to their respective class group and gauge their understanding of the material covered. The teacher will use a variety of methods, including observation and questions, use of teacher-designed tasks such as worksheets, quizzes or games and use of reflection or learning logs. Assessment is essential to RSE as it is to any other subject. The assessment process should be a positive experience for children and enable the teacher to modify curriculum content according to the needs of the child and so maximise the learning potential of each individual.

Confidentiality

The school follows Children First Guidelines 2011 and The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017. During RSE lessons children may wish to connect and disclose personal or related stories and information. It is important to protect children and families and their privacy. This can be done by ensuring there are ground rules for the sharing of information in relation to the topics covered in RSE. Confidentiality cannot be offered for the content covered from children whose parents have chosen not to have them included in the sensitive lessons. It is important to note that any disclosures must be dealt with in line with Child Protection Procedures.

Resources

Relationships and Sexuality Education Resource Materials (DES) - Each class teacher has a copy of the appropriate manual or access to it in online / pdf format. Other resources that support the broader aims of RSE include:

Stay Safe programme, Walk Tall Programme, Anatomical Dolls and Story books, Busy Bodies DVD and Booklet, Picture books across the 9 grounds of equality, INTO Different Families, Same Love Poster and RESPECT guidelines. Careful attention needs to be brought to resources used to teach RSE education, due to the sensitive nature.

Provision of Ongoing Support

Opportunities provided by Education Centres will be brought to the attention of staff members. Teachers will be encouraged to attend CPD in RSE and staff meetings utilised as a platform for discussion and development of RSE materials.

Review

The policy will be reviewed after every two years. The policy may also be reviewed at an earlier time should a need arise. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made.

This plan was ratified by the Board of Management at their meeting on 18th April 2018.