

Relationships and Sexuality Education policy of Saint Patrick's Infants N.S., Gardiner's Hill

▪ **Introductory Statement & Rationale**

Saint Patrick's Infants National School is a Catholic co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Cork and Ross. It is located in the parish of Saint Joseph's, Mayfield, Cork.

As we are an Infant School, children may be enrolled for Junior Infants and Senior Infants. There are on average 150 pupils enrolled in the school. There are 10 teachers, an administrative principal in the school, as well as a number of special needs assistants and ancillary staff.

This policy statement is an approved approach by the Department of Education and Skills to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education in Saint Patrick's Infants N.S., Gardiner's Hill. It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE. The initial policy was developed in consultation with Saint Patrick's Boys' and Girls' Schools. The development of the policy was facilitated by the Home School Community Liaison teacher. In 2012 a new RSE committee was formed. The profile of this committee was as follows: 2 parents' representatives from the Board of Management, the staff representative from the Board of Management, the Deputy Principal and the Assistant Principal.

▪ **Our School Ethos / Mission Statement**

The general aim of our school policy is to contribute to the development of all aspects of the child the aesthetic, creative, critical, cultural, emotional, intellectual moral, physical, social and the spiritual, to prepare him/her for personal and family life, for working life, for living in the community and for leisure. R.S.E is clearly a part of this general aim.

- Catholic Values inform our school life
- Our School welcomes children of all denominations and nationalities -
- We strive to create a caring educational environment for our children where values of respect, tolerance and understanding are promoted.
- We are committed to the integration of children with special educational needs and disabilities.
- We actively encourage partnership with parents in the education process.
- We promote awareness of and pride in our local area by fostering meaningful links between our school and our community.

▪ **Introductory Statement**

In St. Patrick's Infants National School Relationships and Sexuality Education is part of Social Personal and Health Education. As we develop and implement our R.S.E. Programme we hope to provide children with structured opportunities to develop the knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practical skills necessary to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships as children

and subsequently as adults.

▪ **Definition of SPHE**

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) provides particular opportunities to foster the personal development, health and 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. Through an SPHE programme that is planned and consistent throughout the school, children can develop a framework of values, attitudes, understanding and skills that will inform their decisions and actions both now and in the future. Since SPHE has a moral and a spiritual dimension, its development and implementation are influenced significantly by the ethos or characteristic spirit of the school.

▪ **Definition of RSE**

RSE is an integral part of Social, Personal and Health Education and must be taught in this context. It provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding of human growth and development, human sexuality and relationships, parenting, personal and social skills through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework. (p. 5 National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) interim curriculum and guidelines for RSE).

▪ **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. (p. 5 NCCA interim curriculum and guidelines for RSE).

Relationships and Sexuality education encourages children to examine and explore the relationships in their lives and to learn how to develop and enjoy friendships which are based on responsibility and respect. Children build the foundations for developing more intimate relationships in later life. They learn about themselves as sexual beings, about their social emotional and physical growth and about the various changes that occur as they progress towards adolescent and adulthood. **(Interim Guidelines p.7)** The RSE programme supports and complements what children are learning at home.

▪ **The aims of Social, Personal and Health Education are**

- to promote the personal development and well-being of the child
- to foster in the child a sense of care and respect for himself/herself and others and an appreciation of the dignity of every human being
- to promote the health of the child and provide a foundation for healthy living in all its aspects
- to enable the child to make informed decisions and choices about the social, personal and health dimensions of life both now and in the future
- to develop in the child a sense of social responsibility, a commitment to active and

participative citizenship and an appreciation of the democratic way of life

- to enable the child to respect human and cultural diversity and to appreciate and understand the interdependent nature of the world. (CS P.9)

▪ **Current Provision**

Included in the school curriculum in Saint Patrick's Infants N.S. is:

- Religious Education (Grow in Love)
- SPHE

We use lessons and activities from Child Abuse Prevention programme (STAY SAFE), Substance Use programme (Walk Tall) and Relationships and Sexuality programme (RSE) to teach Relationships and Sexuality Education.

R.S.E is facilitated in three ways within our school:

- in the context of a positive school climate and atmosphere (c.f. SPHE policy)
- as part of timetabled SPHE
- on an integrated cross curricular basis.

Note: As an Infant School we recognise the importance of adopting this thematic approach specifically.

The R.S.E. Programme is delivered by way of a dual approach i.e. through stand alone lessons and cross curricular links.

Our R.S.E. Programme will involve the teaching of content and skills through processes which will enable children to form values and beliefs and establish behaviours within the moral, spiritual and social framework of our Catholic school ethos.

The R.S.E. Curriculum Guidelines recommend a spiral curriculum. This involves revisiting key topics in a developmental manner at regular intervals. It will be a matter for individual teachers to collaborate to decide on the specific content of each lesson.

▪ **Aims of our RSE programme**

The general aim of our school policy is to contribute to the development of all aspects of the child the aesthetic, creative, critical, cultural, emotional, intellectual moral, physical, social and the spiritual, to prepare him/her for personal and family life, for working life, for living in the community and for leisure. R.S.E is clearly a part of this general aim.

- *To help young people develop healthy friendships and relationships*
- *To promote a healthy attitude to sexuality and to relationships*
- *To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child*
- *To foster and 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*
- *To develop and promote in the child a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth*

<p><i>and new life</i></p> <p>➤ <i>To enable the child to be comfortable with the sexuality of oneself and others while growing and developing</i></p>
<p>▪ Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School</p> <p>❖ A developmental approach:</p> <p>Relationships and Sexuality Education is an integral part of SPHE and will be taught in this context (see Plean Scoile: SPHE). Content will be taught developmentally with age appropriate lessons being taught at each class level in primary school. RSE-specific education or core RSE education will be covered in the strand units <i>Talking Care of My Body</i> and <i>Growing and Changing</i> and <i>Safety and Protection</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All issues will be discussed with sensitivity, professionalism and awareness of the varying levels of development within a class.• Possible sensitive issues such as naming the body parts and growing and changing will be covered within the strand units "Taking care of my body", "Growing and changing" and "Safety and Protection". <p>RSE and 'appropriate language'</p> <p>The acquisition of appropriate language in RSE is crucially important to enable children to communicate confidently about themselves, their sexuality and their relationships (Interim Guidelines p.53). Not being familiar with the biological terms for the body can put children at a disadvantage. (DES Resource Materials for Relationships and Sexuality Education, Jnr/Snr Infants, p.148-149.</p> <p>Management of RSE in the Infant School:</p> <p>I. Teachers will teach only the content/topics advised for the class level and will answer only questions relevant to the programme for that class level.</p> <p>II. If it is not possible to answer a question or if the question is outside the scope of the content for the class, teacher may use the following phrases <i>'that's something that we might discuss when you're a bit older'</i> or <i>'I won't be able to answer all your questions in class, but maybe you could talk to your mother/father about that'</i>.</p> <p>III. The school will endeavor to accommodate the request of any teacher who does not wish to teach the RSE aspect of the programme provided that a suitable arrangement can be put in place to ensure that the children are taught the RSE content (i.e. another teacher from the school may teach the RSE lessons to the class).</p> <p>➤ <u><i>Curriculum Matters:</i></u></p> <p>➤ Curriculum Content – The curriculum by NCCA will be followed as published, and will be taught in Infants. <i>It will be taught by the teaching staff OR an outside speaker will address the "sexually sensitive issues".</i> See list below. All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school and the policy.</p>

- In a multi class situation, the younger class will be withdrawn when topics being taught are not age-appropriate.
- When an outside speaker is used, the class teacher is responsible for making them aware of school policy and that teacher will sit in during the lesson.

- Organisational Matters:
- If children are withdrawn, they will be accommodated in another teacher's classroom or taken home.
- If children are withdrawn it is on the understanding that parents/guardians are taking full responsibility for this aspect of the child's education.
- With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom.
- If a child is withdrawn, the school cannot guarantee that other children will not inform the child in question of the content of the lesson(s) or that children will not refer incidentally to aspects of the lesson during subsequent days/weeks.
- 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/guardians are invited/welcome to view the curriculum and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns.
- At the start of Junior Infants parents/guardians will be issued with an information sheet which will outline the RSE programme.
- Prior to the teaching of the lessons which deal with sensitive issues, parents/guardians will be sent a letter to inform them that the topic is coming up. This will allow parents/guardians opportunities to engage with their children.
- If children bring up a sensitive issue in school, teachers will inform parents/guardians of the matter.

- Dealing with Questions:
- All questions answered will reflect the parameters of the curriculum. Questions to the teacher may be answered within the boundaries of the curriculum and policy. Any questions asked by the children that are judged to be inappropriate, the teacher will refer the child to their parents.

The school cannot guarantee confidentiality if a child asks a question of a personal nature to themselves or discloses personal information.

▪ **Provision for Ongoing Support**

- Parents welcome to view curriculum if they wish
- 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 **OR** Contact will be made with parents prior to the address by the outside speaker.

Parental Involvement

In St. Patrick's Infants School, our R.S.E. policy acknowledges Parents and Guardians as the primary educators of their children. Parental involvement will be promoted in the following ways.

- Parents will be provided with an overview of the SPHE curriculum and the RSE policy which will outline the RSE aspects of the curriculum. (RSE Parents booklet).
- An outline of RSE specific lessons will be available to parents – parents may view the RSE teaching materials.
- Class Teachers will answer any queries which Parents and Guardians may have in relation to our R.S.E. Programme.
- Opportunities will be offered to Parents and Guardians to engage with their children on content at various stages throughout the Programme.
- Our policy includes provision for the rights of Parents and Guardians who wish to withdraw their children from R.S.E. To facilitate such withdrawal these children will be accommodated in another classroom for the duration of the lesson. It is the responsibility of the parents to inform the school in writing of this decision.
- At the end of each set of activities there are guidelines as to how Parents and Guardians may be invited to become involved in a practical way.
- Within the Programme there is a specific Home School Links Page for each theme which will be sent home at the discretion of the teacher.

Methodologies

Our R.S.E. Programme includes the following Teaching Approaches.

Stories / Poems

Classroom Discussions

Group Work/Circle Time

Games

Art Activities

Quiet Time

Visitors to the Classroom

Educational Drama

The Content of the R.S.E. Programme

The Junior Infant Programme includes the following 9 themes:

This is me

Who are you
We are friends
This is my family
People who teach us about keeping safe
We have feelings
New life
I grow
Making decisions

These Themes will be adapted to meet the developmental needs of our children.

The Senior Infant Programme includes the following 9 Themes.

Look at what I can do
These are my friends
This is my family
I can be safe
Other people have feelings too
Caring for new life
My body
I grow and change
Making decisions

These Themes will also be adapted to meet the developmental needs of children in Senior Infants and will meet the objectives of the curriculum

Relationships and Sexuality Education is an important part of SPHE. RSE aims to help the child to develop healthy friendships and relationships and to promote an understanding of and a healthy attitude towards human sexuality and relationships. The themes relating specifically to sexuality are only a small part of the SPHE programme. Perhaps some of the language used in these lessons may be of some concern to parents. To alleviate any fears parents/guardians may have, we have compiled a list of specific vocabulary which is used in the infant class and the objectives they relate to in the SPHE curriculum.

This factual information will be delivered to the children in a sensitive, healthy and relaxed manner, with a view to awaken in each child a sense of wonder in themselves and others.

Junior Infants:

The theme of new life is dealt with, which relates to nature and family e.g. new life in spring, pets and family (RSE Teaching Materials p. 68-76)

Vocabulary introduced: born womb breast-feeding

Senior Infants:

Taking care of my body covers personal hygiene and self-awareness (RSE Teaching Materials p.148-156)

Vocabulary introduced: penis vagina breasts

As SPHE is spiral in nature the work in Junior Infants is revisited and expanded re: New Life (RSE Teaching Materials p.158-167)

Vocabulary introduced: breastfed little seed – 9 months in the womb

Relevant Objectives from SPHE Curriculum

The child should be enabled to:

- ❖ Become aware of new life and birth in the world (new growth in springtime, baby animals being born)
- ❖ Develop an awareness of human birth (SPHE Curriculum – Infants p.18)

That a baby grows and is nurtured in a mother's womb until ready to be born

- ❖ Name parts of the male and female body, using appropriate anatomical terms (SPHE Curriculum – Infants p.17)

Integration

We plan for integration in various ways:

- By adopting a thematic approach where a theme is explored from a number of different perspectives, i.e. linkage with our Oral Language Programme and the Grow in Love Programme which includes the exploration of some of the following themes:
 - Myself
 - My Family
 - Our Community /Parish
 - The People who help us.
 - By exploring a specific R.S.E. Issue e.g. Growing and Changing i.e. skills and information from other subjects are used to enhance the Learning e.g. Science and Maths.
-

Time

R.S.E takes place through discrete time provided for S.P.H.E. and by adopting an integrated approach across the relevant subject areas.

Assessment

We assess R.S.E in the following ways:

- ✓ Teacher Observation
- ✓ Teacher designed tasks and tests

Resources

We adapt the following resources to implement our R.S.E. Curriculum.

- Resource Materials for Relationships and Sexuality Education.
 - The Stay Safe Programme for Senior Infants.
 - Walk Tall
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Responsibility / Success Criteria

As outlined in our S.P.H.E policy R.S.E. is a shared responsibility. We recognise that within our school community parents/guardians, teachers, the Board of Management and members of the community all have a responsibility for the relationships and sexuality education of our children. We recognise that their contribution and involvement is essential to the effective implementation of our R.S.E. Programme in our school. Therefore we endeavor to promote partnership, participation and consultation as we plan for this curricular area. We consult with all the above personnel to discuss R.S.E.

- At Board of Management Meetings.
- At RSE policy meetings.
- During informal conversations with Parents and Caregivers.
- By sharing and discussing our own observations at our weekly planning meetings.

Review

This policy will be reviewed after the initial 12th month period has passed by the RSE Policy Committee, and every two years thereafter. This policy will also be reviewed should a need arise. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made by the RSE Policy Committee.

The current RSE policy ratified by the Board of Management in May 2017.

- Parents/guardians are welcome to review, comment and make recommendations.

Ratification and Communication:

This policy will be communicated to the school community by the following means:

Parents via School Development Plan in Reception

Parents' Association via hard copy

Teachers via School Development Plan on school server.

SNAs via School Development Plan in Reception.

Board of Management/Other staff members via hard copy

Appendix 1

Junior and Senior Infants

Strand Unit – Taking Care of My Body

the child should be enabled to...

Knowing about my body

- appreciate the need, and understand how to care for his/her own body in order to keep it healthy and well ***regular exercise and activity, adequate sleep and rest, balanced diet, correct posture***
- respect his/her own body and that of others
- **name parts of the male and female body, using appropriate anatomical terms**
- explore and discuss the different things the body can do.....***move, feel, think, grow, heal***
- recognise and practise basic hygiene skills,.....***personal hygiene practices hygienic eating habits, developing basic skills in dressing himself/herself and caring for clothes, taking proper care of teeth***
- realise that each individual has some responsibility for taking care of himself/herself

Food and nutrition

- become aware of the importance of food for growth and development

food provides energy for work and play, food helps to protect against illness, food helps us to grow

- explore food preferences and their role in a balanced diet

treats, snacks, fruit, vegetables, foods that are unhealthy for some people and not for others

- discuss and explore some qualities and categories of food

fruit, vegetables, foods that can be eaten at breakfast, foods that are grown, food that comes from animals

- realise the importance of good hygiene when preparing food to eat.

SPHE Curriculum CS p.17

Junior and Senior Infants

Strand Unit - Growing and Changing

the child should be enabled to...

As I grow I change

- identify some of the factors that promote growth, **food, love, warmth, exercise, rest, sleep, affirmation,**
- realise that growth and change are part of the process of life and are unique to each individual **physical, increase in shoe size, need to cut hair and nails frequently, social, interacting with others, sharing, arguing, talking, playing together , intellectual , drawing, writing, reading, questioning, things I can do for myself, spiritual , fostering wonder and imagination through the senses, beginning to reflect, availing of quiet time**
- recognise that the ability to take responsibility for himself/herself and others increases as he/she grows older

New life

become aware of new life and birth in the world : **new growth in springtime baby animals being born**

• develop an awareness of human birth: that a baby grows and is nurtured in the mother's womb until ready to be born

- identify what babies need to help them to grow and develop: **love, regular food and water, warmth, nappy changing, careful bathing, medical check-ups**

Feelings and emotions

name a variety of feelings and talk about situations where these may be experienced: **Feelings: happiness, love, joy, excitement, surprise, fear, loss, jealousy, pain, loneliness, experiences when it's my birthday, when I try something new, the day I started school**

- explore the variety of ways in which feelings are expressed and coped with: **hugging or cuddling when expressing affection, becoming red in the face when embarrassed crying when upset or afraid**
- begin to be sensitive to the feelings of others and to realise that the actions of one individual can affect the feelings of another
- explore and discuss occasions that can promote positive feelings in himself/herself , **making a new friend, receiving an invitation, being affirmed.** (SPHE Curriculum CS18)