

Introductory Statement

This Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy is a written statement of the aims of the RSE programme, the relationship of RSE to Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), and the organisation and management of RSE within this school.

A committee comprising three members of the teaching staff, including the Principal, three parents and three members of the Board of Management, including the Chairperson, was established in

The policy was drafted by the Principal, before being discussed and amended by the committee, and then by the staff, the Parents' Association and the Board of Management.

A final draft was agreed and the policy was ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting on July 18th 2019.

What is RSE?

RSE is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. This education is delivered consciously and subconsciously by parents, teachers, peers, adults, the parish community and the media.

In Irish schools, RSE provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire a knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework, firstly as children and subsequently as adults.

This approach gives opportunities to children to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible manner.

At primary level, 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 for others, and providing them with appropriate information.

In the primary school setting, RSE is taught in the context of SPHE. SPHE contributes to developing the work of the school in promoting the health and well-being of children. This happens in the context of their emotional, moral, social and spiritual growth, as well as their intellectual, physical, political, religious and creative development. A supportive school climate, where the needs and well-being of all members of the school community are considered, is essential to the best possible provision for SPHE.

SPHE looks at issues such as relationships at home and at school, building self-esteem, and learning skills of communication, decision-making and expressing feelings in an appropriate

way. It also gives clear information on a range of topics, including healthy eating, alcohol, drugs, human growth and development, safety and social responsibility, and environmental issues.

Scope of this policy

This policy applies to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality, whether in formal RSE/SPHE classes or informally in other areas of the curriculum.

This policy applies to school staff, pupils, parents/guardians, Board of Management, visiting speakers and external facilitators.

Rationale

It is necessary to devise a policy on RSE at this time for the following reasons:

- To comply with the statutory obligation on schools as stated in Section 9 (d) of the Education Act 1998:- “A recognised school...shall use its available resources to...promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and to provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school.”
- Sexuality is a key element of healthy social and personal development. Young people are exposed to a bewildering variety of messages about sexuality and sexual activity. School, in consultation with parents/guardians, need to reflect on how to provide for the needs of the children under their care.

Relationship to this school’s Ethos Statement

Four aspects of our school’s Ethos Statement are relevant to this policy. They are:

1. Bishop Harty National School is a co-educational Catholic national school in Ballinree, Nenagh, which strives to provide a well-ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere where the intellectual, spiritual, physical, moral and cultural needs of the pupils are identified and nurtured.
2. As a community of learners, we recognise the diversity of learning styles, talents and needs among our pupils. We encourage their efforts and celebrate their success, in the belief that this is the key to developing positive attitudes, self-esteem and confidence in our students.
3. We recognise the importance of partnership in education and, as such, encourage the involvement of parents through home/school contact and through the Parents’ Association.

4. We promote self-esteem and confidence and an integral element of our ethos is the respect for, and dignity of, all members of the school community.

As our school's ethos and characteristic spirit is Roman Catholic, RSE is taught with this spirit as its guiding force.

Aims and objectives of this policy

The aims and objectives of this policy are:

- To ensure clarity and consensus in the teaching of RSE in our school
- To ensure that RSE is taught with reference to the characteristic spirit of the school
- To state how the teaching of RSE is organised and managed in the school

Aims and objectives of the RSE programme

The aims and objectives of the RSE programme are:

Key measures in the implementation of the RSE programme

- **Teaching and Learning**

Training and Staff Development

All teachers have been trained in the teaching of the RSE programme, either in teacher training while in college or in in-service training.

The education centres regularly provide refresher courses and staff are encouraged to attend these short courses.

Resources

Each mainstream class teacher is provided with a full kit of the *Grow in Love Programme for Religious Education* for the appropriate class.

The *Stay Safe Programme* is taught at an age-appropriate level each year/every second year. The teacher is provided with a copy of the programme at the class level.

Each mainstream class teacher is provided with a copy of the *Resource Materials for Relationships and Sexuality Education*, published by the DES in 2000. There are four books in the programme, in two year blocks. The material covered is age-appropriate.

These materials are based on two strands of the SPHE curriculum, *Myself* and *Myself and Others*:

Strand	Strand Units
Myself	Self-esteem Growing and changing New life Feelings and emotions Keeping safe Making decisions
Myself and others	Relationships with family Relationships with friends Relationships with other people

Terminology

The correct terminology for the parts of the body will be employed, in accordance with the progression outlined in the *Resource Materials for RSE*. Class teachers have copies.

Links to other curricular areas

As part of the SPHE programme, the teaching of RSE has links through the following:

- Anti-bullying education
- Personal safety education
- Substance use education

The RSE programme also has links with the science, religious education, history and geography curricula.

- **Inclusion of parents/guardians and ethical considerations**

Drafting of this policy

Representatives of the parent body have been involved in the drafting of this policy. They will also be involved in subsequent reviews.

Pre-enrolment

Before enrolling in the school, parents are given a summary of the RSE programme.

Parental consent

Parents of children enrolling in the school are asked to give their consent in writing to allow their child to be taught the programme. Once given, it is assumed that this consent applies for the entire duration of the child's time in school. A decision by parents not to give their consent will be respected. Consent may be withdrawn at any time during the child's time in the school by writing to the Principal.

Article 42.1 of Bunreacht na hÉireann "...acknowledges the family as the natural and primary educator of the child..." The rights of parents to allow their child to opt out of instruction in an area of the curriculum which they consider to be contrary to their conscience is enshrined in Section 30 (2) (e) of the Education Act, 1998:

"The Minister... shall not require any student to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parent of the student or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student."

Consultation

Any parents who have concerns regarding the teaching of the RSE programme are welcome to make an appointment with either the class teacher or Principal to discuss their concerns.

Access to materials

Parents are welcome to view the materials used in the delivery of the RSE and *Stay Safe* programmes. These materials may be viewed on www.ecdrumcondra.ie (RSE) and www.staysafe.ie (*Stay Safe*).

- **Organisational issues**

Multigrade classes

Arrangements will be made for classes to be taught at the age-appropriate level.

- **Child protection**

Confidentiality

Pupils are not encouraged to discuss personal or private information in the classes. However, even with the teacher's best intentions, some pupils may talk about aspects of their own lives. In these cases, confidentiality will be respected by the teacher and the teacher will expect the rest of the class to respect the child's confidentiality.

However, where a child makes a disclosure about one of the four forms of abuse – neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse or sexual abuse – the teacher is obliged to bring this

disclosure to the attention of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP). The DLP will then bring the matter to the attention of the Child and Family Agency in accordance with the school's Child Protection Policy.

Disclosure of sexual intercourse

As the age of consent for sexual intercourse in Ireland is seventeen, any child under that age engaging in such activity is acting illegally, apart from the obvious damage such activity can inflict on children. If a child in our school makes a disclosure that he/she is engaging in sexual intercourse even if it is consensual, the child's parents and the Child and Family Agency will be informed without delay.

Communication

This policy is available for viewing on the school website.

Review

This policy will be reviewed in two years, or before that if necessary.

Ratification

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting on July 18th 2019.

Chairperson's signature _____

Date _____

Review date: