



## **Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy**

### **Introductory Statement & Rationale**

This policy statement is an approved approach to the teaching of RSE in Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál Primary School. It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE.

### **School Philosophy/Ethos**

Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál Primary School is a girls school up to 6<sup>th</sup> class which caters for boys up to 1<sup>st</sup> Class. It is a Catholic school serving the area of Claremorris under the trusteeship of the Bishop of Tuam. Our school aims to give the children in our care a sound religious and moral education within the established Catholic ethos of the school and to help them establish a faith in God which will grow and develop. The ethos of Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál can be seen in the everyday dealings with all those who work in the school have with each other. It is manifested in the respect and consideration shown by teachers to pupils and vice versa. We are proud of the children who are part of our school and hope they go on to become fulfilled adults.

### **Definition of RSE**

RSE aims to provide opportunities for children to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social frame work. It is an integral part of the Social, Personal and Health Education and is taught in this context. RSE aims to help children learn, at home and in school, about their own development, about their friendships and relationships with others. This work is based on developing a good self-image and self-esteem and providing them with appropriate information.

### **RSE in the context of our SPHE programme**

SPHE is a subject on the school curriculum that 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. It is taught from Junior Infants up to 6<sup>th</sup> class. RSE forms part of this programme. It is a spiral curriculum which ensures that topics are taught in a developmental manner through the child's primary school years. SPHE aims to develop the child's emotional, moral, social and spiritual growth as well as their intellectual, physical, political, religious and creative development. The content of the school's SPHE programme covers a wide range of topics such as healthy eating, alcohol and drug awareness, environmental issues, safety and social responsibility as well as RSE.

### **Including RSE in the Curriculum**

RSE is facilitated in the following ways

- in the context of a positive school climate and atmosphere
- in the context of an effective code of behaviour and anti-bullying policy
- as part of religious education
- as part of timetabled SPHE
- on an integrated cross curricular basis

### **Aims of our RSE programme**

- To help young people develop healthy friendships and relationships
- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child.
- 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.

## **Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our school:**

### **Content**

We recognise that the parents are the primary educators of their children and that the home is the natural environment in which RSE should take place. The role of the school, therefore, is seen as one of support of the work of the home in this area. The content objectives covered will be taught as laid down by the Department of Education and Skills in the SPHE Curriculum 1999.

- RSE will be taught in all classes
- The SPHE/RSE curriculum will be of a spiral nature and all content objectives will be covered by the time children leave 6th class
- Questions arising from lesson content will be answered in an age-appropriate manner
- All resources used in the teaching of the programme will be in keeping with the ethos of the school and in the spirit of this policy
- RSE will be delivered to 6<sup>th</sup> class by an external teacher. Parents of these pupils will be invited to attend a talk on the content of these lessons prior to them being taught
- For an outline of the RSE programme - see Appendix I
- For the vocabulary to be taught in the sensitive areas - see Appendix II

### **School Policies and Curricular Plans which support our RSE**

Traditionally, we are a child-centred school. The educational and emotional needs of the children in our care are central to our curricular planning and policy making processes.

- Grow in Love
- SPHE Curriculum
- Stay Safe Programme
- Positive Behaviour and Discipline Policy
- Anti –Bullying Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Acceptable Usage Policy
- Administration of Medicine Policy

In keeping with the sentiment and spirit of these policies, we informally support many of the aims on which RSE is modelled. We encourage good behaviour, open communication, understanding and

tolerance of differences and respect for staff and others. We recognise that both pupils and staff have rights and responsibilities in our school. A sense of responsibility is fostered, and attention is paid to the well-being of all the members of the school community.

### **Timetabling**

One half hour period per week is timetabled for each class for SPHE. RSE will be included in the programme taught during this time. It is envisaged that some aspects of RSE (including the sensitive issues, will be taught through a number of core periods while some material may be taught in a cross curricular manner. The “sensitive issues” of RSE will be taught in each classroom during the Second Term.

### **Parental Involvement**

RSE is an ongoing process throughout life. Parents are acknowledged primary educators of their children and the school work in partnership with them in a supportive role. On enrolment of their child, parents will be provided with an overview of the SPHE/RSE programme and with a copy of this policy document. Each year prior to implementation of the RSE programme parents will be informed when the teacher will begin to teach the programme. The curriculum books and resource materials are available online on [www.pdst.ie](http://www.pdst.ie) and parents are welcome to view these if desired.

### **Withdrawal from RSE**

Since RSE is an obligatory requirement of the Department of Education and Skills, it should be inclusive. However, a parent's right to withdraw a pupil from themes pertaining to sensitive issues will be respected on the understanding that the parent is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education. Parents are obliged to inform the school in writing of their decision to withdraw the child from the classes based on sensitive issues. The school cannot be responsible for any information which a child may receive outside the direct teaching of RSE lessons.

### **Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN)**

Consultation with parents of pupils with SEN may be required. At the request of parents of pupils with SEN, the school will facilitate the teaching of the lessons on ‘sensitive issues’ on another occasion individually or in a small group setting. A variety of teaching methodologies may be required for some children.

## **Confidentiality and Child Protection**

Where there is disclosure by a child of abuse, the school will follow the Department of Education and Skills child protection guidelines and guidelines as set out in "Children First".

## **Resources**

Stay Safe Programme [STAY SAFE - The Child Abuse Prevention Programme | PDST](#)

RSE Manuals [Relationships and Sexuality Education | PDST](#)

Busy Bodies [Busy Bodies - English language version \(sexualwellbeing.ie\)](#)

Walk Tall <https://www.pdst.ie/walktall>

Making the Links [Making the Links \(pdst.ie\)](#)

Other resource material as deemed appropriate by class teachers in consultation with the Principal

## **Provision for Ongoing Support**

### For parents

- Parents are welcome to view the curriculum if they wish
- There will be contact with parents prior to and during the teaching of lessons involving "sensitive issues". Parents of 6<sup>th</sup> class pupils will be invited to a briefing on the lessons which will outline the RSE programme for those pupils. Copies of the 'Busy Bodies' booklets will be available to parents at this meeting.

Note: This meeting may be held remotely on Zoom or another online platform.

### For teachers

- The Board of Management will support in-career development in the area of SPHE/RSE as opportunities arise

## **Implementation**

RSE will be taught on a two-year cycle in conjunction with the Stay Safe Programme. RSE will be taught in the 2021/22 school year and every second year from then on.

## **Review**

This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis or sooner should a need arise. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made.

## **Ratification**

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

**Signed:** Peter Mc Callig

**Signed:** Grace Burke

Chairperson of Board of Management

Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022

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## Appendix I

| <b>Overview of content Strand</b> | <b>Infant Classes</b>   | <b>1st and 2nd Classes</b>  |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Strand</b>                     | <b>Strand Units</b>   |   |
| <b>Myself</b>                     | I am unique<br>My Body<br><br>As I grow I change<br><br>New Life<br><br>Feeling Safe<br><br>Feelings and emotions<br><br>Making decisions | I am unique<br>My Body<br><br>As I grow I change<br><br>New Life<br><br>Feeling Safe<br><br>Feelings and emotions<br><br>Making decisions |
| <b>Myself and others</b>          | Myself and my family<br>Myself and my friends<br><br>Special people in my life<br><br>Relating to others                                  | Myself and my family<br>Myself and my friends<br><br>Other people<br><br>Relating to others   |
|                                   |   |   |

| Strand                   | 3rd and 4th Classes  | 5th and 6th Classes   |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| Strand Units             |  |   |
| <b>Myself</b>            | Accepting myself<br>Physical development<br><br>Growing and changing<br><br>Birth and new life<br><br>Feelings and emotions<br><br>Personal Hygiene<br><br>Personal Safety<br><br>Making decisions | Accepting myself<br>Physical development<br><br>Becoming an adult<br><br>Parenthood<br><br>Feelings and emotions<br><br>Personal Hygiene<br><br>Personal Safety<br><br>Making decisions |
| <b>Myself and others</b> | Roles and responsibilities in families<br>Portrayal of sexuality and relationships<br><br>Roles of males and females in society<br><br>Relating to others  | Changing relationships in families and friendships<br>Group affiliation and loyalty<br><br>Portrayal of sexuality and relationships<br><br>Sexual stereotypes<br><br>Relating to others |

## Appendix II

| <b>Class</b>          | <b>Language Taught</b>   |
|-----------------------|--|
| Junior/Senior Infants | <p>“womb”</p> <p>“penis”, “vulva” and “urethra”-taught as obvious physical differences between boy/girl</p> <p>“breast-feeding” may be used in conversations as a means of feeding a baby.</p> |
| First/Second Class    | <p>“penis” and *urethra” taught in terms of passing urine<br/>(See DES Resource Materials p 70-71)</p> <p>“vagina”</p>   |
| Third/Fourth Class    | <p>Revision of terms listed above.</p> <p>“developing foetus”</p> <p>“umbilical cord”</p> <p>“navel”</p>   |
| Fifth/Sixth Class     | <p>“growth spurt”</p> <p>“menstruation”</p> <p>“development of breasts”</p> <p>“ovaries”</p> <p>“fallopian tubes”</p> <p>“sperm production”</p> <p>“erection”</p> <p>“wet dreams”</p>          |

“sexual intercourse”

“conception”

“puberty”, “human reproduction” and “sexual intercourse” in the context of a loving family

“pregnancy”

Development of baby in womb

“contractions”

Birth of baby

(See DES RSE resource materials for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>)