

Scoil Mhuire Relationships and Sexuality Education (R.S.E.)

Policy Statement Oct 2015

Introductory Statement:

This RSE Policy was drafted in consultation with teachers, parents and Board of Management members. In drawing up this policy, parents are acknowledged as the primary educators of their children and the school seeks to work in a supportive role.

Our School Philosophy/Ethos:

The ethos of Scoil Mhuire is the ethos of a Catholic school which is entirely concerned with fostering the development of relationships, the love of God and the love of every human being. The school seeks to communicate the Christian vision of human life and human relationships. Catholic education values tolerance and inclusion. The school welcomes pupils of other traditions, faiths and none seeing diversity as offering opportunities for deeper understanding among people holding diverse convictions. A spirit of mutual respect is promoted within the school community. Pupils are drawn by example and teaching to appreciate and respect the differences of every member of the school community.

Relationship of R.S.E. to S.P.H.E.:

S.P.H.E. 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 helps them to choose and follow a healthy lifestyle and enables them to play responsible roles as individuals and as members of society.

R.S.E. is an integral part of S.P.H.E. and seeks to provide children with opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of human growth and development, parenting, personal and social skills and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships and human sexuality.

Aims of R.S.E.:

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

- 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.

Current Provision:

Aspects of R.S.E. are taught using lessons and activities from the

- R.S.E. Programme (Department of Education & Skills)
- Stay Safe Programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Religious Education Programme ('Alive-O' and 'Grow in Love')

In 5th/6th Classes a nurse usually delivers the content of the R.S.E. Programme

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of R.S.E. in our School:

1. Provision for R.S.E.:

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 6th class. All issues will be discussed with sensitivity, professionalism and an awareness of the varying levels of development within a class.

R.S.E. will be taught from Junior Infants to 4th Class by the class teacher. Should a teacher choose not to teach the R.S.E. lesson, provision will be made for another teacher to teach the lesson to the class.

The contents of the 5th/6th Class Programme are normally delivered by a nurse. Teachers will be present when this takes place during school hours. All information delivered will be informed by the content of the S.P.H.E. Curriculum and will be taught in the context of the Catholic ethos .

Should a teacher feel comfortable delivering the 5th/6th class Programme (s)he is free to do so provided (s)he has been present for a previous talk by a nurse and/or has received some training in delivering the R.S.E. Programme. No teacher will be asked to teach the 5th/6th Class Programme without having specific training.

2. Parental Rights:

As R.S.E. is part of the S.P.H.E. Programme parental permission is not required. Parents do have a right to know what is being taught. Parents will be made aware of the S.P.H.E./R.S.E. Programme and curricular books and resource materials will be available in the school. The R.S.E. materials are also available on the Department of Education website (www.education.ie). Also, during the first term a letter will be sent home with an outline of the lesson/sensitive issues that will arise in that year's programme. A parent's right to withdraw their child from the programme will be honoured on the understanding that the parent is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education and they must put it in writing. Parents will then be informed that the teacher/school is not responsible for what their child may hear from other pupils.

3. Terminology:

We will give children the correct and appropriate terminology as laid down in the R.S.E. Programme. Specific terminology is outlined in Appendix 1.

4. Answering Questions:

From the outset we will ask the children to be responsible about the information they are given. Thus we hope to discourage playground gossip.

Questions arising from curriculum content will be addressed by the teacher or by the visiting nurse in a sensible, sensitive and age-appropriate manner. If the question is factual and within the programme as agreed upon for that class, the teacher will answer it.

If the question cannot be answered;

- The teacher explains that more information will be given as part of the following year's programme

OR

- The teacher will refer the child to the parents

A question box into which pupils can put their questions can be used especially in the older classes to help filter questions that are presented to the class.

5. Sexual Orientation:

An integral part of RSE is learning to respect others; this will include respect for families or individuals who are different to the norm.

Sexual orientation will be included in our Anti-Bullying Lessons as another unacceptable form of Bullying. Should it arise as a form of Bullying we will refer to our Anti-Bullying policy and it will be handled like all other cases of Bullying.

Sexual orientation will arise from 4th to 6th in the context of SPHE and the nine grounds for discrimination in the Equal Status Acts.

Should sexual orientation arise as a question we will answer it (generally) as follows (Professional Development Services for Teachers (PDST) RSE training guidelines):

The majority of people are attracted to people of the opposite sex. This is called being heterosexual. Some people are attracted to people of the same sex. This is called being homosexual/gay/lesbian.

6. Sources and Resources:

We will use the R.S.E., Walk Tall, Stay Safe and Busy Body Programmes and any other resources that are deemed suitable by the Principal/S.P.H.E. co-ordinator.

7. Training and Staff Development:

Where necessary or if opportunities arise in-career development will be sought for teachers.

Implementation:

This amended Policy was presented to the Board of Management in Oct 2015 and it was ratified on Oct 14th 2015.

Review:

The policy will be reviewed every two years.

Appendix 1: Appropriate terminology in sensitive areas of the RSE programme.

- Junior/Senior Infants - penis, vagina, breast (if 'breast' arises in some other context and terminology is needed)
- 1st/2nd Class - penis, vagina, breast, womb
- 3rd/4th Class - fertilised egg, womb, developing foetus, umbilical cord
- 5th/6th Class - puberty, reproduction, sexual intercourse, male and female reproductive organs

Junior/Senior Infants

Naming parts of the body including private parts - penis, vagina

This lesson is taught in the context of giving a doll a bath - see RSE Manual pg 150 or Lesson Pack

1st/2nd Class

Naming parts of the body including private parts - penis, vagina, breast, womb

This lesson is taught in the context of children at the beach in their swimwear - see Class Lesson Pack

3rd/4th Class

Wonder of New Life - Sequencing stages of development of human baby from conception to birth - see RSE Manual pg 170-172 or Lesson Pack

5th/6th Class

This content will be taught by School Nurse. The HSE 'Busy Bodies' DVD will be used.
