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Scoil Mhuire Relationships and Sexuality Education (R.S.E.) Policy Statement 2026

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. It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE.

Our School Philosophy/Ethos:

The ethos of Scoil Mhuire is the ethos of a Catholic school which fosters 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.

Definition of R.S.E.:

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 framework. 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.

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. have been taught using lessons and activities from the

- Stay Safe Programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Religious Education Programme (‘Grow in Love’)

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 6th Class by the class teacher. 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.
https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/462570f8-27cc-4f5b-a13e-d1e2de8c18d2/PSEC06_SPHE_curriculum.pdf

2. School Policies and Curricular Plans which support our RSE:

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
- School's Code of Behaviour Policy
- Anti –Bullying Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)
- 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.

3. Parental Rights/Withdrawal from RSE:

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 and online. Also, each year 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.

https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/462570f8-27cc-4f5b-a13e-d1e2de8c18d2/PSEC06_SPHE_curriculum.pdf

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. Answering Questions:
   From the outset we will ask the children to be responsible about the information they are given. This we hope to discourage playground gossip.
   Questions arising from curriculum content will be addressed by the teacher 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 years 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.

7. 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.

8. Sexual Orientation:
   An integral part of RSE is learning to respect others; this will include respect for all different families and all individuals.

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.

9. Transgender

Should the term transgender arise as a question we will answer it (generally) as follows;

Transgender: Gender identity other than the one assigned at birth; for example, being assigned female at birth, but identifying as male; and being assigned male at birth, but identifying as female.

Transgender bullying is another unacceptable form of Bullying and it will be handled like all other cases of Bullying.

If a parent approaches the school about their child and their gender identity we will support them.

10. 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".

11. 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.

12. Training and Staff Development:

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

Implementation:

This amended Policy was ratified by the Board of Management on _____

Review and Evaluate:

The policy will be reviewed every two years.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Gerard O'Sullivan

Chairperson, Board of Management

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

Class	Sensitive Content Objectives	Language	Pages in RSE Manual for sensitive objectives	Walk Tall
Junior/ Senior Infants	Growing and Changing ● Become aware of new life and birth in the world ● Develop an awareness of human birth Taking Care of My Body ● Name parts of the male and female body using anatomical names	Penis Vagina Breast (if 'breast' arises in some other context and terminology is needed) (This lesson is taught in the context of giving a doll a bath)	**Giving the Doll a bath P.150** New Life P.68 My Body P.147 Caring for New Life P.137	Senior Infants Our amazing bodies P.94
First/ Second Class	Growing and Changing ● Begin to understand that reproduction, birth, growth and death are all parts of new life cycles Taking Care of My Body ● Name the parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions	Penis Vagina Breast Womb (This lesson is taught in the context of children at the beach in their swimwear)	**At the beach or swimming pool p.153** The wonder of new life P.59.P.151 How my body works P. 67/P.161 Growing Means Changing P.77/P.177	Second Class Our amazing Bodies P.37
Third/Fourth Class	Growing and Changing ● Understand the physical changes taking place in both the male and female body ● Realise that changes do not occur at the same time but nonetheless are predictable and natural and that being different is normal Taking Care of My Body ● Recognise and discuss how feelings and emotions are affected by the physical changes that take place during puberty ● Discuss the stages and sequence of development of human baby from conception to birth	**3rd Class** Womb, umbilical cord, navel/belly button, egg, lining of womb, developing foetus, baby **4th Class** Changes in Puberty to female body: Menstruation (general description), breasts develop, nipples, growth spurt, underarm and pubic hair, hips broaden, perspiration, oily skin, pimples, sanitary protection, hormones	**The wonder of new life P.170** Preparing for new life P.69 As I grow I change P.93 Growing and changing P.195 **RSE Powerpoint-4th Class (RSE folder-Google Drive)**	Third Class As I grow I change P.175 Fourth Class Changing and Growing P.140

Fifth/Sixth Class	Growing and Changing ● Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a loving, committed relationship Taking Care of My Body ● Identify and discuss the physical changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty and understand that these take place at different rates for everyone ● Understand the reproductive system of both males and Females	**5th Class** <u>Female Anatomy:</u> Ovaries-Ovum, Fallopian tube, Womb/Uterus, Cervix, <u>Changes to female body (Menstruation):</u> Revision of language in 4th Class, Puberty, menstruation,ovulation, egg, sanitary protection, hormones, menstrual cycle, sanitary towel/period pad, tampon, cramps/period pains <u>Male Anatomy:</u> testicles, scrotum, penis, foreskin <u>Changes to male body:</u> Revision of language in 4th Class, nocturnal emissions (wet dreams), semen, sperm, hormones **6th Class** Sexual Intercourse, Conception, ovulation, ova/egg, sperm/semen, erection, ejaculation, Fallopian Tubes, fertilise, pregnant, Contractions, birth of baby, caesarean section, folic acid, breast-feeding	**RSE Powerpoint-5th Class (RSE folder-Google Drive)** My body grows and changes P.81 The wonder of new life P.92 Caring for new life P.103 Different kinds of love P.141 Busy Bodies P. 22+23 (Changes to female body) Busy Bodies P.25 (Female Anatomy) Busy Bodies P. 26-32 (Menstruation) Busy Bodies P.18+19 (Male Anatomy) Busy Bodies P. 16+17 (Changes to male body) **RSE Powerpoint-6th Class (RSE folder-Google Drive)** Busy Bodies P.34-P.38	Fifth Class Amazing bodies P.345 Sixth Class Creation P.121

Appendix 2- Parent Withdrawal

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Parental Withdrawal from RSE Sensitive Topics Lessons

I wish to formally withdraw my child, _____ (full name) who is in _____ (class level), from the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) sensitive topics lessons in Scoil Mhuire.

I understand that, by making this decision, I take full responsibility for delivering this part of my child's education at home. I also acknowledge that the school cannot be held responsible for any information or discussion my child may hear from other pupils outside of these lessons.

Signed: _____

Date: _____