RSE Policy

St. Mary's Primary School

St. Mary's Primary School is a mixed sex school as far as and including 1st Class with girls solely from 2nd to 6th Class. The school fosters a Catholic ethos. There are 13 classrooms, 5 SEN rooms and Autistic Unit (as of school year 2020/21)

This policy is an approved approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE both formally and informally. This review was undertaken in March and April 2021.

School Philosophy:

We are committed to creating a warm, happy atmosphere where all work together in a spirit of co-operation, openness and trust. We aim to:

- foster good Christian values and practice
- respect the right of every child to a holistic education whereby they can discover and develop their individual gifts
- develop a sense of self-discipline and respect that will lead to each pupil achieving to the best of their ability
- encourage respect and awareness of others and the environment
- work as a community – parents, teachers, pupils, In-School Management Team and Board of Management – in a spirit of mutual respect and openness
- be aware of the individuality of each other while supporting and sharing

In this way, the school will function as a community which is interdependent, mutually supportive and fully inclusive, where each member of that community is equally important.

Definition of RSE:

Relationships and Sexuality Education is an integral part of SPHE and must be taught in this context. It provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality and relationships through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework. In particular, it addresses the meaning of human sexuality, relationships, growth and development, relevant to personal and social skills.

R.S.E. aims to provide opportunities for children and young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way. At primary level R.S.E. aims to help children learn at home and in school about their own development, about their friendships and relationships with others. This work will be based on developing a good self-image, promoting respect for themselves and others and providing them with appropriate information.

The curriculum will be taught from Junior Infants to 6th class. It will be taught through a spiral curriculum (key topics/ vocabulary will be revisited in a developmental manner at regular intervals).

Aims of RSE:

• To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and wellbeing of the child

• To help the child to develop healthy friendships and relationships

• To foster an understanding of, and a heathy 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.

Broad Objectives

When due account is taken of abilities and varying circumstances, the RSE education curriculum should enable the child to (in conjunction with the SPHE curriculum)

• Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self

• Develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and wellbeing of others

• Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-worth

• Understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and wider contexts

• Develop an awareness of differing family patterns

• Come to value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood

• Develop strategies to make decisions, solve problems and implement actions in various personal, social and health contexts

• Become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change and understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity

• Develop personal skills which help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships

• Develop coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse

• Acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction

• Acquire the use of appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development

• Develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making.

Policies that Support RSE:

▪ Child Safeguarding Statement

▪ Substance Use Policy

▪ Code of Behaviour

▪ Anti-Bullying Policy

▪ Enrolment Policy

▪ Acceptable Use Policy

A code of Discipline and Behaviour and a Policy on Bullying has been drawn up for the school with the co-operation of Teachers, Parents and Management. In keeping with the sentiment and spirit of these policies the school informally supports many of the aims on which S.P.H.E. / R.S.E. are modelled. It encourages good behaviour, open communication, understanding and tolerance of differences and respect for self and for others. A sense of responsibility is fostered and attention is paid to the well being of all members of the school community.

RSE and 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.

• Is a lifelong process and consequently RSE is a continual process throughout primary school and is not confined to once off inputs or lessons

• Is a shared responsibility between family, school, health professionals and the community

• RSE education should include an input from all, and collaboration can be fostered through the teaching and delivery of materials

• Is a generic approach. It is not so much about the specific content of RSE but rather the relationship with a child's skills, attitudes, values and understanding relevant to a range of social, personal and health issues

• Is based on the needs of the child, therefore RSE education should prioritise the needs of the child and his/her environment, with appropriate adaptations made within the curriculum to suit individual requirements and individual school situations

• Is spiral in nature. RSE is revisited at different stages throughout the child's time in school, this will provide opportunities **to consolidate and build** on previous learning. This allows for issues and topics to be explored and treated in a manner appropriate to the children's needs, abilities and levels of maturity

• Engages children to be involved in activity based learning. RSE should provide a range of learning opportunities that include working together, learning about one's own feelings and those of others, developing a sense of empathy and experiencing and supporting healthy relationships.

The definition of **RSE** used is from the Interim RSE Guidelines 1996 and Going Forward Together Parents Information Booklet. 'RSE is an important part of the education of young people, and schools provide a safe context within which young people can learn about themselves and the wider world. This makes access to RSE in schools all the more important' – (Mayock, Kitching and Morgan 2007, p2). RSE is an integral part of SPHE. SPHE is taught through school atmosphere and culture, integration and discrete teaching time.

Through SPHE and RSE, members of the school community should be enabled to enhance their self-esteem and wellbeing through;

• A sense of identity

• A sense of purpose

• A sense of belonging

• A sense of security

• A sense of competence. The school has a responsibility to ensure that its curriculum is free of bias and that issues of inequality in any form are addressed and dealt with (SPHE Teacher guidelines, p25). In learning about cultures and traditions of others, children can develop a sense of respect for difference and appreciate the contribution that such has to offer. It will encourage children to be inclusive with each other, challenge prejudice and learn how to live in an intercultural society.

Current Provision Included in the School Curriculum is:

▪ SPHE lessons (provided through discrete curricular time and integration)

▪ Use of the RSE Manuals and Busy Bodies resources

▪ Stay Safe Programme

▪ Walk Tall Programme

▪ Webwise resources

▪ Adapted resources for SEN from www.pdst.ie

▪ Religious Education

Grow in Love

The Grow in Love programme is used in all classes from Junior Infants to 6th class. This programme extensively covers many of the topics of the SPHE and RSE programmes. The topics, particularly as they relate to self-esteem and inter-personal relationships, are dealt with as they arise in the programme.

Stay Safe Programme

This programme has been taught in St. Mary's since 1990s. Children are taught the programme at appropriate levels during the academic year.

Content of RSE Programme:

The R.S.E. policy of the school, in line with NCCA guidelines, is obliged to indicate the biological terms for the body that will be used and the ages they will be introduced. The programme will be available so that parents may familiarise themselves with the contents.

**SEE ATTACHED APPENDIX 1 FOR OUTLINE

The Management and Organisation of RSE:

Parents' Rights and Responsibilities:

Notice will be given to parents outlining the contents of each topic/theme. It will be the responsibility of the parent to inform the class teacher in writing if there are lessons in the programme which they do not wish their children to cover. Provision will be made for children who are withdrawn from certain areas of the programme in consultation with parents.

Mixed Classes/ Curriculum:

In the event that a class has two curriculum levels, ie 2nd/ 3rd, the teacher will revise the content already covered and introduce as much new terminology as the class are able for.

Outside Speakers:

Where a teacher has a conscientious objection to deliver certain aspects of the programme, provision will be made for those aspects to be delivered by a colleague or a guest speaker.

As in the case of all subjects, outside speakers may sometimes be invited to speak to the children on some aspects of R.S.E. The policy and sensitive language programme will be outlined to the guest speaker. The guest speaker will be required to only cover matters which are currently in our agreed policy. The class teacher will remain with the class group while the guest speaker is present (in accordance with Circular 42/2018).

Classroom Strategy re Sensitive Issues:
Teachers will explain that the amount of information given will be part of this year's programme and further information will be given at a later stage. If the question is factual and within the agreed programme for that age group, the teacher will answer it. If the

question is genuine, the teacher may advise the child to ask at home. Teachers will not answer personal questions. Reference may be made to questions/sensitive areas which will not be addressed at this time.

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE:

- Confidentiality
- Parents' rights and responsibilities
- Ethical issues
- Moral values framework

Curriculum Content –The curriculum by NCCA will be followed as published and will be taught from infants to 6th class. All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school, the whole school plan for SPHE and the RSE policy. Each class teacher will teach the content for their class level each year as laid out in the curriculum, and utilising the RSE manuals to complement their teaching.

Parental Involvement

Content is available on the school website for parent/ guardian perusal

•Parents will be informed that the school fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE programme including sensitive aspects of the programme at enrolment

▪ Parents will be informed in advance of lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme, through a notice on the Aladdin noticeboard or by letter where required

▪ The notice will be issued in advance, giving parents an opportunity to meet with relevant class teachers if they so wish, to discuss or clarify what is covered and to prepare their children. It also gives parents an opportunity to become involved, to inform themselves of the programme content and to prepare children for the information they will acquire around the sensitive areas and discuss areas covered in RSE/SPHE

▪ Parents are invited/welcome to view the curriculum on the website and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns at any time during the year. The school acknowledges that parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children about growing and changing

▪ If a parent has concerns regarding a sensitive lesson, a scheduled meeting can take place with the Principal and Class Teacher. If they wish to withdraw their child from the lesson, notice is to be given in writing stating their reasons for doing so. Going Forward Together (Parents Booklet) states that – "As a parent, you are the first teacher of your child. You hand on values and attitudes to each new generation of children". Our aim is to include and foster a relationship to support parents in their RSE education of the children in the school. In line

with the Education Act 1998, section 30 subsection 2(e) "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". Therefore, **parents have the right to withdraw their child out of the sensitive aspects of RSE if they so wish**. As RSE is an integral component to SPHE, consent is not needed. However, with open communication and systems of dialogue, **our hope in St. Mary's is that withdrawal can be avoided.**

▪ If a child has been withdrawn from the sensitive RSE lessons, the school takes no responsibility for what the child may hear following on from the teaching of the lessons. eg. what they may hear in the yard.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs

Adaptions to the way in which the content is delivered will be made for children with Special Educational Needs. Consultation with parents/ guardians in advance and anticipation of the children's needs will be central to ensuring learning is meaningful.

▪ Children may be pre-taught language or concepts in anticipation of whole class work

▪ Children may work in smaller groups or 1:1 on adapted and suitable material

▪ Any different or specific objectives related to the pupils own learning needs should be detailed in their IEP or IPLP in consultation with parents/guardians.

Language

The language that is promoted in our school must be one that nurtures both children and adults as unique and valuable human beings. It will respect cultural and other differences between people and be used in a way that encourages inclusiveness which children are addressed in class, the manner in which they are reproached or affirmed and the tone of voice used in exploring issues of a personal nature will all reflect the values that are upheld in school. The words 'gay' and 'lesbian' are sometimes used to hurt others and the use of such language in a derogatory way diminishes respect for gay and lesbian people. There are no formal lessons on being gay taught in RSE. However, as part of The Anti-Bullying Procedures 2013, we aim to address identity based bullying such as homophobic bullying and include preventative educational strategies. In order for the RSE policy to be fully in line with these procedures, if questions arise as to the definition of gay and lesbian, and attitudes or opinions about gay people are expressed, age appropriate definitions will be given (from Stay Safe programme) and children will be informed that being gay is okay, and that all people in various types of relationships and families deserve respect. If the teachers deem it necessary, any further questions around same sex relationships, will be directed to home.

As we are a single sex school from 2nd Class to 6th Class, teachers may use their discretion with omitting certain male terminology/ phrases.

Questions

We use some simple principles when fostering discussion and questioning. Before lessons, the rules of respect/ a contract will be agreed upon as a class from paired/ group discussions.

▪ No personal questions of the teacher

▪ The Question Box will be made available to 5th and 6th Class children

▪ The teacher will be mindful of their reaction to any questions

▪ Questions do not have to be answered straight away

Sample responses; • I'll do my best to answer your questions but I may not be able to answer all of them • That's something you'll learn about as you get older • Is that something you could talk to your parents / guardians / family about? • We agreed in our contract that we wouldn't ask anyone personal questions • Somebody asked a question and the language that was used was slang language, what they meant to ask was….

Staff will not invalidate questions but use limits. The main aim of talk and discussion is to create an atmosphere where the children feel comfortable to ask important questions and that the relationship fostered in these sessions is open, controlled and safe for all pupils. While we may not be able to answer all questions, our hope is that children will not be put off seeking answers in the school setting but will talk to their parents and ask the questions again at different stages of schooling or education.

▪ No personal questions will be answered and children will be reminded not to share personal information about their families or others – but can share with teacher after the lessons. If issues arise which might be seen to contravene Children First Guidelines, the teacher will notify the Designated Liaison Person in the school, Mrs. Fitzgerald.

Assessment

Assessment in RSE is important to enable the teacher to pitch the lessons correctly to their respective class group. Teachers will use

• Observation and questions to assess the children's engagement and interest

• Use of teacher-designed tasks such as worksheets, quizzes or games

• Use of reflection or learning log.

Resources

Relationships and Sexuality Education Resource Materials (DES) - Each class teacher has a pack accompanying the named programmes. The pack contains this policy, a whole school Sensitive Language outline (which ensures content will be revised, consolidated and built upon), Class Planning Sheets and a Links outline (Walk Tall, Stay Safe and RSE). Manuals include

- Stay Safe programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Anatomical Dolls and Story books
- Busy Bodies Booklet. This booklet was developed to support the teaching of the 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th class component of RSE within the context of SPHE

Ongoing Support, Development and Review:

When opportunities arise, CPD will be sought for teachers.

The HSCL will arrange training for parents if necessary.

- This policy will be reviewed every two years. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made.
- This plan was ratified by the Board of Management

Date: _____