

St. Mary's National School Crosserlough RSE Policy

Rationale

St. Mary's NS is a Catholic school and therefore all policies developed are implemented in ways which are in keeping with the ethos of the school. The ethos of the school is characterised by the following:

- Sensitive to reality of our children's lives in a changing world
- Mutual respect between all partners in education
- Child-centred
- Aims to ensure each child reaches full potential in the holistic sense
- Hopes that children are equipped with high self-esteem to enable them to go to live happy and fulfilled lives

In St Mary's NS the child's many needs are met in a well-structured environment where she/he can live fully the life of a child. While nourishing the child's young life, we hope to provide her/him with a solid foundation for future growth and development in a Christian tradition. The environment is such that the child is encouraged and stimulated to be confident, appreciate, independent and creative. The Relationships and Sexuality (RSE) programme will be implemented within this framework.

Definition of RSE

RSE aims to provide opportunities for children to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way. This work will be based on developing a good image, promoting respect for themselves and others, and providing them with appropriate information.

RSE in the context of our SPHE programme

Throughout the school year, Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is taught as a subject from Junior Infants to 6th class. A wide variety of topics is included on this programme, at age-appropriate levels. RSE forms a part of this programme; it is a spiral curriculum which ensures that topics are taught in a developmental manner throughout a child's primary school years.

Aims of our RSE programme

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of each child.
- To help children develop healthy friendships and relationships.
- To foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- To enable the older child to acquire and 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 of the RSE programme

The RSE programme should enable the child:

- To acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self.
- To develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth.
- To develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well-being of others.
- To understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and in wider contexts.
- To develop an awareness of differing family patterns
- To come to value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood.
- To develop strategies to make decisions, solve problems and implement actions in various personal, social and health contexts.
- To become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change, and to understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity.
- To develop personal skills which will help them to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships.
- To develop some coping strategies to protect themselves and others from various forms of abuse.
- To acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction.
- To acquire and use an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development.
- To develop in the child a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making.

Overview of content (See appendix 1)

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

Social, Personal and Health Education (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.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (R.S.E) is an integral part of S.P.H.E 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 that 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 personal and social skills and aspects of parenting.

Relationships and Sexuality Education

Relationships will be a key part in the SPHE programme.

The child within the family and their relationship to parents / guardians and siblings – their unique place within the family

The child in school – relationships with their friends – showing friendship – returning friendship – spoiling friendship – forgiving – reconciliation – their sense of belonging within the class.

Boy / Girl relationships – recognition and respect for others' feelings – uniqueness and value of each person – covering all ages – language that describes these feelings.

R.S.E also deals with the issue of human growth and development, human sexuality and human relationships.

In the Senior cycle (5th and 6th classes) some very sensitive issues will be dealt with but the children will have been prepared for these issues by the cyclical nature of the syllabus. Each year their awareness and knowledge is growing and expanding and they now have reached a very important stage in their development.

Content and language are carefully selected so that children get the necessary factual knowledge in the context of Catholic moral teaching as befits the ethos of the school.

Management and Organisation of RSE (or for teaching sexually sensitive issues) in our school.

A developmental approach:-

Teaching about relationships and sexuality will be delivered in the context of S.P.H.E. All content objectives will be taught developmentally from Junior Infants to the time the children leave at the end of 6th class. All issues will be discussed with sensitivity, professionalism and awareness of the varying levels of development within a class.

Possible sensitive issues such as naming the body parts and sexual intercourse will be covered within the strand units "Taking care of my Body", "Growing and Changing" and "Safety and Protection". Please see Appendix 1 for more detail of the content taught.

Language

The acquisition of appropriate language in RSE is crucially important to enable children to communicate confidently about themselves, their sexuality and their relationships (Interim Guidelines, p53). Not being familiar with the biological terms for the body can put children at

a disadvantage. (DES Resource Materials for Education and Sexuality Education, Junior/Senior Infants, pp.148-149).

We will give children the correct and appropriate language outlined in the RSE materials.

In order to allay any fears that parents have, it is important for parents to know exactly what will be taught to the children and at what stage it will be taught. See Appendix 1 for the course content to be delivered at each class level.

Rights and responsibilities of Parents/Guardians:

- In SPHE and RSE parents are acknowledged as the primary educators of their children and the school will work in a supportive role.
- On enrolment parents will be provided with an R.S.E School Policy.
- An outline of the sensitive issues will be available to parents before they are taught, so that they can prepare the child before it is dealt with in school, if they so wish.
- A parent's right to withdraw a pupil from the process will be honoured on the understanding that the parent is taking full responsibility for this aspect of the pupil's education. It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the school **in writing** of this decision prior to the lessons being taught in this area each year, and the school will make alternative arrangements for the care of the pupil while withdrawn from the class.

General Organisational and Classroom Planning

1. If issues are raised following T.V programmes (soaps) or general class. Oral work, which the children may be watching, the teachers will not ignore it, but try to deal with it in an age appropriate way.
2. The school shall be proactive in promoting and exercising an inclusion of all children regardless of race, religion, gender, culture or special needs at all times including break time.
3. Diversity (age, race etc...) within the school community shall be acknowledged, recognised and valued.
4. All children shall have equal access to the services, facilities and amenities in the school.
5. Sanitary provisions shall be provided in toilets between senior classrooms. Sanitary provisions shall also be provided in the staff toilet.
6. In September girls from 4th, 5th & 6th class will be informed about sanitary provisions and who to approach if they need supplies.

6. Teacher shall conduct discrete lessons from the Stay Safe Programme and Substance Use Policy as part of his or her yearly S.P.H.E plan when teaching the relevant class.
7. In multi-class situations maturity levels will be taken into consideration and specific issues will be managed in a sensitive way. An alternative is that these issues may be taught when the junior class group is with another teacher.
8. Children with different needs will be offered support where possible through...
 - Resource teachers support S.P.H.E for Special Needs children and the Learning Support Teacher will support language difficulties
 - S.N.A's will support S.P.H.E where appropriate
 - Any specific / sensitive issues will be considered in meeting the individual needs of the child for example bereavement or loss, disability, illness etc...

Confidentiality:

If a child is withdrawn for the teaching of sensitive issues we cannot guarantee that the other children will not tell/inform him/her about what was taught.

Rights and responsibilities of teachers:

Each class teacher will teach the SPHE programme. A teachers' right to opt out from teaching the sensitive issues will be honoured. Provision will then be made for these issues to be taught by another staff member or trained outside personnel.

Trained outside Personnel:

All information delivered will be informed by the content objectives of the SPHE Curriculum. (See SPHE Curriculum statement p. 32.)

Communication and Child Protection Issues

Any disclosures made by any child to a member of staff shall be reported directly to the school principal and where necessary the vice principal. Staff must not promise privacy / complete confidentiality as all serious concerns must be reported.

A copy of the RSE Policy will be made available on the school website and on enrolment a hard copy is given to parents.

Caretaker / Secretary & other Staff will be made aware of RSE Policy and any incidents re behaviour etc... are reported directly to School Principal / Deputy Principal

The values and principles upheld in the school community are put into practice through the support of teachers of one another as mentors. They are also evident when teachers display a welcome to visitors, which is friendly and polite.

All Teachers / visitors / Parents are expected to show appropriate example to the children when present at the school

The class teacher or principal shall address any parental concerns positively.

Parents shall review draft policy and all proposed amendments etc... should be made through the Parents Association for review.

Procedures for the Reporting of Child Abuse will be in accordance with the Child Protection Policy which can be viewed on the school website.

Staff Member

Reasonable cause for concern:

Specific indication from the child

An account by the person who witnessed the abuse

Evidence (injury or behaviour) which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused in any other way

An injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse

Consistent indication, over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional / physical neglect

will report to

Mr Mc Dermott & Mrs Galligan who in conjunction with Rev. Fr. Micheal Quinn (Chairman B.O.M.) and Parent/Guardian will report to the HSE

Health Service Executive

Health Board Staff have a responsibility to inform reporters and any other involved professionals about the outcomes of any enquiry or investigation into that reported concern.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on _____

Signed by _____

Chairperson

Principal

Date to be reviewed: _____