



Relationships and Sexuality Education(RSE) Policy

Date	September 2021
Initial Draft	March 2019/June 2020
Parent Consultation	October 2021
Ratified by the Board of Management	11/11/21

This is a working continuous document

School: St Patrick's National School
Diswellstown
Dublin 15

Date: September 2021

Principal: Séamus McConámha

Context:

Saint Patrick's is a Catholic co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. It is located in the parish of Porterstown, Dublin 15. There are 827 pupils from Infants to Sixth Class enrolled in the school. There are 44 teachers on staff

including an Administrative Principal, Administrative Deputy Principal as well as a number of special needs assistants and ancillary staff.

Learning about Relationships and Sexuality is a lifelong process. Children learn about relationships and sexuality primarily from their parents. The school based Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme complements and supports what children are learning at home. The Department of Education and Skills requires all schools to teach RSE and to have an RSE policy. This school policy will ensure that RSE is taught in a way that reflects the core values and ethos of the school. RSE-specific education or core RSE education (sensitive lessons) belong to the strand units Taking Care of My Body and Growing and Changing

Introductory Statement & Rationale

This policy statement outlines our approach to the teaching of RSE in Saint Patrick's NS. An RSE policy was initially developed in 2003 to inform the teaching of RSE in the school. The policy was updated in 2021 in consultation with the teaching staff and Parents Association. This revised policy further informs teachers and parents of (i) the RSE content that is taught at each class level and (ii) outlines the organisation and management of the RSE programme in Saint Patrick's NS. RSE is taught in accordance with the curriculum guidelines of the Department of Education and in the context of the Catholic ethos and philosophy of the school.

Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) & Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE):

The SPHE curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn basic personal and social skills which foster integrity, self-confidence and self-esteem, while nurturing sensitivity to the rights and feelings of others. The Stay Safe Programme is a component of SPHE and is taught under the strand unit 'Personal Safety'. This programme teaches personal safety skills and helps children to deal with upsetting, unsafe or frightening situations.

RSE is an integral part of SPHE. The RSE programme is taught within the context of the SPHE curriculum ... Taking Care of My Body and Growing and Changing..... for all class levels. RSE aims to provide opportunities for pupils to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

Aims of our Relationship and Sexuality Education programme:

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

- To provide children with language through which they may seek clarification, ask questions and discuss all aspects of their growth and development.
- To foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- To develop and promote in the child a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life.
- To understand the physical changes that happen with the onset of puberty - (Senior Classes: 3rd – 6th classes)
- To enable the child to acquire an understanding of, and respect for, human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction (3rd – 6th classes)
- To enhance the capacity of the child to resist sexual exploitation and abuse.

Organisation of RSE

- RSE lessons, as per the curriculum guidelines, are taught from Infants to 6th Class by the class teacher.
- Aspects of the SPHE and RSE curriculum may also be integrated with other curricular areas and with Wellbeing Programmes.
- Parents are acknowledged as the primary educators of their children and the school works in partnership with parents in the education process.
- The SPHE coordinator will provide CPD on the content of ‘sensitive lessons’ and powerpoint presentations to class teachers prior to the lessons being taught.
- The content of the ‘sensitive lessons’ for 4th - 6th and a ‘Parent Information Meeting’ is provided to parents prior to the lessons being taught, to summarise the content of said lessons.
- Parents have the right to withdraw their child from specific, sensitive lessons on the understanding that they take full responsibility for this aspect of their child’s education themselves.
- If a parent chooses to remove a child from RSE lessons, they should do so in writing to the school and this must be recorded on Aladdin.
- Pupils who are not participating in the RSE ‘sensitive lesson’ are placed in another class, or the principals or deputy principals office, for supervision for the duration of the lesson.
- Each year the school will notify parents in advance of the planned teaching of the RSE ‘sensitive lessons’. It will be the responsibility of the parents to inform the school in writing of a decision to withdraw a pupil. However if a pupil is withdrawn, the school cannot guarantee that other pupils will not discuss the content of the lesson(s) in that pupil’s presence.
- Pupils are introduced to all aspects of the RSE Programme at an age appropriate level, in accordance with the curriculum guidelines
- Teachers model appropriate vocabulary relating to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, parts of the body and feelings.
- Teachers teach only the content/topics advised for the class level and will only answer questions relevant to the programme for that class level. Teachers inform

pupils at the beginning of the RSE 'sensitive lesson' that it may not be possible to answer all questions from pupils. They will use the 'Ask it Basket' to facilitate questions.

- Teachers do not give or seek personal information.
- Pupils are advised that it is inappropriate to discuss information about certain aspects of the RSE programme with younger siblings or friends.
- Pupils are encouraged to discuss the learning outcomes of the RSE lessons with their parents/guardians.
- Respect for personal privacy and for personal information is emphasised with the pupils. Pupils are encouraged to use 'a person I know' in place of naming a person when sharing personal information.
- Teachers will encourage pupils to come to them in private if they would like to discuss an aspect of the lesson that they may not be comfortable with discussing in front of their peers.
- If a child makes a disclosure to a teacher that the teacher feels a parent needs to be aware of they will contact the parent in question.
- If a child makes a disclosure to a teacher that the teacher feels is a child protection disclosure, they are mandated to report it to the Designated Liaison Person (Séamus MacConámha) or the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Emer Threadgold) if the Designated Liaison Person is not on the school premises.
- Teachers are aware of the learning needs of their pupils and differentiate the RSE lessons as appropriate to ensure that pupils with special needs can learn at their level of understanding.
- The Principal/Deputy Principal and SPHE Coordinator make the practical arrangements regarding the teaching of the RSE programme and the deployment of teaching staff.
- Account will be taken to support children with special educational needs when planning and delivering these lessons. This support may involve including these lessons as a goal in support plans.

RSE Topics covered in Infants and Junior Classes

- Keeping Safe
- Bodily changes during growth and birth (birth to 9)
- Making age appropriate choices
- Recognising and expressing feelings
- Self-care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep
- Expressing opinions and listening to others
- Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms (Jun/Sen Infants)
- Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions (1st/2nd)

RSE Topics covered in Middle and Senior Classes

- Bodily changes
- Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise
- Keeping Safe
- Expressing Feelings
- Family Relationships
- Making healthy and responsible decisions
- Forming Friendships
- Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (4th)
- Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (4th class girls, all children in 5th/6th)
- Reproductive system of male/female adults (5th/6th)
- Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship.

Ratification by Board of Management and Communication to School Community:

The RSE Policy has been seen by the teaching staff, members of the parent body and by the Board of Management. When due account was taken of amendments to be made this plan has been ratified by the Board of Management.

The Policy is available to parents on the school website and can be read in the school.

This policy will be reviewed regularly.