



## Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy

**School Details:** Mixed school

**Name:** Scoil Mhuire

**Address:** Borrisokane, Co.Tipperary

**Phone Number:** 067 27477

**Enrolment Number:** 122

### **Introductory Statement**

This policy was formulated in March 2017 following a P.D.S.T. seminar requested by staff in order to assist with updating the existing policy. It was reviewed in January 2019. Staff recognise that parents and guardians have the primary responsibility for educating their children in sexual matters. The school RSE programme acts only as a support to parents.

This policy is cognisant of all aspects of our current Child Protection Policy. The school follows the DES child protection guidelines and has a Child Safeguarding policy with the Principal as Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and the Deputy Principal as the Deputy DLP. Where a child protection concern is raised, the procedures outlined in the schools Child Safeguarding Policy will be followed.

### **School Philosophy**

Scoil Mhuire 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.

### **Definition of RSE**

Relationship and Sexuality education (RSE) 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.

## **Relationship of RSE to 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.

Current provision included in the school curriculum is:

- S.P.H.E. Curriculum.
- Engaging with these programmes: Stay Safe, R.S.E. and Walk Tall.
- Religious Education.
- An external speaker is invited to work with 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> class pupils during the second term. The classroom teacher remains present during the presentation and at least one parent/guardian must also accompany their children to this session, in line with circular 22/2010.
- **Spring 2021 will mean a Zoom meeting with an external speaker and the children in 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> class. A parent or guardian must be present during this meeting.**

## **Aims of our RSE programme:**

- To help young people develop healthy friendships and relationships.
- To promote a healthy attitude to sexuality and to relationships.
- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child.
- To foster an understanding of and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- To enable children in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class, to acquire an understanding of and respect for, human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction.
- To understand the physical changes which take place with the onset of puberty in 3<sup>rd</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> classes.
- To develop and promote in the child a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life in Junior Infants – 6<sup>th</sup> class.
- To enable the child to be comfortable with the sexuality of oneself and others while growing and developing in Junior Infants – 6<sup>th</sup> class.

## **Policies which support S.P.H.E./R.S.E.:**

- Code of Behaviour and Discipline
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child Safeguarding Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Intimate Care policy

In keeping with the sentiment and spirit of these policies, we support informally many of the aims on which R.S.E. is modelled. We encourage good behaviour, open communication, understanding and tolerance of differences and respect for self 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 wellbeing of all of the members of the school community.

## **Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School:**

### Curriculum Matters

- Curriculum Content –The curriculum by NCCA will be followed as published and will be taught from Junior infants to 6<sup>th</sup> class. All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school and the policy. Each class teacher will teach the content for their class level.
- Where an outside speaker is used, the class teacher will remain in the classroom. The speaker will be made aware of the school's R.S.E. policy.

- The Stay Safe programme will be implemented throughout the school.
- The class teachers will coordinate the teaching of Stay Safe during the school year from 3<sup>rd</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> class. Stay Safe and R.S.E. will be taught alternate years in line with the school plan.

**Topics covered up to 2<sup>nd</sup> class include:**

- Keeping safe.
- Bodily changes during growth and birth (birth to 9).
- Making age appropriate choices.
- Appreciating family life.
- 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 (Junior/ Senior Infants).
- Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions (1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>).

**Topics from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class include:**

- 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 (4<sup>th</sup> class).
- Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class).
- Reproductive system of male/female adults (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class).
- Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class).

Organisational Matters:

- Parents have a responsibility 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 R.S.E./S.P.H.E. Parents are invited and welcome to view the curriculum and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns.
- In the class situation children will be encouraged to recognise that certain information is for them only and it would be inappropriate to discuss this with younger siblings/children for example.
- With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom. Should a child who is withdrawn from the sexually sensitive lessons receive inappropriate information from others outside the of these classes, it will be the responsibility of the parents/guardians to address the issues.
- If a teacher has concerns about teaching the “sexually sensitive issues” in R.S.E. they should consult with the principal. Any teacher has the right to opt out of teaching the “sensitive parts” of R.S.E. It is the responsibility of the B.O.M. to ensure content is covered by another teacher or an outside speaker.
- Children with SEN – Taking into account the pupil’s social and emotional development, instruction will be based on individual needs where possible. Parents will be consulted around sensitive issues.

## **Dealing with Questions:**

It is natural that children should wish to ask questions in the area of RSE. However, this area is treated somewhat differently from other subjects due to its sensitive nature.

All questions answered will reflect the parameters of the curriculum.

Questions to the teacher may be oral or written within the group setting and answered within boundaries of the curriculum and school policy. If any questions asked by children are deemed to be inappropriate, the teacher will refer the child to their parents/guardians, or state that this information may be available at a later stage of the curriculum. The school cannot guarantee confidentiality if a child asks a question of a personal nature or discloses personal information.

At all times the child's and teacher's right to privacy will be maintained.

Children's questions will be dealt with, taking into account the following criteria, when relevant

- By being aware of circumstances in which the question has arisen.
- By clarifying what information is required.
- By deciding if the issue is relevant/who it is relevant to.
- By giving an age - appropriate answer.
- By deferring the question as one which will be answered in the next lesson, one which should be answered at home or one which will be answered more fully in the future.

## **Parental Involvement**

- Parents are welcome to view the curriculum and resources if they wish. Stay Safe is mandatory, therefore, parents must make a request in writing if a child is to opt out of the R.S.E. content.
- Parents will be informed in advance when formal lessons on the sensitive areas of the programme and will be asked to discuss these issues with their child prior to the lessons in school. A letter will be sent to parents.
- Use of the home/school links pages accompanying such lessons in the RSE Resource books.
- Parents will be advised to refer to the H.S.E. website if they have any queries regarding content. Stay Safe, Walk Tall and R.S.E. content is available on line.
- Parents of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class students will be given a copy of "Toms Flower Power" and "Busy Bodies" booklet.

## **Resources**

- Lesson plans from the DES Resource Material for Relationships and Sexuality Education. Each class teacher has a copy of the appropriate manual.
- The Stay Safe Programme and Walk Tall Programme.
- Busy Bodies DVD and booklet. This DVD and booklet were developed to support the teaching of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class component of R.S.E. within the context of S.P.H.E. It is available for download at [www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie)
- All resources are available for parents/guardians to view if they so request prior to the delivery of the lesson.

## **Provision for Ongoing Support**

- Parents welcome to view curriculum if they wish
- Opportunities provided by our Education Centre will be brought to the attention of staff members.

**Review**

The policy will be reviewed after a 12 month period. The policy may also be reviewed should a need arise. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made. This plan was ratified by the Board of Management.

**Signed:** Paul Dooley - Chairperson

**Signed:** Sarah Leahy - Principal

**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020.