



St. Mary's N.S. Policy for Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Date Updated: November 2020

School Details

Name: St. Mary's National School,

Address: Racehill, Ashbourne, Co. Meath. A84 X762

Category: Boys and Girls, Junior Infants to 6th Class

Enrolment: 490 pupils (September 2020)

Our School Philosophy

St. Mary's N.S, through an integrated and challenging curriculum, hopes to foster in each pupil a healthy self-image, a confidence which allows each to take his/her place in society and a certain independence of mind and spirit.

The school aims to provide a safe and healthy environment in which pupils and staff can grow in self-esteem.

Our aim is that all children should leave St. Mary's N.S. with the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy and enthusiasm for learning, a thirst for knowledge, an appreciation of their own religion and the world they live in and above all, many happy memories.

Definition of RSE

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. It is an integral part of SPHE and must be taught in this context.

Relationship of RSE to SPHE

The draft guidelines for RSE (NCCA) state that Social, Personal and Health Education is ‘spiral, developmental in nature and age appropriate in content and methodology.’ The RSE programme is designed to follow this principle and pattern. Apart from the specific lessons of RSE, SPHE covers other areas which would be pertinent to the development of a healthy attitude to sexuality in oneself and one’s relationship with others. SPHE deals with many issues such as self-esteem, assertiveness, communication and decision making skills – all of which can contribute to the effectiveness of the RSE programme.

Current Provision

The SPHE programme is currently taught in every class for 30 minutes per week, as per guidelines.

- 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
- Weaving Wellbeing
- All Together Now – Homophobic and Transphobic bullying lessons
- RESPECT Guidelines (suggested approaches to teaching about different families)
- Adapted resources for SEN from www.pdst.ie
- Religious Education
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Aims of Our RSE Programme

- a) To help pupils understand and develop healthy friendships and relationships.
- b) To promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's relationship with others.
- c) To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction.
- d) To enable pupils to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework in keeping with the policy of the school.
- e) To provide opportunities for the pupils to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.
- f) To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and wellbeing of the child.
- g) To foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- h) To enable the child to acquire an understanding of, and respect for human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction.
- i) To develop and promote in the child a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life.
- j) To enable the child to be comfortable with the sexuality of oneself and others while growing and developing.

Broad Objectives

The RSE Curriculum, in conjunction with the SPHE Curriculum, should enable the child to

- a) Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self
- b) Develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and wellbeing of others
- c) Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-worth
- d) Understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and wider contexts
- e) Develop an awareness of differing family patterns
- f) Come to value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood
- g) Develop strategies to make decisions, solve problems and implement actions in various personal, social and health contexts

- h) 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
- i) Develop personal skills which help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships
- j) Develop coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse
- k) Acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction
- l) Acquire the use of appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development
- m) Develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making

We support the aims on which RSE 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.

Policies which Support SPHE / RSE

- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Acceptable Usage Policy (Acceptable Use of Technology and Online Services)
- Healthy Eating Policy

Guidelines for Management and Organisation of RSE in Our School

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.

Management of RSE in St. Mary's N.S.

- The content to be taught in each of the two years in St. Mary's N.S. is laid out in the table below.
- The sensitive lessons are covered as part of these broad topics and in St. Mary's N.S, these are taught in 4th, 5th and 6th classes each year. Parents will be informed in advance of the teaching of the sensitive strands. See Parental Involvement section below.
- Special consideration will be taken to ensure that the needs of children with SEN are met.
- 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.
- With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard, classroom or in any locations and at any times outside of the formal RSE lesson.
- Any teacher has the right to opt-out from teaching the sexually sensitive issues in RSE. It is the responsibility of the Board of Management to ensure that the curriculum will be taught to the children by another teacher or an outside speaker.
- Outside Agencies / Speakers: Teachers will deliver the RSE curriculum in each class. Outside speakers or agencies may be availed of, if it's believed they can enhance the delivery of the curriculum. All speakers and agencies will be provided with a copy of this RSE policy in advance of their school visit. All external visits relating to the RSE curriculum will be in full compliance with the Department of Education's Circular 42/2018.

St. Mary's N.S. Two-Year Plan for SPHE

Month	Year 1	Month	Year 2
Sept / Oct	S: Myself, SU: <u>Self-Identity</u>	Sept / Oct	S: Myself and Others SU: <u>My Friends and Other People</u>
Oct / Nov	S: Myself and the Wider World SU: <u>Media Education</u>		
Dec	S: Myself and Others, SU: <u>Myself and My Family</u>	Nov / Dec	S: Myself and Others SU: <u>Relating to Others</u>
Jan	<u>Sensitive Strands</u> of RSE Curriculum *4th- 6th only	Jan / Feb	S: Myself SU: <u>Growing and Changing</u>
Feb / Mar / Apr	S: Myself, SU: <u>Safety and Protection</u> (Stay Safe)	Mar / Apr	S: Myself SU: <u>Taking Care of my Body</u>
May / June	S: Myself, SU: <u>Making Decisions</u> * 3 rd -6 th only. Other classes complete Stay Safe / other unfinished strand units	May / June	S: Myself and the Wider World SU: <u>Developing Citizenship</u>

Note: In 4th, 5th & 6th Classes, the sensitive topics of RSE are covered on an annual basis.

*Content Objectives and Language /Content for the Teaching of the Sensitive Areas of RSE (See Appendix 2).

Parental Involvement

Informing and Involving Parents

St. Mary's NS fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE programme including sensitive aspects of the programme at enrolment.

- Parents will be informed by letter in advance of lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme. See example of letter (Appendix 1) This letter will give parents an opportunity to meet with relevant class teachers if they so wish, to discuss or clarify what is covered. It also gives parents an opportunity 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 to view the RSE Curriculum on the school's 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.

Parental Decision to 'Opt-Out' of Sensitive RSE Lessons

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(ren) from the sensitive aspects of RSE if they so wish.

If a parent wishes to withdraw their child(ren), it should be given in writing to the principal and this will be centrally filed. Parents may state their reasons for withdrawing. It will not be presumed that parents wishing to withdraw their children will do so every year. Parents must provide written notice every year, should this be their intention.

If a child has been withdrawn from the sensitive RSE lessons, they are withdrawn from the discrete teaching time. They will be accommodated in other classes if possible.

The school takes no responsibility for what the child may hear following on from the teaching of the lessons. e.g. what they may hear in the yard and/or other places.

Organisation and Curriculum Planning

RSE forms part of the national curriculum for SPHE by NCCA and will be taught from infants to 6th class. RSE will be covered under the following strands and strand units of the SPHE curriculum:

Myself
Growing and Changing
Taking Care of my Body

The RSE Programme is divided into two main parts:

1. The general programme which contains content covered through SPHE strands and strand units and compliment the aims and objectives of RSE
 - Friendship
 - Self-identity
 - Family
 - Self-esteem
 - Growing up.
2. The second section will deal with any sensitive / specific content covered through RSE strands and strand units.

Topics covered up to 2nd include:

- Keeping safe
- Bodily changes from birth (birth-9)
- Making age-appropriate choices
- Appreciating the variety of family types and the variety of family life that exists in our school and community

Topics from 3rd to 6th include:

- Bodily changes
- Healthy eating, personal hygiene and exercise
- Keeping safe
- Expressing feelings
- Appreciating the variety of family types within our school and

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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 (1st/2nd). 	<p>community and how these family relationships shape us</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Making healthy and responsible decisions ● Forming friendships ● Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (3rd, 4th class) ● Introduction to puberty and changes (3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th class) ● Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (5th and 6th Class) ● Reproductive system of male/female adults (5th and 6th class) ● Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship (5th, 6th class).
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Approaches and Methodologies

When implementing the programme, staff at St. Mary's N.S. will endeavour to display respect for and sensitivity towards the different cultural and family backgrounds experienced by the children. The curriculum will be taught in an age-appropriate manner at all times. The curriculum will be taught from Junior Infants to 6th class. It will be taught through a spiral curriculum (key topics will be revisited in a developmental manner at regular intervals). The materials taught will reflect the needs of the children.

The RSE curriculum will be taught through:

- stories and poems
- classroom discussion
- group work

- games
- art activities
- reflection
- circle time

Differentiation

Teachers use assessment and professional judgment to differentiate the programme and content to suit the needs of the class. Some techniques used:

- ensuring that objectives are realistic for the students
- ensuring that the learning task is compatible with prior learning
- providing opportunities for interacting and working with other students in small groups and spending more time on tasks
- organising the learning task into small stages and ensuring that the language used is pitched at the student's level of understanding
- understanding of the activity using task analysis, outlining the steps to be learned/completed in any given task, posing key questions to guide students through the different stages/processes, and to assist in self-direction and correction
- having short and varied tasks creating a learning environment through the use of concrete, and where possible everyday materials, and by displaying word lists and laminated charts with pictures.

Sometimes the stage of development in a class can vary widely and strategies to differentiate in class can support gradual and appropriate teaching

- group work and discussion
- higher and lower order questioning in groups
- moderated whole class discussions through use of a Question Box.

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

SPHE curriculum provides a context in which children are given opportunities to develop and enhance their language skills and to increase their vocabulary related to SPHE. Children should become aware of the power and influence of language. When used positively, language can build up, affirm and show respect to another human being but if used in a negative manner can hurt, diminish and demean. Children need to recognise and become sensitive to the ways in which they themselves use language in their relationship and their everyday interactions. Language is a powerful tool and should be used with respect and integrity for the dignity of each person.

There are two areas where the use of language is applied in RSE lessons:

1. The formal use and teaching of language generally throughout the school
2. The use of language in discussion through your formal RSE lessons

Appropriate vocabulary in formal teaching

- Relating to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, parts of the body and feelings will be used. The use of slang will be discouraged
- Anatomical terms and language introduced are consistent with RSE Materials Books.

Questions

We use some simple principles when fostering discussion and questioning:

- No personal questions of the teacher
- The Question Box will be availed of by the children in 5th and 6th classes.
- 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....”

Question Box

For children in 5th and 6th classes, a ‘question box’ will be used as part of a structured RSE lesson. Children will be encouraged to place their questions into a box in the classroom. Teachers can follow up on the written questions at a later date, thus allowing time to prepare suitable answers, consult with colleagues, etc. These questions will then be monitored and screened with the teacher answering the questions the following week taking into account the following;

- Questions arising from lesson content will be answered in an age-appropriate manner using the language and contents of the RSE book to guide how and what to answer.
- The class teacher cannot answer questions which do not relate to the particular curriculum objectives for a class.
- Pupils will be informed if a question/issue is not on the programme and they will be advised to talk with their parents. Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents themselves if they feel that a question is very inappropriate or needs to be

communicated with home because of other reasons

- 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 the teacher after the lessons.

N.B. If issues arise which might be seen to contravene Children First Guidelines, the teacher will notify the Designated Liaison Person in the school.

Assessment

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

The teacher uses

- 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.

Confidentiality

The school follows Children First Guidelines 2017 and The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017. If a child makes a disclosure about one of the four forms of abuse (neglect, emotional, physical or sexual), the teacher is obliged to bring this disclosure to the attention of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) or Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDL). The school's Child protection Policy will be followed.

If a child is withdrawn from the teaching of sensitive issues, we cannot guarantee that the other children will not tell or inform him/her about what was discussed in the RSE lesson.

Resources

Relationships and Sexuality Education Resource Materials (DES) - Each class teacher has a copy of the appropriate manual or access to it in online / pdf format. Other resources that support the broader aims of RSE include:

- Stay Safe programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Anatomical Dolls and Story books
- Busy Bodies Booklet--supporting the teaching of the sensitive areas of RSE for 5th and 6th classes
- ‘Tom’s Flower Power’
- Picture books across the 9 grounds of equality
- INTO Different Families, Same love Poster.
- RESPECT guidelines

Provision of Ongoing Support

- Opportunities provided by our Education Centre will be brought to the attention of staff members. Teachers will be encouraged to attend CPD in RSE
- Staff meetings utilised as a platform for discussion and development of RSE materials
- Continuous support from a PDST Advisor
- Promotion and communication of resources available from www.pdst.ie.

Review

This policy was updated in January 2020, after a Curriculum Support Day from the PDST. It was slightly amended in November 2020. Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the Programme will be carried out by the principal in conjunction with the SPHE post-holder and SPHE Team and with the assistance of the teaching staff.

The policy will be reviewed again in September 2022.

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting on 08th March 2021.

Pat O'Connor, Chairperson, Board of Management

Date 8th March 21

Paul O'Connor, Principal

Appendix 1

Parents will be informed by letter in advance of lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme.

Dear Parents,

This letter is to inform you that the more sensitive issues of Relationship & Sexuality Education (R.S.E.) which form part of our S.P.H.E. programme, will be taught in all classes over the next couple of weeks. As you are aware our school’s S.P.H.E. policy recognises that we have an obligation to teach all aspects of this programme.

I know that you, as parents/guardians, will be sensitive to the possibility that your children may wish to talk to you about what they are learning in school and I would like you to be aware that resource material is available in the SPHE section on www.curriculumonline.ie/Primary/Curriculum which may help you in this regard.

There are a number of very good resources available to support parents on <https://www.healthpromotion.ie/publication/fullListing?category=Sexual Health>, including: ‘Tom’s Flower Power’—supporting parents in talking to their children in an age-appropriate and factual way.

‘Busy Bodies Suitable for 5th / 6th classes to complement the teaching of sensitive aspects of RSE programme in school.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of the R.S.E. programme you are very welcome to make an appointment with your child’s teacher in order to do so.

Yours sincerely,

Paul O’Connor,
Principal.

Appendix 2

***Content Objectives and Language /Content for the Teaching of the Sensitive Areas of RSE**

Content Objectives			
Class	Strand	<i>Consult curriculum for complete objectives in</i>	Language

	/strand Unit	<i>Growing and Changing and Taking Care of my Body</i>	
Junior /Senior Infants	Myself Growing and changing Taking care of my body	Growing and changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become aware of new life and birth in the world • Develop an awareness of human birth Taking care of my body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name parts of the male and female body using anatomical terms 	Womb breastfeeding penis vulva
First/ Second Class	Myself Growing and changing Taking care of my body	Growing and changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to understand that reproduction, birth, growth and death are all part of new life cycles Taking care of my body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name the parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions 	penis vulva vagina womb breastfeeding urethra
Third/ Fourth Class	Myself Growing and changing Taking care of my body	Growing and changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	Revise above umbilical cord changes in puberty menstruation

<p>Fifth/ Sixth Class</p>	<p>Myself Growing and changing Taking care of my body</p>	<p>Growing and changing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a loving committed relationship <p>Taking care of my body</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 male and female adults 	<p>Revise above plus: wet dreams <u>Busy</u> <u>Bodies language</u> semen sexual intercourse</p>
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