

# Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy



## **School Details**

Scoil Mhuire is a mixed Catholic primary school located in Clarinbridge, Co. Galway with a current enrolment of 278 students. There are currently 10 mainstream classes, including two Senior Infant classes and two 4th classes. There are four Special Education Teachers. There are three full-time Special Needs Assistants and one part-time SNA. .

## **Introductory Statement**

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

## **School Philosophy**

Scoil Mhuire is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Galway. The Religious Sisters of Charity founded the school but are no longer connected to it. The Bishop of Galway is the Patron of the school. Scoil Mhuire aims to provide a happy, secure and effective learning place for all. While Scoil Mhuire subscribes to a Catholic ethos, it also respects all other religions and faiths and strives to provide an inclusive and welcoming environment where individual differences are respected and appreciated. We recognise that SPHE is intrinsic to the teaching and learning that occurs both formally and informally in school and in the classroom. Through our SPHE programme and subsequently through RSE, we wish to assist children to develop feelings of self-worth and self-confidence while encouraging their ability to relate to others in a positive way. The curriculum also encourages children to be aware of their rights as an individual while at the same time accepting responsibility for their actions as members of the school and the wider community. Parents have the primary role in the social, personal and health education of their children so their involvement will be encouraged as much as possible. SPHE and RSE are key components in supporting our school and children to develop into healthy young adults.

## **Definition of RSE**

Relationships and Sexuality Education is teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of relationships and sexuality. It aims to equip children and young people, in an age-appropriate manner, with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will enable them to develop self-awareness and self-esteem; realise their health, wellbeing and dignity; develop positive and respectful, social and intimate relationships; consider how their choices affect their own wellbeing and that of others; and understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to themselves and others.

## Relationship of RSE to SPHE

RSE is an integral part of SPHE as is the Stay Safe Programme which is mandatory. SPHE is taught through school atmosphere and culture, integration and discrete teaching time. Formal RSE lessons and informal RSE messages must be consistent with the whole school approach to SPHE. 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. RSE is revisited at different stages throughout the child's time in school as part of the SPHE programme. 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. Through SPHE and RSE, students should be enabled to enhance their self-esteem and well-being through a sense of identity, a sense of purpose, a sense of belonging, a sense of security and a sense of competence.

## Current Provision Included in the School Curriculum is:

- SPHE lessons
- Use of RSE Manuals and Busy Bodies resources
- Stay Safe Programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Webwise resources
- Adapted resources for SEN from [www.pdst.ie](http://www.pdst.ie) [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie)
- Religious Education

## Aims of our RSE Programme

### (Interim Guidelines for RSE Education 1996)

- 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 healthy 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.

## **Policies which support SPHE/RSE**

- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Substance Use Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy

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

### When and how formal lessons are taught:

The strands Growing and Changing, and Taking Care of my Body are covered in Year Two of a 2-year SPHE plan (*See Appendix 1*). The sensitive lessons are covered as part of these broad topics.

### Adaptations for children with SEN:

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.

## **Parental Involvement**

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

Parents will be informed in advance of lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme, with a letter relevant to what will be taught at their child's class level. The letter will be issued in advance, giving parents an opportunity to talk 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 to discuss areas covered in RSE/SPHE.

## **The Lessons in RSE in programmes for all classes are**

### **Junior Infants Themes**

This Is Me: Who Are You: We Are Friends: This Is My Family: People Who Teach Us About Keeping Safe: We Have Feelings: New Life: I Grow: Making Choices:

### **Senior Infants Themes**

Look What I Can Do: These Are My Friends: This Is My Family: I Can Be Safe: Other People Have Feelings Too: Caring For New Life: My Body: I Grow And Change: Making Decisions:

### **First Class Themes**

Things I like to do: My Friends: My Family: Keeping Safe: Showing our Feelings: The Wonder of New Life: How My Body Works: Growing Means Changing: Decisions and their Consequences:

### **Second Class Themes**

Other People are Special: Being Friends: My Family: Keeping Safe: Coping with Our Feelings: The Wonder of New Life: When my Body needs Special Care: Growing and Changing: Personal Decisions:

### **Third Class Themes**

Special Gifts: Sometimes Friends Fight: My Family: Keeping Safe: Expressing Feelings: Preparing for New Life: Our Senses: As I grow I change: Making Decisions:

### **Fourth Class Themes**

Myself And Others: Bullying Behaviour: My Family: Reasons For Rules: Feelings And Emotions: The Wonder Of New Life: Being Clean-Keeping Healthy: Growing And Changing: Problem-Solving:

### **Fifth Class Themes**

The Person I Am: Different Kinds Of Friends: My Family: Keeping Safe: Feelings And Emotions: My Body Grows And Changes: The Wonder Of New Life: Caring For New Life: Making Healthy Decisions:

### **Sixth Class Themes**

Me and My Aspirations: Different Kinds Of Love: Families: Keeping Safe And Healthy: Feelings And Emotions: Growing And Changing: Relationships And New Life: A Baby Is A Miracle: Choices and Decision-Making:

**The Stay Safe Programme** which is mandatory also teaches aspects of the sensitive areas of the SPHE Curriculum. The lessons are:

Feeling Safe & Unsafe: Friendship & Bullying: Touches: Secrets & Telling: Strangers:

### Withdrawal from RSE

Written consent is **not** necessary for a pupil to engage in RSE.

Following discussion with the Class Teacher and Principal, if a parent wishes to withdraw their child from the sensitive lessons it should be given in writing stating their reasons for doing so.

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, e.g. what they may hear on yard.

### Organisation and Curriculum Planning

RSE is covered under the Strand "Myself" and Strand Units "Growing and changing" and "Taking care of my body" in the SPHE curriculum.

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. The sensitive aspects are in **bold**.

Topics covered (Infants to 2nd class)	Topics covered (3rd-6th class)
Keeping safe	<b>Bodily changes</b>
<b>Bodily changes from birth (birth to 9)</b>	Healthy eating, personal hygiene and exercise
Making age appropriate choices	Keeping safe
Appreciating the variety of family types that exists in our school and community	Expressing feelings

Recognising and expressing feelings	Appreciating the variety of family types within our school and community and how these relationships shape us
Self care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep	Making healthy and responsible decisions
Expressing opinions and listening to others	Forming friendships
<b>Naming the parts of the male/female body using appropriate anatomical terms (JI/SI)</b>	<b>Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (3rd, 4th class)</b>
<b>Naming the parts of the male/female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of its functions (1st/2nd)</b>	<b>Introduction to puberty and changes (3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th class)</b>
	<b>Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty ( 5th and 6th Class)</b>
	<b>Reproductive system of male/female adults (5th and 6th class)</b>
	<b>Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship (5th, 6th class)</b>

Sensitive content is taught as per 2-year SPHE plan (*See Appendix 1*).

### **Approaches and Methodologies**

Active Learning Methodologies are an integral part of teaching of SPHE and RSE.

Some of the following methodologies may be used to allow the child to play an active part in the learning process:

- Discussion
- Role play
- Interviewing friends, or other school pupils, family members
- Surveys of attitudes
- Analysing and evaluating newspapers and magazines, agony columns, television schedules
- Hosting visitors
- Projects
- Modelling
- Designing advertisements
- Writing captions
- Ranking statements
- Describing photographs

- Viewing and discussing videos

## Differentiation

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

- 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
- Organising the learning 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.
- Having short and varied tasks creating a learning environment through the use of concrete, and where possible everyday materials.
- Discussion
- Higher and lower order questioning in groups

## Pupils with Special Educational Needs

Adaptations 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 School Support Plus or School Support plan in consultation with parents/guardians.

## Language

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, and
- 2) The use of language in discussion through your formal RSE lessons.

Appropriate vocabulary in formal teaching will be used to implement RSE lessons relating to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, parts of the body and feelings. **The use of slang will**



**be discouraged.** Anatomical terms and language introduced is consistent with RSE Materials Books (See Appendix 2).

## Questions

Staff should not invalidate questions but use limits.

The main aim of talk and discussion is to create an atmosphere where children feel comfortable to ask important questions and that the relationship fostered in these sessions is open, controlled and safe for all pupils. While staff may not be able to answer all questions, we hope 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, and are not discouraged because they perceive the topics or questions to be embarrassing.

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 (See below)
- The teacher will be mindful of their reaction to any questions
- Questions do not have to be answered straight away

For older classes, a **Question Box** will be used as part of a structured RSE lesson. Teachers can follow up on the written questions at a later date/time, thus allowing time to prepare suitable answers, consult with colleagues, etc. 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.

### Sample responses to students' questions:

- 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 any personal questions

## 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 is withdrawn from the teaching of sensitive issues, we cannot guarantee that the other children will not tell or inform him/her about what happened.

### Resources

- Stay safe programme
- Walk Tall programme
- Anatomical dolls and story books
- Busy bodies booklet
- Picture books
- INTO-different families, same love poster
- RESPECT guidelines

### Provision of Ongoing Support

- Opportunities provided by Galway Education Centre will be brought to the attention of staff members.
- Teachers will be encouraged to attend CPD in RSE
- Staff meetings will be utilised for discussion and development of RSE materials
- Support from a PDST advisor
- Promotion and communication of resources available from [www.pdst.ie](http://www.pdst.ie)

### Review

The policy will be reviewed regularly. The policy may also be reviewed at an earlier time should a need arise. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made.

This plan was ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2022



Niall Geraghty (Chairperson Board of Management)

## APPENDIX 1

## Anatomical Terminology Guide

Class	Strand/ Strand Unit	Content Objectives	Language	Pages in RSE Resource Materials Book	Pages In Walk Tall	Supplementary resources
Junior/ Senior Infants	<b>Myself</b> ▪ Growing and changing ▪ Taking care of my body	<b>Growing and changing</b> ▪ Become aware of new life and birth in the world ▪ Develop an awareness of human birth <b>Taking care of my body</b> ▪ Name parts of the male and female body using anatomical terms	-womb -breastfeeding -penis -vulva	-New Life p68 -My Body p147 -Caring for new life p137 -At the beach or swimming pool p.153	<b>Our Amazing Bodies</b> p94 (Senior Infants book)	▪ Anatomically correct dolls ▪ Picture books of new baby ▪ Visit of baby to class
1 <sup>st</sup> /2 <sup>nd</sup>	<b>Myself</b> ▪ Growing and changing ▪ Taking care of my body	<b>Growing and changing</b> ▪ Begin to understand that reproduction, birth, growth and death are all part of new life cycles <b>Taking care of my body</b> ▪ 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	-The Wonder of new life p59 /151 -How my body works p67/161 -Growing means changing p77/171 -A Visit to the Doctor p.164	<b>Our Amazing Bodies</b> p37 (2nd class book)	▪ Picture books of going to the doctors ▪ Tom's Power Flower ▪ Books / activities on Life cycles ▪ Birth and new life in nature

3 <sup>rd</sup> /4 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Myself</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Growing and changing</li> <li>- Taking care of my body</li> </ul>	<b>Growing and changing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the physical changes taking place in both the male and female body</li> <li>• Realise that changes do not occur at the same time but nonetheless are predictable and natural and that being different is normal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Revise above umbilical cord</li> <li>-changes in puberty</li> <li>-menstruation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Preparing for new life p69</li> <li>-The wonder of new life p169</li> <li>-As I grow and change p93</li> <li>-Growing and changing p195</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-As I grow, I change p175 (3rd class book)</li> <li>-</li> <li>Changing and Growing p140 (4th class book)</li> <li>-The Wonder of New Life p.150</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Body Systems</li> <li>- Picture books on Growing and Changing</li> </ul>
		<b>Taking care of my body</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise and discuss how feelings and emotions are affected by the physical changes that take place during puberty</li> <li>• Discuss the stages and sequence of development of human baby from conception to birth</li> </ul>				
5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Myself</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Growing and changing</li> <li>- Taking care of my body</li> </ul>	<b>Growing and changing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a loving committed relationship</li> <li>- Taking care of my body</li> <li>- 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</li> <li>- Understand the reproductive system of both male and female adults</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Revise above wet dreams</li> <li>-Busy Bodies language</li> <li>-Semen</li> <li>-sexual intercourse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-My body grows and changes p81</li> <li>-The wonder of new life p92</li> <li>-Caring for new life p103</li> <li>-Different kinds of love p141</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-My Amazing body p345 (5th class book)</li> <li>-</li> <li>Creation p121 (6th class book)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Busy Bodies</li> <li>- Power points recap</li> <li>- Question Box</li> <li>- Puberty Quiz</li> </ul>