



Rolestown National School

RSE Policy

Policy for Relationships and Sexuality Education

Introduction

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. (Going Forward Together Parent's Information Booklet, page 4)

Introductory Statement

All schools have a responsibility to devise an RSE policy as part of the wider Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curricular area. It is a spiral curriculum which ensures that topics are taught developmentally throughout a child's primary school years. This policy was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE. It is in accordance with the Interim Curriculum and Guidelines for Relationships and Sexuality Education prepared by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and approved by the Department of Education and Science (1996).

Summary of this RSE Policy

General	This policy aims to ensure that the acquisition of appropriate language in RSE is taught to the children. It is crucially important to enable children to speak confidently about themselves and their relationships.
Curriculum Planning	An outline of which RSE topics are to be taught in each year band. Questions arising from lesson content will be answered in an age-appropriate manner.
Organisational Planning	The sensitive objectives of RSE should be taught in the second term to allow time for the teacher to establish a relationship with their class and to provide opportunities for reflection and questioning over the following months. These lessons should not be taught by a substitute or student teacher.
Roles and Responsibilities	A nominated teacher/ teachers will be encouraged to attend RSE training with the PDST at the local education centre which is Drumcondra education Centre. After attending, they will feedback the information to the relevant teachers. The language of RSE will be explained to parents before a set of lessons are due to take place.

Rationale

The acquisition of appropriate language in RSE is crucially important to enable children to speak confidently about themselves and their relationships. Acquiring the appropriate vocabulary for the discussion of sexuality, growing up, physical changes, feelings, etc. gives the child the means to discuss these issues in an age-appropriate way. The RSE programme will encourage the use of the proper terms for body parts from Junior Infants so that these terms are given status and acceptability. Many children get information and misinformation about relationships and sexuality from television, in the playground, from older friends – in many ways that parents cannot control and may not be happy about. For this reason, there is a need for a soundly based programme of RSE in schools.

Vision Statement

Rolestown National School is an inclusive school where we strive to provide a positive learning environment for all our pupils. Children are guided and supported to develop their talents and skills to the best of their ability.

We work in close partnership with the parents, guardians and school community to enable every child to reach their full potential on an intellectual, social, spiritual and emotional level through engaging in a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular activities.

Staff aim to build positive, nurturing relationships with pupils to create an environment where they can feel happy and safe. We seek to instill a love of learning in our pupils which will carry them through their school years and on into adulthood.

Rolestown NS is guided by its catholic ethos and promotes the holistic development of every child.

The primary RSE programme aims:

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being 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
- 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 his or her own sexuality and that of others while growing and developing
- To assist parents in their role as the primary educators of their children
- To understand the physical changes taking place with the onset of puberty (4th class girls, 5th & 6th Class)
- To enable the child to acquire an understanding of, and respect for, human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction (5th / 6 th Class)

We support the aims on which RSE is modelled. We encourage good behaviour, open communication, understanding and respect of differences, 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.

Curriculum Planning

Strands & Strand Units

RSE forms part of the national curriculum for SPHE by NCCA and will be taught from Junior Infants to 6th class. See appendix 1 for teacher planning support. Figure 1 shows the RSE topics to be taught in the Junior and Senior cycle of the school.

Figure 1

Topics covered up to 2 nd Class include:	Topics from 3 rd to 6 th Class include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Keeping Safe● Bodily changes during growth and birth (birth-9 years)● Making age appropriate choices● Appreciating the variety of family types and a variety of family life that exists in our school and community● Recognising and expressing feelings● Self-care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep● Expressing opinions and listening to others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Bodily changes● Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise● Keeping Safe● Expressing Feelings● Appreciating the variety of family types within our school and community and how these family relationships shape us● Making healthy and responsible decisions● Forming Friendships

- 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)

- Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb(4th class)
- Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (Fifth and Sixth Class) *
- Reproductive system of male/female adults (Fifth and Sixth Class) **
- Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship (Fifth and Sixth Class)***

*Fourth class girls and boys will be taught the lesson on physical changes during puberty together, with a follow up lesson a week later in separated groups. Only the girls will receive information on menstruation in 4th class.

**Fifth class girls and boys will be taught the lesson on puberty together, they will be split into boys and girls later to reteach and have space for questions and reflection.

***Sixth class girls and boys will be taught the lesson on reproduction together, and will be separated for a follow up lesson to reteach and provide an opportunity for questions. There will be follow up lessons on responsibilities which are of equal importance to the context of these lessons.

When teaching about sexual intercourse, it is advisable for teachers to give young people information on the age of consent which, following the passage of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act, 2006 is 17 years of age for both males and females.

Topics such as sexually transmitted diseases, contraception, masturbation and abortion are not covered in the primary school RSE programme.

Approaches & Methodologies

When implementing the programme, staff at Rolestown National School will endeavour to display respect for and sensitivity towards the different cultural 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
- Guest speaker

The teaching approach in school is child-centred and will take the age and stage of development of the children into account. Appropriate vocabulary relating to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, parts of the body and feeling will be used. The use of slang will be discouraged. The RSE programme includes several possibly sensitive issues, listed in Appendix 1. It is school policy to deal with these issues through structured lessons, as naturally as possible and without undue emphasis. While students should not be encouraged to disclose personal or private information in class, there may be times when they do talk about their own lives. Confidentiality should be respected unless a teacher becomes aware that a child is at risk, in which case the appropriate action should be taken e.g. follow the procedures set down in the Child Protection Policy, notify parents, etc. It is important that students are made aware of the limits of confidentiality and that teachers do not give unconditional guarantees of confidentiality. Questions arising from lesson content will be answered at an age-appropriate manner. 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.

When deciding whether it is appropriate to answer a question or not the teacher should consider:

- If the question is a moral one, while being sensitive to the different religious and non-religious backgrounds, the teachers will refer the child to speak to their parents or guardians
- If a question is a factual one and within the current class curriculum, the teacher will answer it sensitively

· It will be our policy not to answer personal questions about ourselves

· A question is an opportunity to clarify, to teach and to reassure

The following sample responses could be used when addressing questions:

· I will do my best to answer your questions, but I may not be able to answer all of them

· That is something you will learn about as you get older · Is that something you could talk to your parents/guardians/family

· We agreed in our contract that we would not ask anyone personal questions.

Staff should not invalidate questions but use limits.

For older children, a 'question box' can be used as part of a structured RSE lesson. Teachers can follow up on the written questions at a later date, thus allowing time to prepare suitable answers, consult with colleagues, etc. If issues arise which might be seen to contravene Children's First Guidelines, the teacher will notify the designated liaison person in the school. The Equal Status Acts 2000 and 2004 protect against discrimination on nine grounds, one of which is sexual orientation. The Acts oblige those who manage schools to protect students and staff from discrimination or sexual harassment. In Rolestown NS we implement an equality policy which promotes the inclusion of images and stories of different types of families from an early age. These include images of same-sex couples. Situations may arise where children have questions about sexual orientation or who are taunting others about being 'gay'.

· A teacher may ask a child or a class group what they mean by the word 'gay'.

· It will be explained that the word gay has two meanings. It can mean happy. Or it can be used to describe when a man loves/is attracted to another man or a woman loves/is attracted to another woman. In senior classes the vocabulary 'gay', 'lesbian', 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual' may also be used.

· Homophobic insults will be treated in exactly the same way as racist or other insults. The teacher will explain that such insults are hurtful to the other person and are not acceptable. The school's Anti-Bullying Policy may need to be implemented.

Children with Additional Needs

Special consideration will be taken to ensure that the needs of children with special educational needs are met. Considering the pupil's social and emotional development, instruction will be based on individual needs where possible. Teachers must also be mindful of children who have been exposed to bereavement or sexual abuse and offer appropriate support. Parents may be consulted around sensitive issues. Some children may have sensory needs which result in behaviour that may be interpreted as inappropriate. This behaviour may not necessarily be sexual but may stem from the fact that the child is stressed, bored, lonely or lacks access to other sensory experience. This should be borne in mind when helping a student to understand the boundaries between public and private behaviour.

Organisational Planning

Timetable

RSE is taught in our school every year. One half hour period per week or one-hour fortnightly is timetabled in each class for SPHE, (however timetable for SPHE will change to align with new Curriculum Framework); some aspects of RSE will be included in the content taught during this time. Other aspects will be taught in a cross-curricular manner, e.g. the anatomical names of the male and female body parts will be taught during Aistear role play lessons in the baby clinic. The sensitive objectives of RSE should be taught in the second term to allow time for the teacher to establish a relationship with their class and to provide opportunities for reflection and questioning over the following months.

Guest speakers are often invited in to do a programme on relationships and sexuality with 5th and 6th classes (Accord).

Individual Teacher's Planning & Reporting

This plan for RSE and the curriculum documents will inform and guide teachers in their long- and short-term planning in RSE. Objectives covered by discrete lessons will be included as well as new objectives covered throughout the day via the hidden curriculum or integration with other subjects. There will be thematic weeks throughout the year which will emphasise certain objectives of the RSE curriculum. These may include Friendship Week, Intercultural Week, Human Rights Week. Teachers will ensure that all sensitive objectives are taught by the class teacher themselves. **No student teacher or substitute should engage in these lessons.** Each teacher will keep a Cuntas Míósúil and this will inform our progress and needs when evaluating and reviewing our progress in RSE.

Resources

Each teacher has access to the following materials:

- Relationships and Sexuality Education Manuals (DES)
- Picture Books on different families see Appendix 3a, INTO poster and RESPECT guidelines
- Anatomical dolls

All other resources used should be agreed at school management level, ensuring that the content is appropriate to the needs of their students in line with school policy, and suitable for school programmes as outlined by the NCCA. All resources are available for parents/guardians to view if they so request prior to the delivery of the lesson.

Policies

When implementing this policy, the school staff should be familiar with the content and procedures outlined in the following policies:

- Child Protection Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- SPHE Policy

Staff Development

A nominated teacher/ teachers will attend RSE training with the PDST at the local education centre which is Drumcondra Education Centre. They will then feedback information to the relevant teachers.

Parental Involvement – Home School Links

The role of the school is seen as one of support for the work of the home in the area of RSE. Parents have a responsibility to become involved in educating their child in relation to the RSE curriculum. Parents should inform themselves of the programme content and prepare children for the information they will acquire around the sensitive areas. Information will be sent home in advance of the ‘sensitive’ lessons from Stay Safe or RSE (Appendix 4). Parents are invited/welcome to view the curriculum and lessons and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns. Parents will be given information about the lessons on puberty for pupils in 5th and 6th class in advance of this part of the programme. Parents will also be directed to the Health Promotion website where they can view the videos from the programme which may be used in the classroom setting with their child.

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. Concerning matters of a confidential or sensitive nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what a child may say in the yard or classroom.

If in accordance with the Education Act, 1998, Section 30 (2)(e), a parent wishes to withdraw their child from the lessons pertaining to the sensitive elements of the RSE programme, they will first be informed of the following:

- That the school cannot prevent the child hearing the language being used or discussed by other children outside of these lessons
- That our recommendation would be that they attend, so that they learn the factually accurate information, rather than hearing inaccurate information from other sources
- It is their duty now to take full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves

If a parent wishes to withdraw their child for the sensitive lessons, they must first organise a meeting with the SPHE coordinator to discuss their concerns. If the parent is not satisfied with this meeting, they will then bring their concerns to the principal. If they still wish to withdraw their child, they must sign a withdrawal form (Appendix 2) and return it to the school principal. Their decision will be honoured on the understanding that the parent is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves. This form will need to be completed each year that the child is withdrawn. The child may be accommodated in another teacher’s classroom in the school or collected early by the parent.

Implementation

Success Criteria

The success of this plan will be evaluated through teacher’s planning and preparation, and if the procedures outlined in this plan have been consistently followed. We will also judge its success if the children have been enabled to achieve the aims outlined in this plan.

Implementation, Review, Ratification & Communication

The Board of Management of Rolestown National School supports and fosters the development of this RSE policy.

- The school principal has overall responsibility for the implementation of the plan.
- The class teacher has the responsibility for implementing this policy within their classroom.
- All teachers have the responsibility to be aware of the content of this plan and the limitations and responses to be used with children when conversations happen outside of the discrete RSE lessons.
- The SPHE coordinator has the responsibility to:
 - o Maintain and supplement the relevant resources agreed at school management level
 - o Advise on and monitor the implementation of the RSE programme in the second term of school

o Initiate and lead the review of the policy informally at planning meetings and formally on an annual basis, at the end of each academic year.

· Parents/guardians have the responsibility to familiarise themselves with this policy and support the learning of their child. As with all our policies, parents have access to this policy on our school website and upon request to the school office.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on _____ and will be reviewed periodically.

Signed Marie Bailey

Chairperson.

Date 20-03-2024

Class	Strand /strand Unit	5-16 Content Objectives Consult curriculum for complete objectives in <i>Growing and Changing</i> and <i>Taking care of my body</i>	Language	Pages in RSE Resource Materials Book	Pages in Walk Tall	Supplementary resources
Junior /Senior Infants	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	New Life p68 My Body p147 Caring for new life p137 At the beach or swimming pool p.153	Our Amazing Bodies p64 (Senior infants book)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anatomically correct dolls Picture books of new baby Visit of baby to class
Third/ Fourth Class	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 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	Preparing for new life p69 The wonder of new life p169 As I grow and change p93 Growing and changing p195	As I grow I change p175 (3rd class book) Changing and Growing p140 (4th class book) The Wonder of New Life p.150	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Body Systems Picture books on Growing and Changing
Fifth/ Sixth Class	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing and changing Taking care of my body 	Growing and changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a loving committed relationship Taking care of my body <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 	Revise above wet dreams <u>Busy Bodies</u> <u>Language</u> Semen sexual intercourse	My body grows and changes p81 The wonder of new life p92 Caring for new life p103 Different kinds of love p141	My Amazing body p345 (5th class book) Creation p121 (6th class book)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Busy Bodies Power points recap Question Box Puberty Quiz

Appendix 2



Rolestown National School

Letter for RSE Withdrawal

Child's Name	Class	Teacher

I wish to withdraw my child from the sensitive issues that will be taught this school year, in the Relationship and Sexuality Education Curriculum and the Stay Safe Programme. I am taking responsibility to cover the sensitive issues with my child outside of school hours. I understand the following:

- the school cannot prevent my child hearing the language being used or discussed by other children outside of these lessons;
- The school cannot guarantee that the other children will not inform my child about what happened in the lessons;
- I am aware that the teacher may also need to make incidental reference to the issue at another time while the child is present.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) 1 signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) 2 signature: _____ Date: _____