

# RELATIONSHIP & SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE) POLICY

## 1. Introductory Statement & Rationale

This policy statement is an approved approach to the teaching of Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) at St Laurence's NS. It was reviewed in 2009 by the RSE Policy Committee, which included teachers, representatives of the Board of Management (BoM) and also parent representatives. A further review was undertaken by the Principal and some of the teaching staff in 2014, 2017/18. It was developed to inform teachers and parents/guardians as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).

## 2. School Philosophy

St Laurence's NS is a mixed primary school in the Roman Catholic tradition. Therefore, all policies developed are implemented in ways that are in keeping with the ethos of the school as detailed in the Parent Handbook. This booklet can be accessed from the school website at [www.stlaurence.ie](http://www.stlaurence.ie). The school is aware that families with different religions and cultures attend St Laurence's NS and this has been taken in to account when drafting the RSE policy. The school is also aware that different types of family units live in the area and are sensitive to their needs.

## 3. Definition of RSE

RSE is an integral part of SPHE and must be taught in this context. It provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality and relationships through processes, which enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework.

## 4. Relationship of RSE to SPHE

SPHE contributes to developing the work of the school in promoting the health and well-being of children. SPHE provides opportunities for pupils to learn basic personal and social skills which foster integrity, self-confidence and self-esteem while also nurturing sensitivity to the feelings and rights of others.

RSE is an integral part of SPHE and must be taught in this context to keep it in perspective and to give it proper emphasis. SPHE is a time-tabled subject to be implemented in full.

## 5. Current Provision

The school currently provides SPHE /RSE formally and informally through:

- The promotion of a caring atmosphere on a daily basis
- Religious Education (Grow in Love & Alive-O schemes)
- SPHE Curriculum

- P.E. Curriculum
- Stay Safe Programme
- Social, Environmental & Scientific Education (S.E.S.E.) lessons
- Health Education visitors
- ACCORD Schools Team

## **6. Aims of our RSE programme**

The aims of RSE are:

- To help the child 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 enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child
- 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

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

The RSE programme will be delivered as follows:

The class teacher will teach the programme in the normal classroom situation. It is recognised that a teacher has the right to opt-out of teaching some of the programme, for example, the more sensitive issues of RSE. In this case alternative arrangements will be made to ensure that the programme will be taught to all classes. It is responsibility of Board of Management to ensure that another teacher or an outside speaker will teach the curriculum to the children. Teachers will adhere to the limits of the content of the programme.

Visitors such as a nurse, Garda, mother and baby may be brought into any class if a teacher feels that such a visit would be beneficial to the pupils (Circular 22/2010). Issues discussed will be age appropriate. Topics will be dealt with in a manner that will show care and sensitivity to all pupils.

Contact will be made with parents/ guardians prior to the teaching of the formal lessons involving "sensitive issues". The relevant home/school links page in the RSE Teacher's Book or a letter will be sent home.

### **Curriculum Matters**

- Curriculum Content – The curriculum detailed in the RSE Resource materials and Busy Bodies will be followed as published, and will be taught in Infants to 6th class. All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school and the policy.
- The themes and language relating specifically to sexuality or the sensitive issues of RSE at each class level are detailed in the Appendix below.
- When an outside speaker is used, the class teacher is responsible for making them aware of school policy and the teacher will sit in at all times during the lesson in accordance with Circular 22/2010.
- Children with Mild General Learning Disabilities (MGLD) in the main will follow the mainstream class programme. However, as the need arises, or on an individual basis, with either the Special Educational Needs teacher or the Special Class teacher, these pupils will be provided with opportunities to develop further necessary skills in the area of SPHE, as outlined in the NCCA 'Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities' ([www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie)). The parents will be informed and consulted if additional lessons re the sensitive issues of RSE are required.
- The Catholic Marriage Care Service (ACCORD) provides a one-day programme on various aspects of relationships and sexuality, presented by trained facilitators to 6th class pupils. This programme is delivered to the classes at St Laurence's NS on a yearly basis. The course outline can be viewed on the following website: [www.accord.ie/schools\\_programmes/](http://www.accord.ie/schools_programmes/)

### **Organisational Matters**

- As parents/ guardians are the primary educators of their children they may wish to deal with certain aspects (sensitive issues) of the RSE programme in the home. Consequently, having been made aware of the programme and following discussions with the relevant class teacher and the principal, a parent may decide to withdraw the child from the classroom while the lessons are being taught.
- If a parent chooses to withdraw their child from the sensitive issues this should be given to the principal in writing and will be centrally filed. If children are withdrawn, they will be accommodated in another teacher's classroom.
- With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the classroom or in the yard.
- Parents are invited/welcome to view the Resource Materials for RSE and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns.

### **Dealing with Questions**

All questions answered will reflect the parameters of the curriculum. Questions to the teacher may be written or oral within the group setting and answered within the boundaries of the curriculum and policy. Any questions asked by the children that are judged to be inappropriate, the teacher will refer the child to their parents. The school cannot guarantee confidentiality if a child asks a question of a personal nature relating to them or discloses personal information.

RSE will be facilitated in three ways within the school:

- a) In the context of a positive school atmosphere
- b) As part of SPHE discrete time
- c) In an integrated cross-curricular basis

### **8. Provision for Ongoing Support**

- Parents are welcome to view the RSE Resource Materials if they wish.
- Contact will be made with parents/ guardians prior to the teaching of lessons involving “sensitive issues”. The relevant home/school links page in the RSE Teacher’s Book or a letter will be sent home.
- A letter will be sent home to parents/guardians of 6th Class prior to the one-day programme presented by trained facilitators from the ACCORD schools team.

### **Resources**

Resource Materials for Relationships and Sexuality Education

Busy Bodies Booklet and DVD ([www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie))

Walk Tall Programme – PDST - 2016

### **9. Review**

Following the publication of the revised edition of the Stay Safe programme, a further review of the RSE policy was undertaken in 2017/18. The next review date will be Autumn 2019.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Principal

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of next review: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) “provides particular opportunities to foster the personal development, health and well-being of the child and to help him/her to create and maintain supportive relationships and become an active and responsible citizen in society” (SPHE Teacher Guidelines p2).

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is an important part of SPHE. RSE aims to help the child to develop healthy friendships and relationships and to promote an understanding of and a healthy attitude towards human sexuality and relationships. The themes relating specifically to sexuality are only a small part of the SPHE programme. Perhaps some of the language used in these lessons may be of concern to some parents/guardians. To alleviate any fears you may have, we have compiled a list of specific vocabulary, which is used in each of the classes and the objectives they relate to in the SPHE curriculum.

We expect that this factual information be delivered to the children in a sensitive, healthy and relaxed manner, with the view to awaken in each child a sense of wonder of themselves and others.

### Junior Infants/Senior Infants

**Junior Infants:** The theme of new-life is dealt with, which relates to nature and family for example, new life in spring, pets and family (RSE Teaching Materials p. 68-76)

Vocabulary Introduced: ***born, womb***

**Senior Infants:** As SPHE is spiral in nature, the work in Junior Infants is revisited re: Caring for New Life and expanded (RSE Teaching Materials p. 138-145)

Vocabulary Introduced: ***breasts, breastfed***

The theme covered includes “My Body” (RSE Teaching Materials p. 148-156)

Vocabulary Introduced: ***9 months in womb, penis, vulva/vagina***

### **Relevant Objectives from SPHE Curriculum:**

The child should be enabled to

- develop an awareness of human birth - that a baby grows and is nurtured in the mother’s womb until ready to be born (SPHE Curriculum – Infants – p. 18)
- name parts of the male and female body, using appropriate anatomical terms (SPHE Curriculum – Infants – p. 17)

### 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Class

**First Class:** The themes covered include “The Wonder of New Life” and “How my Body Works” (RSE Teaching Materials p. 60-75)

Vocabulary Introduced: ***urine, urethra***

**Second Class:** Themes explored include “The Wonder of New Life”, “When my Body Needs Special Care” (RSE Teaching Materials p. 152-169)

Vocabulary Introduced: ***anus***

**\*\* Some of the vocabulary introduced in the Infant classes will be revised again.**

**Relevant Objectives from SPHE Curriculum:**

The child should be enabled

- to name parts of the male and female body, using appropriate anatomical terms, and identify some of their functions  
(SPHE Curriculum – 1st & 2nd Class – p. 27)
- appreciate what is necessary in order to provide and care for new-born babies in both the animal and human world  
(SPHE Curriculum – 1st & 2nd Class – p. 28)

**3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> Class**

**Third/Fourth Class:** Themes include “Preparing for New Life” (RSE Teaching Materials p.70-79)

Vocabulary Introduced: Pregnancy, umbilical cord, navel (belly button)

Themes include “The Wonder of New Life” which deal with all stages of pregnancy and birth and encourages children not to take these daily miracles for granted. (RSE Teaching Materials p.170-181)

Other themes are “As I Grow I Change” (RSE Materials p. 93-101) & Growing and Changing” RSE Teaching Materials p. 196-205)

Vocabulary Introduced: Fertilized egg, scan, hormones, cells, menstruation, periods, pubic areas, pubic hair, perspiration.

**Relevant Objectives from SPHE Curriculum:**

The child should be enabled

- discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby, from conception to birth  
(SPHE Curriculum – 3rd & 4th Class – p. 41)
- understand the physical changes taking place in both the male and female body
- growing height and weight, increasing strength growing from boy to man, growing from girl to woman  
SPHE Curriculum – 3rd & 4th Class – p. 39)

**5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> Class**

Fifth Class: Themes include “My Body Grows and Changes” (RSE Teaching Materials p. 82-92) and Busy Bodies DVD – Sections 2 & 3

Vocabulary Introduced: ***ovaries, fallopian tubes, uterus, cervix, ovulation, labia, clitoris, testicles, scrotum, sperm production, erection, wet dreams, semen, foreskin, circumcision***

Sixth Class: Themes covered include "Growing and Changing", "Relationships and New Life" and "A Baby is a Miracle" (RSE Teaching Materials p. 183-197 & 199-208 & 209-219)

Busy Bodies Booklet and DVD: Section 4 and 5

Vocabulary Introduced: ***Adolescence, responsibilities, sexual intercourse, conception***

### **Relevant Objectives from SPHE Curriculum:**

The child should be enabled to:

- identify and discuss the physical and other changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty and understand that these take place at different rates for everyone
  - female**  
hormonal changes, changing body shape  
development of breasts, appearance of pubic hair, onset of menstruation (periods)
  - male**  
hormonal changes, physical growth  
enlargement of testicles and penis  
appearance of pubic, underarm and facial hair  
breaking of the voice, beginning of sperm production  
onset of nocturnal emissions (wet dreams)
- understand the reproductive system of both male and female adults (SPHE Curriculum – 5th & 6th Class – p. 56)
- understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed, loving relationship
- discuss and explore the responsibilities involved in being a parent and the emotional and physical maturity required to be a parent preparing for the birth of the baby taking care of offspring from birth onwards emotional, psychological and practical provisions (SPHE Curriculum – 5th & 6th Class – p. 58)