



# Relationships and Sexual Education Policy

## Policy Review

Date Agreed:

Signed by Chair of Governors:

Next Review Date:

## **Mission Statement**

In St. Patrick's Primary School, we aim to help each child in our care to develop to his/her full potential. It is our purpose to give our children the skills, knowledge and confidence to go out in to the community and play an active role, as participants in society. The Catholic ethos of our school creates the atmosphere in which these aims can be achieved. We endeavour to lead the children in our care to follow the inspiration of Jesus Christ, in loving God and other human beings.

## **Introduction**

*'The whole aim of a Christian and healthy sexuality is to put love, in its full and genuine meaning, into sexual relationships.'* (Guidelines on Relationships and Sexuality Education, Irish Bishops' Conference, April 2014)

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), is a statutory element of the Northern Ireland Revised Curriculum, which builds in a developmentally appropriate way, on children's existing knowledge and experiences of their bodies, relationships and the world around them.

The school's RSE policy and programmes will ensure that structured and progressive opportunities are being provided for all pupils to learn about;

- Themselves as unique human beings.
- Their spiritual, social, emotional and physical growth.
- Their friendships and relationships with others.
- The various emotional and physical changes, which occur as they progress towards adolescence.
- The Christian vision of human life and human relationships

Relationship and Sexual Education will be taught throughout our school in a sensitive manner, with the support of the parents, in harmony with the Catholic ethos of the school.

We seek to provide for pupils a happy, caring and secure learning environment in which life is enjoyable and where:

- Skills and interests are developed.
- Independence is fostered, developed and encouraged.
- Moral standards are encouraged so that pupils have respect for themselves and others and become responsible members of the community in which they live or will live in the future.

### **Aims of RSE:**

We aim to enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the children; and help them to recognise their worth as children in God's family.

Help children develop healthy and respectful friendships and relationships.

Foster an understanding of and a healthy attitude to human sexuality and relationships in a moral, social and spiritual framework.

To promote responsible behaviour in their lives, and foster the ability to make informed decisions.

Help each child to value family life and marriage.

Appreciate the responsibilities of being a parent.

Promote an appreciation of the value of human life and the wonder of birth.

### **Learning Objectives:**

The RSE curriculum should enable pupils to:

- Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self.
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness and self-worth.
- Develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well-being of others.
- Understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and in wider contexts.
- 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.

- Develop strategies to help make decisions, solve problems and implement actions in various personal, social and health contexts.
- Develop personal skills, which will help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships.
- Develop coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse.
- Acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction.
- Acquire and use an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development.
- Develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision-making.

(Guidance for Primary Schools CCEA pg 4 and 5)

### **Definitions:**

#### Relationships and Sexuality Education

There is an intricate entwining between relationships and sexuality, which is a life-long process. Sexuality impacts upon the physical, spiritual and psychological aspects of the human person. This gift of sexuality shapes relationships through the qualities of love and respect.

Sexuality is a gift from God; it calls us into a relationship with Christ and encompasses the whole person. Faith colours and influences our sexuality so we can interpret our relationships in and through Christ. (Alive O'6)

#### Morals:

These are essentially linked with behaviour and what we actually do. They are also directly connected with faith.

#### Values:

The characteristics of good moral behaviour e.g. respect for self and others.

## Values to be taught in our RSE Programme:

- An appreciation of the value of stable family life and permanent loving relationships based on trust and commitment.
- Christian marriage and sexual union are a reflection of the love Christ has with His church
- An appreciation that friendships and relationships should be based on self and mutual respect, non-exploitation, honesty, trust and commitment.
- An appreciation that compassion and forgiveness should be shown when people do not conform to their views or way of life.
- An appreciation that in any relationship there is a recognition that rights, duties and responsibilities are involved.
- To understand the stages of development from infancy through to puberty.
- An appreciation that sexuality is a gift from God; that male and female are made in the image of God and the importance of using this gift appropriately.

## Meeting the needs of all pupils:

"Children with special educational needs have the same rights and needs as all children, but the content and delivery of the RSE programme will be different. An RSE programme should be tailored to pupils ' needs in terms of content, methodology and the resources used"

(Guidance for Primary Schools CCEA page 16)

Our pupils will be given the opportunity to receive adequate preparation for the emotional and physical changes that occur at adolescence, regardless of their age, gender, culture, disability, religion or social class. The programme will be tailored to be appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils and will meet the needs of both genders.

## Organisation and implementation of the RSE Programme:

The responsibility for the policy and programme is under the guidance of the Principal and Board of Governors.

The class teachers are responsible for teaching the aspects of the RSE programme appropriate to the age and ability of those pupils in their care. It will be delivered and integrated through a range of subjects each covering aspects of the RSE programme; whilst helping to deliver the NI Revised curriculum subject areas, via a range of topics for each year group.

*These include:*

- PDMU activities
- Love for Life Workshops (P7)
- Alive 'O/Grow in Love resources
- World Around Us activities

Personal:

Morality by nature is personal but also public or social. It is about what we do every day and through example.

Considerations:

- RSE will be taught in mixed groups so that girls and boys can gain an understanding of each other's perspectives and needs.
- Whilst presenting marriage as the ideal, teachers should take account of the complexities of family life, e.g. one parent families, foster care, living with guardians, adoption etc...
- Teachers should ensure materials are compatible with the policies and ethos of the school.
- Teachers should be aware of the sensitivities regarding children of different race, culture or creed.
- If pupils have a respect for themselves then ultimately they will have a respect for others.
- Use of correct biological terms and language is vital and when these terms are placed in the context of respect and self-respect then their essence is understood.
- Staff will be encouraged to respect the maturity and gender needs of the children concerned and to establish a line of development in the pupils' learning throughout primary school.

## Teaching Styles and learning Strategies of the RSE Programme:

The RSE programme is about more than imparting facts, it is also aimed at developing personal and social skills, clarifying attitudes and values within a moral framework. It promotes positive behaviours that allow pupils to take increasing responsibility for themselves as they grow and develop. Class teachers are responsible for judging whether the children in their care, display the necessary emotional and intellectual maturity required to discuss sensitive issues.

## Strategies recommended in supporting the teaching of RSE:

- Establishing ground rules to create a safe environment where no one feels embarrassed or anxious about sharing feelings or asking questions.
- Planning Boards
- Brainstorming
- Small group/ whole class discussions
- Report back sessions
- Debate
- Listening exercises
- Questionnaires and quizzes
- Trigger Resources; pictures, photos, video clips, magazine articles, poems and drama activities
- School Visitors: school nurse, counsellor, NSPCC, Love for Life Workshop, School Chaplin
- Story telling
- Checklists: a technique to raise awareness of issues quickly. Pupils respond to statements using true /false... Don't know/ agree/ disagree/ not sure.
- Role-play
- Circle time: This is an effective strategy for promoting self-esteem. The circle symbolises the unity of a group as well as the equality of each member of the group. It is a non-confrontational and accepting approach to helping children talk about their feelings.

The RSE Programme should enable pupils to:

"Acquire and use an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development...to provide children with language through which they may seek clarification, ask questions and discuss aspects of their growth and development."

(Guidelines for Primary Schools, CCEA)

## Knowing how to deal with unexpected questions and comments from pupils:

- If the question is factual and within the agreed programme for that age group, the teacher will answer it.
- If the question is a moral one, Catholic teaching should be adhered to.
- The teacher may advise the child to discuss sensitive matters at home.
- Teachers will neither ask nor answer personal questions.

## Parents

'The schools must recognise that, in this area above all, its role is subsidiary to that of parents' (Guidelines on Relationships and Sexuality Education, 2014) If parents wish to withdraw their children from attending lessons/activities on RSE containing possible sensitive issues, they can do so by submitting a written request to school. Parents will be made aware of RSE policy and can request a copy as well as resources/ websites used in this area. The schools will endeavour to inform parents about proposed schedule for lessons/activities in the area of sexual education, so that prior discussion can take place.

## Confidentiality and Child Protection:

Staff cannot give any guarantee of confidentiality to pupils. If details are revealed which could lead staff to suspect sexual, physical or emotional abuse is involved, the teacher must follow the procedures outlined in the school's Child Protection Policy.

## Pastoral Care Policy Links

(Links to our school Pastoral Care Policy)

## Visitors:

All resources whether human or material will be vetted to ensure that they are consistent with our Child Protection and RSE policies.

Visitors will be aware of what has to be taught in preparation for their visit and how the school will develop their input further.

## **Monitoring and Evaluating the RSE Programme:**

This policy will be reviewed and updated regularly. Teachers will be asked to give feedback at the end of each RSE programme and changes will be made as required.