

Cushinstown National School

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

School Details

Cushinstown National School is a co-educational school in Ireland. The school has a Catholic ethos. There are 8 mainstream classrooms and 1 special class for children with ASD. There are currently 166 pupils enrolled (2022/23 academic year).

Introductory statement and Rationale

All schools are required to have an RSE policy to detail how RSE is taught in the school, including the sensitive aspects. This policy is an approved approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). 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

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. Our school values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. Our ethos means that we value respect, tolerance and openness through the lived experience of the children and school 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 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 will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework. In particular, it addresses the meaning of human sexuality, relationships, growth and development, relevant to personal and social skills. RSE is the formal approach to educating children in:

- Relationships with others – parents, siblings, friends and the community in general
- Respect for themselves and others

- Physical development – bodily functions and changes, and personal hygiene
- Emotional development – maturing in society
- Parenting, personal and social skills and relationships
- Sexuality in context – part of a loving relationship

Relationship of RSE to SPHE

RSE is an integral part of SPHE. 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. Stay Safe is planned to be taught in Terms 1 & 2. This policy sets out that a whole-school approach to the discrete teaching of RSE take place in Term 3. The key characteristics of this programme are that SPHE is a lifelong process and is a shared responsibility between family, school, health professionals and the community. The content of the programme falls under the following headings:

- Myself - Self-identity, taking care of my body, growing and changing, safety
- Myself and Others - Myself and family, friends and relating to other people
- Taking Care of My Body - Naming parts of the male and female body using appropriate terminology (Lower and Middle classes). Identifying physical changes. Understanding puberty and the Reproductive System (Senior Classes)
- Growing and Changing - The stages of development of a baby from conception to birth (Middle Classes). Understanding sexual relations within the context of a committed loving relationship (Senior Classes).

It is clear that Relationships and Sexuality Education is an integral part of the programme outlined above. Sexually sensitive issues will be covered within the strand units:

- Taking care of my body
- Growing and changing
- Safety and protection.

As stated previously, the content of all lessons will be governed by the school's Catholic ethos

Current Provision included in school curriculum

- SPHE lessons (provided through discrete curricular time and integration)
- Use of the RSE Manuals and Busy Bodies resources
- Use of external speakers
- Stay Safe Programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Webwise resources
- All Together Now – Homophobic and Transphobic bullying lessons (as necessary)

- RESPECT Guidelines (suggested approaches to teaching about different families)
- Adapted resources for SEN from www.pdst.ie
- Religious Education.

Aims of our RSE Programme

- 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

Become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow, change and understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity

- 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.

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

Policies which support RSE/SPHE

Child Protection Policy

Substance Use Policy

Code of Behaviour

Anti-Bullying Policy

Enrolment Policy

Acceptable Use Policy

Healthy Eating/Food Policy

Guidelines for the 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 content objectives will be covered by the time each pupil leaves 6th class – (see Appendix 3 for further details). 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 every other year as laid out in the curriculum, and utilising the RSE manuals to complement their teaching.
- Special arrangements exist for the delivery of the sensitive elements from 4th class up (teacher may choose to teach Puberty separately to male and female pupils when first taught). Children will be encouraged to recognise that certain information is for them only, i.e. that it is inappropriate for them to discuss information received about puberty, intercourse and birth with younger sibling, friends from outside school etc. It will be explained that other children will be given this information by their own parents and teachers when they reach the appropriate age.
- Organisational Matters - SPHE (including RSE) is taught in a two-year cycle. See Appendix 2 “Making The Links”.
- Prior to the teaching of lessons involving “sensitive issues”, parents will be informed by letter in Appendix 1.
- It is a parent’s/guardian’s right to withdraw a pupil from these lessons. This request for withdrawal must be made in writing.
- If parents/guardians request the withdrawal of a child from RSE lessons, provision will be made for them to leave the classroom at that time. Supervision will be provided. With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom by the children. **Should a child who is withdrawn from the sexually sensitive classes receive inappropriate information from others outside of these classes, it will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian to address the issues.**
- 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 delivered to the children by another teacher.
- Questioning-No personal questions will be answered by the teacher. The Question Box will be availed of by the children. The teacher will be mindful of their reaction to any questions. Questions do not have to be answered straight away. All questions answered will reflect the parameters of the curriculum. Certain topics will not be discussed i.e. abortion, masturbation, contraception, etc. Homosexuality will not be discussed under the RSE umbrella but may be discussed as part of the anti-bullying policy in the school.
- If any questions asked by the children are judged to be inappropriate, the teacher will refer the child to their parents, or state that this information may be available at

a later stage of the curriculum. The school cannot guarantee confidentiality if a child asks a question of a personal nature or discloses personal information

- If issues arise which might be seen to contravene Children First Guidelines, the teacher will notify the Designated Liaison Person in the school.
- Special consideration will be taken to ensure that the needs of children with SEN are met, where required. 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. Children with special educational needs may be pre-taught language or concepts in anticipation of whole class work.

Parental Involvement

- Parents will be informed at enrolment that the school fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE programme including sensitive aspects of the programme.
- 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 (sample letter in Appendix 1). The letter will be issued at least 2 weeks in advance, giving parents an opportunity to meet 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 discuss areas covered in RSE/SPHE.
- Parents are invited/welcome to view the curriculum 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.
- Parents have the right to withdraw their child out of the sensitive aspects of RSE if they so wish. As RSE is an integral component to SPHE, consent is not needed.
- Parents will be informed if the teachers feel a particular child would benefit from more in-depth discussion at home of a topic covered.
- The school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom by the children. **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. eg. what they may hear from classmates while on yard.**

Organisation and Curriculum Planning

<i>Topics covered up to 2nd class</i>	<i>Topics covered from 3rd-6th class</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Keeping Safe➤ Bodily changes from birth-9 years.➤ Making age appropriate choices➤ Appreciating a variety of family types➤ Recognising and expressing feeling➤ 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 <i>JI-2nd</i>-penis, vagina, breast, breast-feeding.➤ <i>1st & 2nd class will also learn-vulva, urethra)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Keeping safe➤ Bodily changes➤ Making healthy and responsible decisions➤ Appreciating a variety of family types➤ Expressing feelings➤ Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise.➤ Forming friendships➤ Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (3rd/4th class)➤ Introduction to puberty and changes➤ Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty.➤ 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)

- Sensitive issues may be dealt with in the following class grouping;
- Puberty-Girls at the end of 4th class.
- Boys at the beginning of 5th class.
- Puberty, intercourse and birth with boys and girls during 5th/6th class.

To facilitate this, appropriate arrangements will be made for the rest of the classes for these periods.

Approaches and methodologies

When implementing the programme, staff at Cushinstown National School 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 and through a guest speaker, if necessary. (The class teacher will stay in the room at all times in accordance with Circular 22/2010).

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 DVD and Booklet. This DVD and booklet were developed to support the teaching of the 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th class components of RSE within the context of SPHE.
- INTO Different Families, Same Love Poster
- RESPECT guidelines.

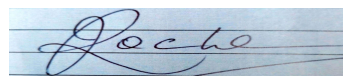
Review

The policy will be reviewed after every three years. The policy may also be reviewed at an earlier time should a need arise. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made, should it be revised before then. This policy will also be available on the school website. This plan was ratified by the Board of Management on **6/12/2022**



Colm Gallagher

Principal



Mr John Roche

Chairman, BOM.

Review Date; _____

Appendix 1

Dear Parents,

In Term 3, each class will be covering the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Programme. This programme comes under the curricular area of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). The strand areas of 'Growing and Changing' and 'Taking care of my body', will also be taught in Term 3.

The school acknowledges that parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children about growing and changing. We would appreciate it if you would cover these topics as listed below with your children over the next few weeks. **If you have any concerns about this programme the class teacher or principal will be happy to talk with you.**

<i>Topics covered up to 2nd class</i>	<i>Topics covered from 3rd-6th class</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Keeping Safe➤ Bodily changes from birth-9 years.➤ Making age appropriate choices➤ Appreciating a variety of family types➤ Recognising and expressing feeling➤ 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 <i>1st-2nd</i>-penis, vagina, breast, breast-feeding.➤ <i>1st & 2nd class will also learn-vulva, urethra)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Keeping safe➤ Bodily changes➤ Making healthy and responsible decisions➤ Appreciating a variety of family types➤ Expressing feelings➤ Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise.➤ Forming friendships➤ Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (3rd/4th class)➤ Introduction to puberty and changes➤ Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty.➤ 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)

The full RSE Programme is available for viewing on

<https://www.pdst.ie/primary/healthwellbeing/RSE>

The Busy Bodies Programme may be used to discuss puberty and reproduction with senior classes. This can be viewed on http://www.healthpromotion.ie/health/inner/busy_bodies. A

hardcopy of this book will be distributed to 5th & 6th class children in the coming weeks to bring home to be discussed in advance of the lesson covering this material.

All parents should discuss these topics with their child prior to class discussion. Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours Sincerely,



Colm Gallagher, Principal

Appendix 2

<u>Month</u>	<u>Year 1 (Even/Odd)</u>	<u>Year 2 (Odd/Even)</u>
<u>Myself</u>	Self Identity (S/O)	
	Taking care of my body (M/A)	
		Growing & Changing (M/J)
	Safety & Protection (J/F)	
		Making Decisions (M/A)
<u>Myself & Others</u>		Myself & my family (S/O)
	My friends & other people (N/D)	
		Relating to others (N/D)
<u>Myself & the wider world</u>		Developing citizenship (J/F)
	Media Education (M/J)	

Appendix 3

RSE - Sensitive Areas

Junior Infants

New Life – mention of baby in the womb.

Senior Infants

My Body – specific names for male and female sex organs – vagina, penis, womb.

First Class

New Life – New baby. Baby joined to mother by umbilical cord – mention breast feeding.

Second Class

Birth of baby through vagina. Mention umbilical cord and breast feeding.

Third Class

As for second class, but in more detail.

Fourth Class

Language around baby's development in womb, i.e., fertilised egg, cord. Diagrams of fetuses (in RSE manual) to be used.

Fifth and Sixth Classes

Menstruation in the context of hygiene and growth from a girl to a woman. Boys and girls development – puberty. Diagrams will be used. How does new life begin? Biological facts as follows:

- What journey does the egg make?
- What journey does the sperm make?
- Where do they meet?
- What happens when they meet?
- Busy Bodies DVD (produced by the HSE – it can be viewed and downloaded from www.healthpromotion.ie)