

# **St. Joseph's National School, Granagh**

## **Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy**

### **Introductory Statement**

This policy statement is an approved approach to the teaching of RSE (Relationship and Sexuality Education) in St. Joseph's National School. It was developed in 2014 by the RSE Policy Committee, which included two teachers, two representatives of the Board of Management and two parent representatives. It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to the material covered in the RSE programme within the SPHE curriculum.

### **Rationale**

The provision of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is obligatory in primary schools as part of the Primary School Curriculum.

### **Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School**

St. Joseph's National School is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Bishop of Limerick. It is managed by a Board of Management. The school has a Catholic ethos and this ethos is a guiding principle in the formulation and implementation of this RSE Policy. This ethos recognises the value and dignity of each pupil and all those working in the school community, and aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person, including:

- a) relationship with God
- b) relationship with family
- c) relationship with teachers
- d) relationship with self
- e) relationship with others
- f) relationship with the environment.

This ethos also acknowledges the cultural and religious values of all the pupils attending the school. The school recognises that the parents are the primary educators of their children and we support them in that role.

In the area of RSE, above all, the schools' role is subsidiary to that of the parents. We support and complement their work.

### **Definition of RSE**

RSE is an integral part of Social, Personal and Health Education 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. (p. 5 NCCA curriculum and guidelines for RSE). 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 and Religion**

Social, Personal and Health Education contributes to developing the work of the school in promoting the health and well-being of children and young people. This happens in the context of their emotional, moral, social and spiritual growth, as well as their intellectual, physical, political, religious and creative development. (p.5 Going Forward Together Parents Information Booklet).

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 main strands of the SPHE programme are:

- Myself
- Myself and Others
- Myself and the Wider World

It is clear that the Relationships and Sexuality Programme is correctly defined as being 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 schools' Catholic ethos as taught in the Grow in Love programme.

### **Current Provision**

We are a child-centred school. The educational and emotional needs of the children in our care are central to our planning and policy making processes. We have always, and will always, continue to put the welfare of the children first.

The following are included in the school curriculum:

- Religious Education (Grow in Love)
- SPHE
- Stay Safe Programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Flourish

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

- Code of Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child Safety Statement and Risk Assessment
- Admission Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- Internet Safety Policy

In keeping with the sentiment and spirit of these policies, we informally support many of the aims on which RSE is modelled. We encourage good behaviour, open communication, understanding and tolerance of differences, and respect for 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 well being of all of the members of the school community.

### **Aims of our RSE programme**

When due account is taken of intrinsic abilities and varying circumstances, the Relationships and Sexuality Education curriculum should enable the child to:

- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem 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
- Develop an awareness of differing family patterns
- Come to value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood
- Develop strategies to make decisions, solve problems and implement actions in various personal, social and health contexts
- 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

- Develop personal skills, which will help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships
- Develop some coping strategies to protect themselves 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.

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

#### **Curriculum Matters**

The curriculum as published by the NCCA will be followed. All content objectives will be covered by the time each pupil leaves 6<sup>th</sup> class. The curriculum will be taught from Infants to 6<sup>th</sup> class, on a two year cycle- generally the sensitive issues will be taught in term 2/3. Ideally it will be taught by the teaching staff. Occasionally it may be deemed necessary for an outside speaker to address the “sexually sensitive issues” i.e. puberty, reproductive system, conception, birth and sexual intercourse on the 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Class curriculum. All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school and this policy.

- In a multi class situation, the younger class will be withdrawn when topics being taught are not age-appropriate:
- The delivery of the RSE programme will be co-educational within the context of the class group
- When an outside speaker is used, the SPHE coordinator/principal will make them fully aware of school policy. Parents/guardians will be notified of the name of this speaker in advance of the lesson. The class teacher will remain with the class during the lesson.

#### **Topics from Junior Infants to 2<sup>nd</sup> class include:**

- Keeping Safe
- Bodily changes during growth and birth (birth to 9)
- Making age appropriate choices
- Appreciating family life
- Recognising and expressing feelings
- 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 including- head, eye, ear, nose, breast (in the context of feeding), skin, hips, navel (where baby is joined to mother), bottom, penis and vagina. knee, leg, foot (*Junior/Senior Infants*)
- Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions (*1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>*)

#### **Topics from 3<sup>rd</sup> to Sixth include:**

- Bodily changes
- Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise
- Keeping Safe
- Expressing Feelings
- Family relationships
- Making healthy and responsible decisions
- Forming Friendships
- Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (*This is covered in Third/Fourth class but how the baby was conceived is not. Children may be taught that the baby comes out of the woman via the vagina but not how it gets in the womb*)
- 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*)

## **Organisational Matters**

- Parents will receive an information leaflet on the RSE Programme at least two weeks prior to the programme being taught.
- Parents are informed that they are obliged to inform the school in writing of their decision to withdraw their child from the sensitive issues classes. Parents who wish to withdraw their child are asked to discuss with the principal how this may be facilitated.
- If parents/guardians request the withdrawal of a child from RSE lessons, the school will accommodate these children by providing supervision within another classroom. With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom. 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.
- Teachers do not cover topics such as contraception, abortion, masturbation and homosexuality. Children who ask questions in class on content outside the designated curriculum are encouraged to discuss the issue with their parents. Parents are informed and asked to talk to their child.
- The school has no responsibility for any information which the pupil may receive outside the direct teaching of the RSE lessons.
- Questions arising from curriculum content will be addressed by the teacher or by the visitor in a sensible, sensitive and age-appropriate manner. Questions arising outside of the curriculum will be referred back to the parent(s).
- Any teacher has the right to opt-out from teaching the sexually sensitive issues in RSE. It is responsibility of Board of Management to ensure that the curriculum will be delivered to the children, by another teacher, or an outside speaker.
- Parents are welcome to view the curriculum and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns.

## **Dealing with Questions**

It is natural that children should wish to ask questions in the area of RSE. However, this area is treated somewhat differently from other subjects due to its sensitive nature.

All questions answered will reflect the parameters of the curriculum. Certain topics will not be discussed i.e. abortion, masturbation, homosexuality and contraception. Questions to the teacher/speaker may be written or oral within the group setting and answered within the boundaries of the curriculum and school policy. If any questions asked by the children are judged to be inappropriate, the teacher will refer the children 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.

*At all times the child's and teacher's right to privacy will be maintained*

## **Parental Involvement**

Parents/Guardians are the primary educators of their children and as such the school supports them in this role. As stated parents/guardians will be given the option of withdrawing their child from a particular lesson if they so wish. The Parents' Association may on occasion arrange for speakers/meetings to help them in the task of communicating with their children on aspects of their development. Parents/Guardians may access copies of the policy from the school office.

## **Resources**

The Grow in Love programme, the Stay Safe programme, the Walk Tall Programme, Busy Bodies Information Book and video clips, the Flourish Programme, information from the PDST website, and a selection of other appropriate resources will also be used.

## **Provision for Ongoing Support**

- Parents are welcome to view curriculum if they so wish.
- Funding will be sought for the provision of suitable materials when deemed necessary.
- Opportunities provided by our Education centre will be brought to the attention of staff members. Career development will be sought for staff when required, or as requested.

### **Special Needs/Sensitivities**

In line with the school ethos, this policy is sensitive to and respectful of the emotional, physical, cultural and learning needs of students. The sensitivities of individual students and their families will be considered when planning content, materials, activities and teaching methodologies.

### **Equality of Participation and Access**

Every child will have access to the full SPHE programme. The rights of parents/guardians with regard to their child's participation in the discrete timetabled sessions for Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) will be respected.

### **Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment**

The school follows the DES Child Protection Procedures, which are based on Children First, national Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children. The principal is the designated liaison person (DLP). Each teacher has a copy of our Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment on display in his/her classroom and a copy is available to parents, via the school website [www.granaghns.weebly.com](http://www.granaghns.weebly.com).

### **Success Criteria/ Evaluation**

- Teacher observation
- Ensuring all topics are covered
- Teacher designed tasks and tests and self-evaluation
- Community feedback

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The whole school community of B.O.M, staff and parents play a key role in the formation and implementation of the plan.

### **Implementation**

SPHE is a shared responsibility between family, school, health professionals and the community. The role of the school is to support parents/guardians in this lifelong process. The school will seek to develop positive relations with all these parties.

### **Monitoring & Review**

This policy was ratified by the Board on Management on **04/05/2023**

This policy will be due for review in three years, that is, during the school year 25/26. It may be revisited sooner if the need arises.

Signed: David Leahy  
Chairperson, Board of Management.