

ST. PATRICK'S BOYS' NATIONAL SCHOOL

School Policy Document

RSE Policy



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School

St Patrick's Boys' National School is a Catholic primary school in Donabate under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin.

School Philosophy

We aim to promote the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person of the pupil: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual, including a living relationship with God and with other people. It is also an expression of our philosophy to welcome children to our school whatever their origin, language, religion. We provide an open, welcoming, tolerant and democratic environment for all our pupils. We aim to ensure that the individuality of each child is accommodated, acknowledging that each child is unique, while also acknowledging the right of each child to education in a safe and relatively disruption free environment. We recognise that each child has diverse talents and gifts. Our aim is to identify, encourage and develop these.

Rationale

This policy statement is the approved approach to the teaching of Relationship and Sexuality Education in St Patrick's Boys' National School.

This policy informs teachers and parents of (i) the RSE content that will be taught at each class level and (ii) outlines the organisation and management of the RSE programme across all class levels. RSE will be taught in accordance with the curriculum guidelines of the Department of Education and in the context of the Catholic ethos and philosophy of the school.

Definition of Relationship and Sexuality Education

RSE aims to provide structured opportunities for children to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality and relationships through processes that help 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. It is an integral part of the Social, Personal and Health Education and is taught in this context.

Relationship of RSE to SPHE

Social, Personal and Health Education provides opportunities for pupils to learn basic personal and social skills which foster integrity, self confidence and self esteem while nurturing sensitivity to the feelings and rights of others.

SPHE and consequently RSE is a lifelong process; is a shared responsibility between family, school, health professionals and the community; is based on the needs of the child, is spiral in nature and engages children to be involved in activity based learning.

Current Provision

- SPHE curriculum provided through discrete curricular time and through integration
- The teaching of the Stay Safe Programme
- The teaching of the RSE programme
- Walk Tall resources

- Webwise resources
- Religious education through the Grow in Love programme
- Welcome to Wellbeing and Weaving Wellbeing programmes
- As we are a democratic school, we offer children a role in the running of their school, and facilitate their voice at a whole-school level through frameworks such as the school council.
- At a class level our positive behaviour policy focuses on encouraging the child to make good choices, whilst developing their sense of self-worth.

Aims of our RSE Programme

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and wellbeing of the child
- To help young people to develop healthy friendships and relationships
- To foster an understanding of and healthy attitude to human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework
- To promote knowledge of and respect for human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction
- To understand the physical changes taking place with the onset of puberty
- To promote a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life
- To enable the child to feel comfortable with his/her sexuality and that of others

Broad Objectives

When due account is taken of abilities and varying circumstances, the RSE education curriculum should enable the child to (in conjunction with the SPHE curriculum)

- Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self
- Develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and wellbeing of others
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-worth
- Understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and 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 and change and understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity
- Develop personal skills which 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 the use of appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development
- Develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making

We support 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 wellbeing of all of the members of the school community.

Policies and Curricular Plans which support SPHE/RSE

- Child Protection Policy

- Substance Use Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- Grow in Love
- Stay Safe
- SPHE School Plan

Guidelines for the management and organisation of RSE in our school

- RSE is taught as an integral part of the SPHE curriculum
- The RSE programme is taught at every class level every year
- According to best practice the class teacher will deliver this programme to their own class.
- In a class situation, 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 siblings, friends from outside school, friends from another class etc. It will be explained that other children will be given this information by their own parents and teachers when it is developmentally appropriate for them to receive it. However, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed outside of the school or on the yard.
- Staff members' own privacy will be respected and they should not feel obliged to disclose aspects of their own personal life
- St. Patrick's BNS fully complies with the DES Child Protection Guidelines and has an updated Child Safeguarding Statement. In cases of disclosures from pupils, the DLP/DDLP will follow the procedures as outlined in the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017
- It is recognised that individual teachers have a right to opt out of teaching some parts of the RSE programme. In this case alternative arrangements will be made to ensure that the programme is taught to all classes.

Organisation and Curriculum Planning

- RSE forms part of the national curriculum for SPHE by NCCA and will be taught from infants to 6th class.
- RSE will be covered under the following strands (Myself) and strand units of the SPHE curriculum: Growing and changing Taking care of my body
- The RSE programme is divided into two main parts:
- 1) The general programme which contains content covered through SPHE strands and strand units and compliment the aims and objectives of RSE - Friendship • Self-identity • Family • Self-esteem • Growing up
- 2) The second section will deal with any sensitive / specific content covered through RSE strands and strand units. The sensitive aspects are in bold.
- Please see [Appendix 1](#) for more information on the sensitive aspects of the RSE curriculum, sample resources and the appropriate vocabulary used.

Topics covered up to 2nd include:	Topics from 3rd to 6th include:
Keeping safe	Bodily changes
Bodily changes from birth (birth-9)	Healthy eating, personal hygiene and exercise
Making age-appropriate choices	Keeping safe
Appreciating the variety of family types and the variety of family life that exists in our school and community	Expressing feelings
Recognising and expressing feelings	Appreciating the variety of family types within our school and community and how these family relationships shape us
Self-care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep	Making healthy and responsible decisions
Expressing opinions and listening to others	Forming friendships
Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms (Junior/ Senior Infants)	Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb(3rd, 4th class)
Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identifying some of their functions (1st/2nd).	Introduction to puberty and changes (3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th class)
	Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (5th and 6th Class)
	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)

Approaches and Methodologies

- When implementing the programme, staff at St Patrick's Boys' 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.

- Methodologies used to teach the RSE programme may include: stories and poems, classroom discussion, group work, games, art activities, circle time, guest speaker (The class teacher will stay in the room at all times in accordance with Circular 22/2010).
- Appropriate home school links pages from the RSE manuals which outline the material covered in class may be sent home to encourage further discussion on the topics with parents/guardians.

Differentiation

- Teachers use assessment and professional judgement to differentiate the programme and content to suit the needs of the class. Some techniques used:
- ensuring that objectives are realistic for the students
- ensuring that the learning task is compatible with prior learning
- providing opportunities for interacting and working with other students in small groups and spending more time on tasks
- organising the learning task into small stages and ensuring that the language used is pitched at the student's level of understanding

Assessment

- Assessment in RSE is important to enable the teacher to pitch the lessons correctly to their respective class group
- The teacher uses;
 - Observation and questions to assess the children's engagement and interest
 - Use of teacher-designed tasks such as worksheets, quizzes or games

Parental Involvement

- We recognise that parents are the primary educators of their children, and that the home is the natural environment in which RSE should take place. The role of the school, therefore, is seen as one of support for the work of the home in this area.
- Parents have the responsibility to become involved, to inform themselves of the programme content, to prepare children for the information they will acquire around the sensitive areas and to discuss areas covered in school in RSE with their children
- On enrolment, parents will be provided with a copy of the R.S.E. policy.
- Each year, prior to implementation of the RSE programme, parents will be reminded that the teacher will soon begin to teach the programme. The curriculum books and resource materials are available online on www.pdst.ie and parents are provided with these links to view the resources themselves if desired.
- If a parent has a particular concern/issue in relation to the teachings of the RSE programme, they are encouraged to discuss this with the teacher or the principal.
- Parents are requested to inform teachers of special family situations. These will be dealt with in confidence. It is the experience of the teachers that it is to everyone's benefit if they are kept informed.

Withdrawal from RSE

- Parents are the primary educators of their children and important partners in the education process that happens within schools. While Relationships and Sexuality Education is a mandatory part of the curriculum in schools, parents have a right to request that their child

opt out of RSE, on the understanding that the parent is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education.

- Parents are obliged to inform the school in writing of their decision to withdraw their child from these classes.
- In as far as is possible and practicable the school will accommodate the child in another class while the lesson takes place. If this is not possible, parents will be asked to arrange for collection of their child for the period of time the lesson lasts.
- The school takes no responsibility for any information which a child may hear following on from the teaching of the lessons
- The school takes no responsibility for other children in the class referring incidentally in class to aspects of the lesson in the subsequent days/weeks

SEN

- Teachers will be aware of the learning needs of their pupils and will differentiate the RSE lessons as appropriate to ensure that pupils with special educational needs can learn at their level of understanding.
- Adaptations to the way in which the content is delivered may be made for children with Special Educational Needs. Anticipation of the children's needs will be central to ensuring learning is meaningful and any parental consultation that may be necessary will take place. Parents may also be directed to further resources to support their child's learning such as The Busy Bodies materials and Tom's Flower Power
- Children may be pre-taught language or concepts in anticipation of whole class work
- Children may work in smaller groups or 1:1 on adapted and suitable material
- Any different or specific objectives related to the pupils own learning needs should be detailed in their ILP in consultation with parents/guardians

Language

- Language reflects values, attitudes, beliefs, prejudices and principles. It not only helps to express a culture but influences and shapes that culture as well. It is essential that children are enabled to use language in a precise and appropriate manner
- Children should become aware of the power and influence of language. When used positively, language can build up, affirm and show respect to another human being but if used in a negative manner can hurt, diminish and demean. Children need to recognise and become sensitive to the ways in which they themselves use language in their relationship and their everyday interactions.
- The words 'gay' and 'lesbian' are sometimes used to hurt others and the use of such language in a derogatory way diminishes respect for gay and lesbian people. There are no formal lessons on being gay taught in RSE. However, as part of The Anti-Bullying Procedures 2013, schools must address identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying and include preventative educational strategies. In order for the RSE policy to be fully in line with these procedures, if questions arise as to the definition of gay and lesbian, and attitudes or opinions about gay people are expressed, age appropriate definitions will be given and children will be informed that being gay is okay, and that all people in various types of relationships and families deserve respect. If the teachers deem it necessary, any moral questions around same sex relationships, will be directed to home.
- Appropriate language is used in discussions in formal RSE lessons

- Appropriate vocabulary is used in formal teaching
- Vocabulary relating to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, parts of the body and feelings will be used, the use of slang will be discouraged
- Anatomical terms and language introduced are consistent with RSE Materials Books.

Questions

- The main aim of talk and discussion is to create an atmosphere where children feel comfortable to ask important questions and that the relationship fostered in these sessions is open, controlled and safe for all pupils.
- Staff members' own privacy will be respected and they should not feel obliged to disclose aspects of their own personal life if questioned by the pupils
- Teachers will be mindful of their reactions to any questions
- Teachers should be aware that they do not have to answer any questions straight away
- Sample responses could include: I'll do my best to answer your questions but I may not be able to answer all of them • That's something you'll learn about as you get older • Is that something you could talk to your parents / guardians / family about? • We agreed in our contract that we wouldn't ask anyone personal questions • Somebody asked a question and the language they used was slang language, what they meant to ask was.... • A question was asked, and we cannot talk about that particular topic but I think that question was about...
- Teachers may wish to avail of a question box where questions can be posed and answered at a later date
- Questions arising from lesson content will be answered in 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 or needs to be communicated with home because of other reasons
- No personal questions will be answered and children will be reminded not to share personal information about their families or others

Confidentiality

- Where there is disclosure by a child of abuse, or a teacher has any concerns about a child, the school authorities will follow our Child Protection Policy. The Principal is our Designated Liaison Person.
- If a child is withdrawn from the teaching of sensitive issues, we cannot guarantee that the other children will not tell or inform him/her about what happened

Resources

- Relationships and Sexuality Education Resource Materials (DES) - Each 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.

Provision of ongoing support

- Opportunities provided by our Education Centre will be brought to the attention of staff members
- Teachers will be encouraged to attend CPD in RSE
- Staff meetings utilised as a platform for discussion and development of RSE materials
- Support from a PDST Advisor
- Promotion and communication of resources available from www.pdst.ie.

Review

- The policy will be reviewed after every two 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

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St. Patrick's Boys' National School in March 2022

Signed: _____

Mary Brooks (Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Appendix 1 - Sensitive Aspects of the Relationship & Sexuality Education curriculum

Class	Strand /Strand Unit	Sensitive Content Objectives <i>consult curriculum – for complete objectives in Growing/ Changing and Taking Care of my Body</i>	Language	Pages in RSE Manuals for <i>sensitive objectives</i>	Pages in Walk Tall for <i>sensitive objectives</i>	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, Breast-feeding Penis Vagina	New Life p68 My Body p147 Caring for New Life p137	Senior Infants Our Amazing Bodies p94	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anatomically correct dolls Picture books of new baby Visit of baby to class
First/ Second 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"> Begin to understand that reproduction, birth, growth and death are all part of new life cycles Taking care of my body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name the parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions 	Penis, Vagina, vulva, womb, breast - feeding, Urethra	The Wonder of New Life p59 /151 How my Body Works p67/ 161 Growing Means Changing p77/171	Second Class Our Amazing Bodies p37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Picture books of going to the doctors Books / activities on Life cycles Birth and new life in nature
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 nonetheless are predictable and natural and that being different is normal Taking care of my body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize 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 (4 th class)	Preparing for New Life p69 The wonder of new life p169 As I Grow and Change p93 Growing and Changing p195	Third Class as I Grow I Change p175 Fourth Class Seven Changing and Growing p140	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Body Systems Picture books on Growing and Changing 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 Busy Bodies <u>language</u> Semen Sexual intercourse Periods	My Body Grows and Changes p81 The Wonder of New Life p92 Caring for New Life p103 Different Kinds of Love p141	Fifth Class My Amazing Body p345 Sixth Class Creation p121	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Busy Bodies PowerPoint recap Question Box Puberty Quizzes Busy Bodies DVDs Power points recap Question Box Puberty Quizzes