

ST.FELIM'S NATIONAL SCHOOL

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Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

This policy statement is an approved approach to teaching Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) in St Felim's N.S. Heretofore, our approach to teaching RSE was documented within our Social, Personal and Health Education School Plan and was agreed in partnership with the school community. This policy was drafted in April 2019. It was circulated to the parent body via our school website and parents were invited to submit a response to the policy in advance of its ratification. Its purpose is to inform teachers and parents of the material covered in Relationship and Sexuality Education which is taught as part of Social, Personal and Health Education.

School Philosophy

St Felim's National School is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Bishop of Kilmore. It is managed by a Board of Management, elected according to the procedures agreed by the partners in Education. The school has a Catholic ethos and this ethos is a guiding principle in the formulation and implementation of this policy. Our ethos recognises the value and dignity of each pupil and all those working in the school community. We aim to promote the full and harmonious development of our pupils: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual, including a living relationship with God and with others.

This ethos also acknowledges the cultural and religious values of all the pupils attending our school. St Felim's N.S. recognises the central role of family as the primary educators of the child and we support them in that regard. Parents have the primary role in the social, personal and health education of their children so their involvement is encouraged as much as possible.

Definition of RSE

Relationships and Sexuality Education is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, sexual identity and intimacy. In a school situation RSE provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire a knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality through processes which enable them to form values and to establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework, appropriate to their age.

Relationship of RSE to SPHE

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).

Social, Personal and Health Education 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. RSE will be taught in accordance with the Departments directives and within the philosophy framework of our school.

Aims of RSE

The aims of RSE are:

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and wellbeing of our pupils
- To help our pupils develop healthy friendships and relationships
- To foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships within a moral, spiritual and social framework
- To enable our pupils to acquire an understanding of, and respect for human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction
- To develop and promote in our pupils a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life
- To enable our pupils to be comfortable with the sexuality of oneself and others while growing and developing

Broad Objectives:

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

- Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self
- 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.

Policies which support SPHE/RSE

- Child Safeguarding Documents
- Substance Use Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- Code of Behaviour

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 our school community.

Management and Organisation of RSE in our School

RSE as part of SPHE, is taught as part of our two year SPHE plan. Strands and strand units taught, and the timing of when they are taught are outlined below:

Month	Year A	Year B
September/October	Myself <i>Self-Identity</i>	Myself and Others <i>Myself and my family</i>
November/December	Myself and Others <i>My friends and other people</i>	Myself & Others <i>Relating to Others</i>
January/February	Myself <i>Safety & Protection</i>	Myself Growing & Changing
March/April	Infants – 2 nd : Myself <i>Safety & Protection</i>	Myself Growing & Changing
	3 rd -6 th : Myself <i>Making Decisions</i>	
May/June	Myself & the Wider World <i>Media Education</i>	Myself & the Wider World <i>Developing Citizenship</i>

The curriculum as published by the NCCA will be followed. All content objectives will be covered by the time each pupil leaves sixth class. RSE lessons will ideally be taught by the teaching staff. However, the school may engage the services of an outside speaker if deemed appropriate.

Sensitive parts of RSE

RSE incorporates content that parents may consider sensitive. Sexually sensitive issues will be covered within the strand units:

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

The following table outlines the sensitive learning objectives from the curriculum:

<u>Junior & Senior Infants</u>	
Myself Taking Care of my body	❖ Name parts of the male and female body parts using appropriate anatomical terms
Myself Growing and Changing	❖ Become aware of new life and birth in the world <i>e.g. new growth in springtime, signs of new life in spring</i> ❖ Develop an awareness of human birth <i>i.e. that a baby grows and is nurtured in the mother's womb until ready to be born</i>
Myself Safety & Protection	❖ Identify situations and places that are safe and those where personal safety might be threatened

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Realise how other people can persuade him/her to engage in unsafe behaviour <i>Note: anatomically correct terms for male and female body parts are used in parts of these lessons</i>
Language	Womb, penis, vulva, breastfeeding,
<u>First & Second Class</u>	
Myself Taking care of my body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Name parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms and some of their functions <i>e.g. eyes can see, ears can hear,</i>
Myself Growing & Changing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Begin to understand that reproduction, birth, growth and death are all part of a life cycle
Myself Safety & Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Recognise and explore situations where children feel safe and those where safety might be at risk ❖ Discuss and practise appropriate strategies for dealing with these situations ❖ explore how other people can persuade him/her to engage in unsafe behaviour and how this may be counteracted <i>Note: anatomically correct terms for male and female body parts are used in parts of these lessons</i>
Language	Womb, penis, vulva, breastfeeding,
<u>Third & Fourth Class</u>	
Myself Taking care of my body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Understand the physical changes that take place in both the male and female body e.g. growing height, increasing strength, boy, man, girl, woman, <i>Please note: we do not refer to puberty</i> ❖ Explore the relationship between health and hygiene
Myself Growing and changing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby from conception to birth <i>Please note: conception is not explained.</i>
Myself Safety & Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Identify, people, places and situations that may threaten personal safety <i>Bullies, large gatherings, being touched inappropriately, being asked to keep a difficult secret</i>
Language	Womb, penis, vulva, breastfeeding, umbilical cord, fertilised egg,
<u>Fifth & Sixth Class</u>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Please Note: Learning Objectives outlined in red below are taught in Sixth Class</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">The school may engage the services of an outside speaker to address sexually sensitive issues for 6th class. When an outside speaker is used, the Principal will make them fully aware of our school policy. Parents/guardians will be notified of the name of this speaker in advance of the lessons. There may be the option of a meeting with parents on the content of the lessons, in advance of them taking place, should there be sufficient interest. The class teacher will remain with the class during the lessons.</p>	
Myself Taking care of my body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ 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 everybody ❖ Recognise the importance of treating his/her body and that of others with dignity and respect ❖ Understand the reproductive system of both male and female adults

Myself Growing & changing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Identify and discuss the changes that are experienced in growing from child to adult. ❖ Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship such as marriage ❖ Discuss the different types of love that exist and explore how love is portrayed and defined in music, films, books, magazines and other media
Myself Safety & Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Identify situations and places that may threaten personal safety <i>bullying, inappropriate touches</i> ❖ Discuss a variety of risky situations and behaviour and assess and evaluate how these risks may be avoided or minimised and the implications of taking risks
Language	Womb, penis, vulva, breastfeeding, umbilical cord, fertilised egg, puberty, menstruation, periods, pubic hair, breasts, vagina, ovaries, fallopian tubes, womb/uterus, penis, testicles, scrotum, sperm, urethra, wet dreams/nocturnal emissions, semen, erection,

Organisational matters

- Parents are informed on enrolment that we teach the Stay Safe Programme and the Relationships and Sexuality Programme, both of which are part of the Department of Education & Skills Social and Personal Health Education curriculum.
- Parents will be informed in advance of lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme by letter. Information about content that will be taught at each class level will be provided.
- This letter will be issued in advance, giving parents an opportunity to meet with the Principal 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 their children for the information they will acquire around the sensitive areas.
- If parents are concerned about the sensitive aspects of RSE they are welcome to visit the school to examine the content of the programme and discuss their concerns with the Principal. The school acknowledges that parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children about growing and changing.
- Following this meeting, if a parent wishes to withdraw their child from the sensitive lessons, they may request this in writing, stating their reasons for doing so and this letter will be centrally filed. Parents are expected to make their wishes known each year to their child's/children's teacher/s. Efforts will be made by the school, using the resources it has, to accommodate the children in another classroom.
- If a child is withdrawn from sensitive RSE lessons, the school cannot take any responsibility for what the child may hear following on from the teaching of the lesson. 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 these issues.

Dealing with Questions

It is natural that children should wish to ask questions in the area of RSE. However, this 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. Questions to the teacher may be written or oral within the group setting and answered within the boundaries of the curriculum and school policy. The teacher will be mindful of their reaction to any questions. 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. Questions do not have to be answered straight away. The school cannot guarantee confidentiality if a child asks a question of a personal nature or discloses personal information. The school may also use a question box if deemed appropriate.

Sample responses which may be used are:

- I'll do my best to answer your questions but I may not be able to answer all of them.
- That's something you will learn about as you get older.
- Is that something you could talk to your parents/guardians/family about?
- Somebody asked a question and the language that was used was slang language, what they meant to ask was.....

Language

The SPHE curriculum provides a context in which children are given opportunities to develop and enhance their language skills and increase their vocabulary related to SPHE. Children should become aware of the power and influence of language. When positively used, language can build up, affirm and show respect to another human being but if used in a negative manner can hurt, diminish and demean.

There are two areas where the use of language is applied in RSE lessons:

- The formal use of teaching and language generally throughout the school.
- The use of language and discussion through formal RSE lessons

Appropriate vocabulary will be used at all times in formal teaching relating to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, parts of the body and feelings. Slang will be discouraged. Anatomical language used will be consistent with RSE material books.

Approaches and Methodologies

The curriculum will be taught in an age appropriate manner at all times. Resources chosen will be appropriate to the needs of the children, the content of the lesson and will be in keeping with the philosophy framework of our school.

Differentiation

Teachers will

- Ensure that the objectives are realistic for the students
- Ensure that the learning tasks are compatible with prior learning
- Organise the learning task into small stages and ensure that the language used is pitched at the student's level of understanding
- Use higher and lower order questions in groups
- Facilitate group work and discussion
- Moderate whole class discussions to ensure content is age appropriate

Pupils with Special Educational Needs

Adaptions to the ways in which the content is delivered will be made for pupils with Special Educational Needs, Consultation with parents in advance and anticipation of the children's needs will be essential to ensure learning is meaningful.

- 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 on their IEP or IPLP in consultation with parents/guardians.

Assessment

The teacher will use:

- Observation and questioning to assess the children's engagement and interest
- Teacher designed tasks such as worksheets, quizzes, games

Confidentiality

The school follows the Children's First Guidelines 2017 and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017. If a child is withdrawn from the teaching of sensitive issues the school is not responsible for what that child may do here outside of the classroom.

Resources

Each teacher has a copy of the Relationship and Sexuality Resource Manuals (DES). Other resources that support the broader aims of RSE include:

- Stay Safe Programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Anatomical Dolls and Story Books
- Busy Bodies booklet. This booklet was developed to support the teaching of the 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th class component of RSE within the context of SPHE.
- INTO Different Families, Same Love Poster

Provision for 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 will be used as a platform for discussion around RSE. Support from a PDST advisor may be sought if deemed necessary.

Implementation

Roles and Responsibilities

The teaching staff will implement this policy with the support of the Principal, Board of Management, parents and local community.

Review


This policy will be reviewed every three years as part of the school's three-year review cycle, or earlier if the need arises.

Ratification and Communication

The policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St Felim's N.S. at its meeting on

_____.

The policy will be effective at the commencement of the school year 2019/2020.



Signed: _____
Chairperson – Board of Management

Date: 8th May 2019



Signed: _____
Acting Principal

Date: 8th May 2019

