

Rathgormack National School  
Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy

### **Introduction**

We, the Principal and staff of Rathgormack National School have reviewed and updated our RSE policy, in line with a review and update of our SPHE policy.

### **School Philosophy**

Our school values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. We believe that we have responsibility for our actions and a duty to be kind and helpful to all. The implementation of this plan will assist the children to develop feelings of self-worth and self-confidence while encouraging their ability to relate to others in a positive way. It will encourage the children to be aware of their rights as individuals while at the same time accepting responsibility for their actions as members of the school and the wider community. We acknowledge the importance of SPHE in the life of the school and in light of keeping our children safe and happy, and helping them to achieve their full potential while becoming full and active citizens. The school has a Catholic ethos and this ethos is a guiding principle in the formulation and implementation of this RSE Policy. 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.

### **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.

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

- To help young people develop healthy friendships and relationships
- To promote a healthy attitude to sexuality and to relationships
- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child
- 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- Fifth and Sixth

Class

- To understand the physical changes taking place with the onset of puberty- Senior Classes
- 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.

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 which support SPHE/RSE**

- Child Protection Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Acceptable Internet Usage Policy
- Health & Safety Statement

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

The curriculum by NCCA will be followed as published, and will be taught from infants to 6<sup>th</sup> class. 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 each year as laid out in the curriculum, and utilising the RSE manuals to complement their teaching

- The strands Growing and Changing, and Taking Care of my Body are covered in Year two of a 2 year SPHE plan.
- The sensitive lessons are covered as part of these broad topics (as outlined below)
- Special arrangements exist for the delivery of the sensitive elements from 5<sup>th</sup> class up (see below)
- Letters are sent out before RSE is taught
- Special consideration will be taken to ensure that the needs of children with SEN are met. 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.

## Curriculum Planning

RSE will be covered under the following strands and strand units of the SPHE curriculum:

<b>Strand:</b>	Myself
<b>Strand Units:</b>	Growing and changing Taking care of my body

The RSE programme is divided into two main parts:

A. The general programme which contains content such as:

- Friendship
- Self-identity
- Family
- Self-esteem
- Growing up

B. The second section will deal with any sensitive / specific content.

<p>Topics covered up to 2<sup>nd</sup> class include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping Safe</li> <li>• Bodily changes during growth and birth (birth-9)</li> <li>• Making age appropriate choices</li> <li>• Appreciating the variety of family types and a variety of family life that exists in our school and community</li> <li>• Recognising and expressing feelings</li> <li>• Self-care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep</li> <li>• Expressing opinions and listening to others</li> <li>• Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms (Junior/ Senior Infants)</li> <li>• Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate</li> </ul>	<p>Topics from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> classes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bodily changes</li> <li>• Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise</li> <li>• Keeping Safe</li> <li>• Expressing Feelings</li> <li>• Appreciating the variety of family types within our school and community and how we these family relationships shape us</li> <li>• Making healthy and responsible decisions</li> <li>• Forming Friendships</li> <li>• Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb(4<sup>th</sup> class)</li> <li>• Introduction to puberty and changes (4<sup>th</sup> class)</li> <li>• Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (Fifth Class)</li> </ul>
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<p>anatomical terms and identify some of their functions (1st/2nd)</p> <p>(Refer to Appendix 1 for specific vocabulary)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reproductive system of male/female adults (Fifth Class)</li> <li>• Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship (Fifth Class)</li> </ul>
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The RSE lessons are taught incrementally to support the appropriate and supportive development of the children and from 4<sup>th</sup> class the following arrangements apply

<b>4<sup>th</sup> Class</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> class lessons from RSE manuals – introduction to Puberty Menstruation is not covered in 3 <sup>rd</sup> class, but if teachers are concerned that girls are entering puberty and need this information, they will inform and provide support for parents. In some instances this lesson may be taught to girls in small groups depending on need, with full co-operation with parents
<b>5<sup>th</sup> Class</b>	We invite an independent facilitator to work with our 5th class for one day annually. The content of this programme is designed specifically for this age group. A Parent’s Information talk forms part of this school programme and parents are made aware of the content in advance of the children’s lesson and are asked for confirmation in writing that for their children will take part.

## Approaches & Methodologies

When implementing the programme, staff at Rathgormack National School will endeavor to display respect for and sensitivity towards the different cultural 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, role play, relevant video clips, circle time and a guest speaker.

The approach in school is child-centered and will always take the age and stage of development of the children into account. Appropriate vocabulary relating to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, parts of the body and feeling will be used. The use of slang will be discouraged.

## Questions

- 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

Staff will not invalidate questions but use limits.

Invariably some questions may not be covered by the curriculum and any decisions to answer particular questions should take the following into account. If any staff member is unsure, they should explain to the child they will find out if they can answer their particular question, after chatting with the principal.

When deciding whether it is appropriate to answer a question or not the teacher should consider:

- If the question is a moral one, while being sensitive of different religious and non-religious backgrounds, teacher will refer the child to speak to their parents or guardians or to the Catholic teaching.
- It will be our policy not to answer personal questions about ourselves.
- A question is an opportunity to clarify, to teach and to reassure and in line with the SPHE curriculum which aims to equip children with attributes and skills necessary to live a democratic way of life with individual and group rights and responsibilities
- The teacher will use techniques to challenge children sensitively to develop critical thinking by facilitating appropriate discussion.

#### Sample responses:

- 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.

For older children a 'communication box' will be used as part of a structured RSE lesson. Teachers can follow up on the written questions at a later date, thus allowing time to prepare suitable answers, consult with colleagues, etc.

If issues arise which might be seen to contravene Children's First Guidelines, the teacher will notify the designated liaison person in the school.

## **Parental Involvement**

- 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, example of letter see Appendix 2.
- The letter will be issued in advance, giving parents an opportunity to meet with relevant class teachers to discuss 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.
- Home-School links will be sent to parents outlining what has been taught regarding the sensitive lessons of RSE and the Stay Safe Programme.
- 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.
- Our RSE programme is inclusive and so we actively discourage withdrawal. Should a parent seek to have their child withdrawn from the RSE lessons, the school will take account of parental concerns, and parents' right to withdraw their child from themes pertaining to sensitive issues will be honoured on the understanding that the parents will sign a document agreeing to take full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves. Arrangements will be made with parents for that child during the teaching of these RSE lessons.

## **Confidentiality**

- 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.
- If 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 and Deputy Principal are our Designated Liaison Person and Deputy Designated Liaison Person respectively.

## **Resources**

Relationships and Sexuality Education Manuals (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

## **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 are utilised as a platform for discussion and development of RSE materials.

## **Review**

- The policy will be reviewed after every four 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 plan was ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting in June 2019:

Signed:  
Francis Quigley  
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed:  
Cathy Power  
Principal

<b>Class</b>	<b>Strand /strand Unit</b>	<b>Sensitive Content Objectives ( consult curriculum – for complete objectives in Growing/ Changing and taking Care of my Body</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Pages in RSE Manuel’s for sensitive content objectives</b>	<b>Resources for other content objectives</b>
Junior Infants	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Growing and changing</li> <li>▪ Taking care of my body</li> <li>▪ Safety and protection: personal protection</li> </ul>	Growing and changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Become aware of new life and birth in the world</li> <li>▪ Develop an awareness of human birth</li> </ul> Taking care of my body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Name parts of the male and female body using anatomical terms</li> </ul>	Womb, Breast/ Breast feeding Penis Vagina	New Life p68  I Grow p78	RSE manuals Walk Tall manuals Stay Safe (Touches)
Senior Infants	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Growing and changing</li> <li>▪ Taking care of my body</li> <li>▪ Safety and protection: personal protection</li> </ul>	Growing and changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Become aware of new life and birth in the word</li> <li>▪ Develop an awareness of human birth</li> </ul> Taking care of my body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Name parts of the male and female body using anatomical terms</li> </ul>	Revise above	My Body p147  Caring for new life p137	RSE manuals Walk Tall manuals Stay Safe (Touches)
First	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Growing and changing</li> <li>▪ Taking care of my body</li> <li>▪ Safety and protection: personal protection</li> </ul>	Growing and changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Begin to understand that reproduction, birth, growth and death are all part of new life cycles</li> </ul> Taking care of my body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Name the pars of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions</li> </ul>	Revise above  Vulva, Urethra	The Wonder of new life p59 How my body works p67 Growing means changing p77	RSE manuals Walk Tall manuals Stay Safe (Touches)
Second	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Growing and changing</li> <li>▪ Taking care of my body</li> <li>▪ Safety and protection: personal protection</li> </ul>	Growing and changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Begin to understand that reproduction, birth, growth and death are all part of new life cycles</li> </ul> Taking care of my body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Name the pars of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions</li> </ul>	Revise above	The Wonder of new life p151 When my body needs special care p.161 Growing means changing p171	RSE manuals Walk Tall manuals Stay Safe (Touches)
Third	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Growing and changing</li> <li>▪ Taking care of my body</li> <li>▪ Safety and protection: personal protection</li> </ul>	Taking care of my body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Discuss the stages and sequence of development of human baby from conception to birth</li> </ul>	Revise above.  Umbilical cord Genitals Lesbian Gay Homophob ic	Preparing for new life p69 As I grow and change p93	RSE manuals Walk Tall manuals Stay Safe (Bullying & Touches)
Fourth	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Growing and changing</li> <li>▪ Taking care of my body</li> <li>▪ Safety and protection: personal protection</li> </ul>	Growing and changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Recognize and discuss how feelings and emotions are effected by the psychical changes that take place during puberty</li> </ul> Taking care of my body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Discuss the stages and sequence of development of human baby from conception to birth</li> <li>▪ Menstruation</li> </ul>	Revise above.  Changes in Puberty Menstruation	The wonder of new life p169 Growing and changing p195	RSE manuals Walk Tall manuals Stay Safe (Bullying & Touches)
Fifth Class	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Growing and changing</li> <li>▪ Taking care of my body</li> <li>▪ Safety and protection: personal protection</li> </ul>	Taking care of my body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 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</li> <li>▪ Understand the reproductive system of both male and female adults</li> </ul> Growing and changing	Revise and include above  Testicles Reproduction language	My body grows and changes p81 The wonder of new life p92 Caring for new life p103 Different kinds of love p141	RSE manuals Walk Tall manuals Stay Safe (Touches)  Facilitator to teach specific content in 5 <sup>th</sup> class

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a loving committed relationship</li> </ul>			
Sixth class	<p>Myself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Growing and changing</li> <li>▪ Taking care of my body</li> <li>▪ Safety and protection: personal protection</li> </ul>	<p>Growing and changing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a loving committed relationship</li> </ul> <p>Taking care of my body</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 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</li> <li>▪ Understand the reproductive system of both male and female adults</li> </ul>	Revise and include above	<p>Caring for new life</p> <p>p103</p> <p>Different kinds of love</p> <p>p141</p>	<p>RSE manuals</p> <p>Walk Tall manuals</p> <p>Stay Safe (Touches)</p>