



RELATIONSHIPS and SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE) POLICY

Policy Area	Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)
Version	
Date	Created: April 2024
Responsibility for Implementation	All Employees
Monitored	Every three years or in line with changing legislation
Amendment	
Responsibility	Raheen Wood Community National School Board of Management
Approved by Board	June 2024
Notified to Staff	June 2024

Introductory Statement

Raheen Wood is a Steiner Community National School. We provide a co-educational and multi-denominational programme for children from Junior Infants to Class 6.

This policy was drawn up by a committee involving staff/parents/guardians/carers in April 2024. This policy is an agreed approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). It was developed to inform teachers and parents/guardians/carers about the provision of RSE in Raheen Wood Community National School.

OUR VISION

Our Community National School seeks to support children in meeting the world with wonder, awe, respect and compassion. We also strive to empower children by enabling them to develop the skills they need to thrive in a modern and rapidly changing world. Our vision is to support children to develop high levels of self-esteem, enriching relationships, excellent communication skills, creative and critical thinking, as well as strong problem-solving abilities. As a Community National school our character is driven by the core values of excellence in education, care, equality, community and respect. We recognise the wisdom of Rudolf Steiner's theories on the development of the human being, and these underpin much of our pedagogy. This pedagogy works together with nationally accredited curricula and programmes.

School Philosophy

We recognise that SPHE is intrinsic to the teaching and learning that occurs both formally and informally in school. Through our SPHE/RSE programme 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 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 wider community.

Our school values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community.

Our ethos values respect, inclusion and diversity of all members of our school community. The focus of the Relationship and Sexuality Education is to equip the children with the lifelong skills to have healthy, positive relationships.

Throughout the school we foster positive relationships between the children, and between children and teachers, parents and other adults. We encourage respect and consideration for other people, managing friendships, and body autonomy, developing and maintaining a feeling of security around other people. We build on this by providing in a spiral curriculum age-appropriate information on the human body, gender identity and sexuality.

As far as possible, we try to link and integrate RSE into other lessons rather than through designated lessons, although some topics need this. In this way, the children learn that relationships are part of every aspect of life; that the way we relate to other people is always important.

Our school acknowledges that parents/guardians/carers have the primary role in the social, personal and health education of their children and as such, their involvement will be encouraged. SPHE/RSE is a key component in supporting our pupils 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.”

Taken from the Interim curriculum and guidelines for primary schools (DE 1996, p.5)

Relationships and Sexuality Education is:

- a subject which develops a child's skills, attitudes, values and understanding relevant to a range of social, personal and health issues
- a lifelong and continual process throughout primary school and we as a school will not confine it to once-off inputs or solitary lessons
- a shared responsibility and the school will collaborate with families, health professionals and the community
- will be child-centred. The RSE education we provide will prioritise the needs of the child and his/her environment, with appropriate adaptations made to suit individual requirements and individual school situations.
- spiral in nature. We begin SPHE/RSE in Junior Infants and it is developed throughout the child's time in school. This will provide opportunities to consolidate and build on previous learning in a developmentally appropriate manner.
- taught through active learning methodologies. The school will provide a range of learning opportunities that require children to actively participate in their learning in a wide variety of ways e.g. discussion, circle time, role play.
- free of bias. The lessons, language and resources selected by the school reflect this. Ours school's approach to SPHE/RSE encourages children to be inclusive with each other, challenge prejudice and learn how to live together in a pluralistic society where peoples' values, identities, and ways of being are respected.

Aims of RSE

- 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
 - 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
- Develop effective strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse.

Broad Objectives of RSE

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

- Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self
- Develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and wellbeing of self and 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 effective 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

Policies that support the RSE elements of SPHE

- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Stay Safe Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Admissions Policy
- GDPR Policy

Curriculum Planning for RSE lessons within the broader SPHE subject

Our school follows a two-year plan for SPHE

Month	Year One	Year Two
September - October November - December	Self - Identity (Myself) My Friends and Other People (Myself and Others)	Myself and My Family (Myself and Others) Relating to Others (Myself and Others)
January - February	Safety and Protection (Myself)	Growing and Changing (Myself)
March - April	Making Decisions (3rd-6th) (Myself)	Taking Care of My Body (Myself)
May - June	Media Education (Myself and the Wider World)	Developing Citizenship (Myself & the Wider World)

RSE, which largely looks at the development of relationships, is interwoven through all strands and strand units of the SPHE curriculum. The more sensitive aspects of RSE will be covered under the strand 'Myself' and strand units 'Growing and changing' and 'Taking care of my body'. See Appendix one for details. Teachers will refer to the resource 'Making the Links' to support their planning for the delivery of these strand units.

Guidelines for the Implementation of RSE.

The SPHE curriculum will underpin all teaching and learning of RSE in RWCNS. The SPHE curriculum (1999) is allocated 30 minutes of discrete teaching time by the Department of Education. Teachers can use their professional discernment if extra time is required, this can be taken from discretionary time. Teachers are encouraged to use an integrated approach for the delivery of SPHE.

The Stay Safe programme and the RSE elements of the SPHE curriculum, though having different objectives, work hand in hand. The courses are delivered in full on alternate years.

Lessons containing sensitive material are covered as part of 'Growing and changing' and 'Taking care of my body' strand units.

The class teacher will consider the pupil's social and emotional development when planning the RSE block of lessons and arrange the sensitive elements of the curriculum based on the individual needs of each class. In the Senior

classes boys and girls may be separated for different topics, at the discretion of the class teacher.

Approaches & Methodologies

Active learning is central to the ethos of our school, we will use the following approaches and methodologies to teach RSE:

Integration	Group work	Art
Stories and poems	ICT (Busy Body Videos)	Circle Time
Talk and Discussion	Games	Reflection

Storytelling is an integral part of the way we teach, and all stories teach about relationships. From Fairy Tales, Fables, to Norse, Irish, Roman and Greek myths, the students are continuously taught about what it means to be a human being and the kinds of relationships that human beings can have to one another. Daily poetry recitation, Drama, group discussions, and oral project presentations, give pupils experience of expressing themselves clearly, while sharpening their communication skills, which is an important part of relationships.

Teachers may use a variety of methodologies to create a safe, open space where pupils feel comfortable to ask RSE related questions, e.g. Question boxes, or open discussion.

Resources

All resources used will be in keeping with this RSE policy. At RWCNS our staff may consult any of the following teaching resources when teaching RSE in addition to the DE Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme:

- PDST Health and Wellbeing RSE
- NCCA SPHE/RSE Toolkit
- DE Walk Tall Manuals
- Making the Links and Beyond
- Stay Safe programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Anatomical Dolls
- HSE publications (www.healthpromotion.ie)
- Busy Bodies Booklet/ Videos/ Workbook (PDST)
- Inclusive picture and story books
- INTO Different Families, Same Love Poster
- INTO Different Families, Same Love Lesson Ideas
- INTO Different Families Same Love Online Presentation J1 – 2nd
- INTO Different Families Same Love Online Presentation 3rd – 6th
- RESPECT guidelines
- Gender Equality Matters (GEM)
- All Together Now
- We All Belong
- PDST Education and Transgender Information

- PDST Identity Based Bullying Information
- RSE related educational websites

Useful Resources for SEN:

- Middletown Centre for Autism
- PDST RSE
- Stay Safe for Children with SEN

Teachers can also choose additional resources to support the above. When choosing RSE resources, teachers should consider the sample criteria outlined in the SPHE Teacher Guidelines p.103. It recommends that teachers consider if the resource is:

- In line with the principles of the SPHE curriculum, and our ethos
- Free of bias
- Demonstrates equality
- Up to date
- Devoid of racial or sexual stereotyping

Differentiation

The age and stage of development in a class can vary widely and strategies for differentiation can support gradual and appropriate learning. In RWCNS, teachers use assessment and professional judgment to differentiate the curricular objectives and content to best suit the needs of all pupils.

Adaptations to the way in which the content is delivered will be made for children with special and additional educational needs. Both consultation with parents/guardians/carers in advance of lessons and the anticipation of the pupil's needs will be central to ensuring learning is meaningful. This may be reflected in the student's support file.

Learning activities will aim to be meaningful, relevant, and achievable for all students. The teacher will find ways to respond to students' diversity by using differentiated approaches and methodologies.

NCSE Guidelines for teachers of students with Mild, Moderate and Severe and Profound Learning Disabilities is available to download at

<https://www.sess.ie/cat-categories>

Language

The language that is promoted in RWCNS nurtures both children and adults as unique and valuable human beings. It respects cultural and other differences and will be used in a way that encourages inclusiveness.

Language is a powerful tool and will be used with respect and integrity for the dignity of each person.

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 it can hurt, diminish and demean.

In the Anti-Bullying Procedures 2013, schools are asked to put specific strategies in place to prevent identity-based bullying, such as homophobic and transphobic bullying. We teach respectful, positive, and inclusive language which is modelled by staff in all classrooms and in the playground,

- Staff will be aware of binary language or language that implies gender stereotyping
- The correct anatomical terms are used in a consistent way across all class levels See Appendix 1

Anti-identity-based bullying strategies:

- We teach respectful, positive, and inclusive language which is modelled by staff in all classrooms and in the playground.
- Staff will be aware of binary language or language that implies gender stereotyping
- The correct anatomical terms are used in a consistent way across all class levels See Appendix 1
- Derogatory language (e.g. when a child misuses the word 'gay' or 'lesbian') will be addressed in a restorative way,
- The Goodness me, Goodness you programme, (GMYG) the multi-belief and values curriculum, is taught in all classes throughout the year, it celebrates inclusion and diversity, and promotes positive language.
- The 'All Together Now, An educational Awareness Programme on Homophobic Bullying', will be taught in the senior classes, every other year, as stated in the Anti Bullying Policy.
- Staff will be made familiar with the PDST Identity Based Bullying resource, and PDST Education and Transgender resource.

Assessment

Teachers are free to choose the assessment method that best suits their class group, from the following methods for assessment in SPHE/RSE:

- Observation and questions to assess the pupils' engagement and interest
- Use of teacher-designed tasks such as worksheets, quizzes, or games
- Use of reflection or learning log.

Parental Involvement

In RWCNS parents/guardians/carers will be informed at enrolment that the school fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE curriculum. (A sample letter is provided in Appendix 2).

Parents may be signposted to developmentally appropriate resources to support them in speaking with their child about relationships, sexuality and growing up.

Parents/guardians/carers will be informed in advance of the teaching of the formal RSE lessons. The aims, and content of the RSE Curriculum will be outlined and discussed at the Autumn Parent Evenings, annually. Parents / guardians/ carers, of classes 3-6 will be informed of the block by letter two weeks prior to lessons. This letter will outline the aims and content of the lessons, with guidelines and support for parents.

This prior information will allow time for parents to discuss topics with the child, meet the teacher if required and/or follow the appropriate procedure for opting out of the RSE programme. It will also allow the parents/guardians an opportunity to share any personal details they feel the teacher should be aware of prior to their child engaging in RSE lessons.

A parent's right to withdraw a pupil from the sensitive issues process will be honoured on the understanding that the parent(s) is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves. Parents are obliged to inform the school in writing of their decision to withdraw the child from the sensitive issues classes. Any parent who wishes to withdraw their child is asked to meet with the principal to discuss how the child's understanding of the topics will be facilitated. The withdrawal will be noted in the child's file. It is the parent's responsibility to inform the child of the withdrawal.

The school cannot accept responsibility for indirect RSE related information delivered outside the classroom.

Pupil Voice

In our school the voice of our pupils is acknowledged, valued, and respected. Children are given opportunities in the Senior Classes to reflect and feedback on SPHE/RSE provision. This information will be used to inform school improvement in relation to future RSE provision.

Confidentiality

RWCNS follows the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2023. If a child is withdrawn from specific RSE lessons, the school cannot guarantee that the withdrawn child will not hear the information from another source.

Parents are invited to share any changes in circumstances with the school as necessary e.g. changes in family structures etc. For the welfare of some children, this information may be important for a teacher to know prior to engaging in specific topics on family/relationships etc.

Provision of Ongoing Support

If a teacher has any concern in relation to the teaching of specific content, the teacher can consult with the School Principal. The teachers' right to opt out will be honoured which will not affect the teaching of the subject.

RWCNS ensures the provision of ongoing support by the following:

- encouraging teachers to attend RSE CPD
 - utilising staff meetings as a platform for discussion and development of RSE
 - seeking the support from an Oide Advisor
 - creating a mentor system amongst staff to support the teaching of RSE
 - budgeting for the updating and development of RSE materials
 - reviewing RSE policy on a regular basis
 - ensuring special education teachers have adequate training opportunities
 - staff will reflect on information gathered from pupil focus groups.
- This will be used to inform future developments regarding RSE.
- signposting staff to resources available from PDST and other sources

Ratification and Review Procedure

RWCNS will review this policy 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.

Ratification.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Raheen Wood Community National School on 25/06/2024 and will be reviewed in 2027.

Signed: Pearse O' Shiel
Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: 25/06/2024

Attached :

Pg 16: Appendix One - Sensitive topic grid.

Pg 17: Appendix Two - Sample parent letter.

Class	Strand /strand Unit	Content Objectives <i>Consult curriculum for complete objectives in <u>Growing and changing</u> and <u>Taking care of my body</u></i>	Language	Pages in RSE Resource Materials Book	Pages in Walk Tall	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 breastfeeding penis vulva	New Life p68 My Body p147 Caring for new life p137 At the beach or swimming pool p.153	Our Amazing Bodies p94 (Senior Infants book)	<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 vulva vagina womb breastfeeding urethra	The Wonder of new life p59 /151 How my body works p67/ 161 Growing means changing p77/171 A Visit to the Doctor p.164	Our Amazing Bodies p37 (2 nd class book)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Picture books of going to the doctors Tom's Power Flower 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"> Recognise 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 menstruation	Preparing for new life p69 The wonder of new life p169 As I grow and change p93 Growing and changing p195	As I grow I change p175 (3 rd class book) Changing and Growing p140 (4 th class book) The Wonder of New Life p.150	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 <u>Busy Bodies language</u> semen sexual intercourse	My body grows and changes p81 The wonder of new life p92 Caring for new life p103 Different kinds of love p141	My Amazing body p345 (5 th class book) Creation p121 (6 th class book)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Busy Bodies Power points recap Question Box Puberty Quiz



Dear Parent/Guardian,

Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is a very important element of the school curriculum. SPHE covers a wide range of topics such as self-identity, making decisions, citizenship and relationships, which equip children with many of the skills and knowledge needed in today's world. Relationship and Sexuality Education is one small element of the SPHE curriculum.

The Relationship and Sexuality element of the programme (RSE) includes the learning, understanding and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, sexual identity and intimacy.

The main aims of the RSE programme are:

- To enhance the personal development, wellbeing and self-esteem of each child
- To enable each child to gain an understanding of and respect for human love, reproduction and sexual activity in a sensitive and measured way
- To enable the child to develop healthy friendships and relationships
- To develop and promote a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life.
- 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).

Within this content, there are a number of sensitive issues such as conception and reproduction. Our school policy outlines that these issues will primarily be taught in May and June and we are now advising parents in advance that this will take place in the coming weeks. We encourage you to talk to your child about what they will learn through RSE in a mature and respectful way.

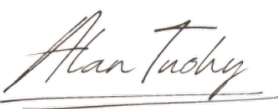
The following guidelines have been put in place to support teaching and learning. These are taken from our RSE policy. Please read through the guidelines and do not hesitate to contact me should you have any queries or comments.

- The sections within the RSE programme which have been identified as sensitive issues will be taught in May and June of alternate years.
- The programme is taught within the ethos of the school and contemporary issues/topics are dealt with by the teacher at a level appropriate to the age and stage of development of pupils and within a moral framework.

- Relationships and Sexuality Education is an on-going process throughout life. A child's first experience of love and intimacy and of relationships takes place in the family. Parents and the family are acknowledged as the primary educators of their children. We work in a supportive role with the parents, by complementing their role with a school-based programme in RSE.
- All the content objectives of the RSE Programme will be covered by the time children leave Class 6.
- Parents will be informed by letter two weeks prior to the teaching of sensitive issues. This will allow time for parents to discuss topics with the child and meet the teacher if required.
- Parents are encouraged to discuss these topics with their children beforehand. Parents are advised to inform childminders etc. that the sensitive topics are going to be discussed.
- Questions arising from curriculum content will be addressed by the teacher in a sensible, sensitive and age-appropriate manner.
- Questions arising outside of the curriculum will be referred back to the parent(s). Support is offered to the parent to discuss questions outside the curriculum in the form of HSE information to assist a parent to inform their child in an accurate and suitable way.
- In RSE lessons, teachers do not cover topics such as orgasm, contraception and same sex relationships. Children who ask questions in class on content outside the designated curriculum are encouraged to discuss the issue with their parents.
- Curriculum books and resource materials are available in the school and parents are welcome to view them if desired.
- The Class Teacher will be available to support parents during this time.
- The school has no responsibility for any information which the pupil may receive outside the direct teaching of the RSE lessons.

We are very aware of the importance and sensitivity of teaching the RSE programme to our pupils and we thank you for your ongoing support in ensuring your child will have received a balanced education which will prepare them not only for secondary school, but for life.

Is mise le meas,

Signed: 
Principal Teacher

Date: _____