



Policy: RSE

Relationships and Sexuality Education

Ratified: 8th December 2020

St. Francis Junior School is an inclusive school under the patronage of the Catholic Church and is committed to the education and development of each pupil. We welcome pupils of all denominations and from every culture and social background. We strive to foster each child's physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual development. We recognise that every child has a right to equal opportunity in education and have special concern for children in difficult circumstances and with special needs. We promote self-worth, love of learning, personal responsibility and the belief that we can make our world a better place.

School Philosophy

The whole school community of St. Francis Junior School recognise that SPHE is intrinsic to the teaching and learning that occurs both formally and informally in school and in the classroom. Through our SPHE programme and subsequently through RSE, 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 also 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 the wider community. Our school values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. Our ethos means that we value respect, tolerance and openness through the lived experience of the children and school community. 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. SPHE and RSE are key components in supporting our school and children to develop into healthy young adults.

Relationship of RSE to SPHE

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) 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:

- Is a lifelong process and consequently RSE is a continual process throughout primary school and is not confined to once off inputs or lessons
- Is a shared responsibility between family, school, health professionals and the community
- RSE education should include an input from all, and collaboration can be fostered through the teaching and delivery of materials
- Is a generic approach. It is not so much about the specific content of RSE but rather the relationship with a child's skills, attitudes, values and understanding relevant to a range of social, personal and health issues
- Is based on the needs of the child, therefore RSE education should prioritise the needs of the child and his/her environment, with appropriate adaptations made within the curriculum to suit individual requirements and individual school situations
- Is spiral in nature. RSE is revisited at different stages throughout the child's time in school, this will provide opportunities to consolidate and build on previous learning. This allows for issues and topics to be explored and treated in a manner appropriate to the children's needs, abilities and levels of maturity.

- Engages children to be involved in activity based learning. RSE should provide a range of learning opportunities that include working together, learning about one's own feelings and those of others, developing a sense of empathy and experiencing and supporting healthy relationships.

Through SPHE and RSE, members of the school community should be enabled to enhance their self-esteem and wellbeing through;

- A sense of identity
- A sense of purpose
- A sense of belonging
- A sense of security
- A sense of competence.

The school has a responsibility to ensure that its curriculum is free of bias and that issues of inequality in any form are addressed and dealt with (SPHE Teacher guidelines, p25). In learning about cultures and traditions of others, children can develop a sense of respect for difference and appreciate the contribution that such has to offer. It will encourage children to be inclusive with each other, challenge prejudice and learn how to live in an intercultural society.

Current Provision included in the school curriculum is:

- SPHE lessons (provided through discrete curricular time and integration)
- The teaching of the 'Stay Safe Programme' in Senior Infants / 1st class / 2nd class
- Use of RSE manuals
- Walk Tall programme
- Webwise online resources www.webwise.ie
- Weaving Wellbeing programme (Second Class)
- Religious Education taught through the Alive O programme/ Grow in Love

Aims of our RSE Programme

- 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.

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
- Develop strategies to make decisions, solve problems and implement actions in various personal, social and health contexts
- 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

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 Safeguarding Statement
- Substance Use Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy.

Parental Involvement

- Parents will be informed that the school fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE programme including sensitive aspects of the programme at enrolment
- Parents will be informed by letter in advance of the sensitive areas of the RSE programme being taught
- The letter will be issued in advance, giving parents an opportunity to meet with relevant class teachers 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 children for the information they will acquire around the sensitive areas and discuss areas covered in RSE/SPHE
- 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
- Following discussion with Principal and Class Teacher, if a parent wishes to withdraw their child from the sensitive lessons it should be given in writing stating their reasons for doing so and this will be centrally filed

Organisation and Curriculum Planning

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

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|--|
| Myself |
| Growing and Changing Taking care of my body |

The RSE programme is divided into two 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**.

Topics covered from Junior Infants to Second class include:

- Keeping safe
- **Bodily changes from birth (birth-9)**
- Making age-appropriate choices
- Appreciating the variety of family types and the variety of family life that exists in our school and community
- 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 (Junior/ Senior Infants)**
- **Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions (1st/2nd)**

Approaches & Methodologies

When implementing the programme, staff at St. Francis Junior 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 2nd 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
- circle time

Teachers will use assessment and professional judgment to differentiate the programme and content to suit the needs of the class.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs

Adaptions to the way in which the content is delivered will be made for children with Special Educational Needs. Consultation with parents/ guardians in advance and anticipation of the children's needs will be central to ensuring 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.

Assessment

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.

Confidentiality

- The school follows Children 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, 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 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
- Picture books across the 9 grounds of equality

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 plan was ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting.

Ratification

The Board of Management of St. Francis Junior School ratified this policy statement on

Chairperson

Principal