

**St. Colmcille's**  
**Senior National School**



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**Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy**

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## St. Colmcille's Senior National School – R.S.E. Policy

### **Introduction**

St Colmcille's Senior National School is a co-ed mainstream primary school catering for pupils from third to sixth classes. The school is a Catholic Primary School under the patronage of the Diocese of Meath.

In our school we 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.

### **Development of this Policy**

This version of St. Colmcille's RSE policy was developed in November 2019 and will be reviewed annually in consultation with staff, parents and the Board of Management of the school.

### **Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education**

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.

### **Relationship of RSE to Social, Personal and Health Education**

- 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.
- 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, (meeting with parents in Feb) 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

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- 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 provisions included in the School Curriculum are:**

- SPHE lessons (provided through discrete curricular time and integration)
- Use of the RSE Manuals and Busy Bodies resources
- Stay Safe Programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Religious Education
- Adapted resources for SEN

### **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.

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### **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.

In St. Colmcille's 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 Use Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy

### **Management and Organisation of the R.S.E Programme in our school**

#### **Parental Involvement:**

Parents/guardians and the family are acknowledged as the primary educators of their children. We work in a supportive role with the parents of our school, by complementing their role with a school based programme in R.S.E.

Parents/guardians will be informed by letter and invited to a meeting in advance of formal lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme being taught. This gives parents/guardians

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the opportunity to inform themselves of the programme content and to prepare their children for the information they will acquire around the sensitive areas and discuss areas covered in RSE.

### **Withdrawal from RSE:**

Since RSE is an obligatory requirement of the Department of Education and Science, it should be inclusive. St. Colmcille's National School actively promotes the implementation of RSE and strongly discourages withdrawal. The school will, however, take account of parental concerns and a parent's right to withdraw a pupil from themes pertaining to sensitive issues 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 Principal in writing of their decision to withdraw the child from the sensitive issues classes. Any parent who wishes to withdraw their child should make arrangements for the supervision of the child while the RSE class is in progress. The school can take no responsibility for any information which the pupil may receive outside the direct teaching of the RSE lessons.

### **Rights and responsibilities of teachers:**

- The approach to the teaching of RSE will be kept as normal as possible and will usually be delivered within the child's class by the class teacher.
- A teachers' right to opt out from teaching the sensitive issues will be honoured. Provision will then be made for these issues to be taught by:
  1. Another staff member
  2. Trained outside Personnel: All information delivered will be informed by the content objectives of the SPHE Curriculum. (See SPHE Curriculum statement p. 32.) We will require the said Personnel to keep within the school guidelines, and to furnish the school with an outline of the talk beforehand.

Class teacher will be present when this takes place.

### **Children with Special Needs:**

Children with special needs will receive the same content objectives as other children, but the teacher may have to differentiate the information and use more active learning methodology i.e. make it more child specific. Where required, the Special Education teachers will assist to achieve this.

### **Questions:**

Questions arising from curriculum content will be addressed by the teacher or by the visitor in a sensible, sensitive and 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 that that question/issue is not on the programme and they will be referred back to the

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parent(s). Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents themselves if they feel that a question is very inappropriate.

### **Confidentiality and Child Protection:**

Where there is disclosure of abuse by a child, the school will follow the Department of Education and Science Child Protection Guidelines and guidelines as set out in 'Children First'.

### **Organisation and Curriculum Planning:**

RSE forms part of the national curriculum for SPHE by NCCA and sensitive lessons will be taught under the following strands and strand units of the SPHE curriculum:

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

The 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**.

#### Topics from 3rd to 6th include:

- Healthy eating, personal hygiene and exercise
- Keeping safe
- Expressing feelings
- Appreciating the variety of family types within our school and community and how these family relationships shape us
- Making healthy and responsible decisions
- Forming friendships
- **Bodily changes**
- **Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (3rd, 4th class)**
- **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 (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class)**

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The lessons for these sensitive topics will be taken from the relevant Relationships & Sexuality Books published by The Department of Education and taught as follows:

Third Class will cover Theme 6: Preparing for New Life &  
Theme 8: As I grow and Change

Fourth Class will cover Theme 6: The Wonder of New Life &  
Theme 8: Growing and Changing.

Fifth class will cover Theme 6: My Body Grows and Changes &  
Theme 7: The Wonder of New Life

Sixth Class will cover Theme 2: Different kinds of Love,  
Theme 6: Growing & Changing &  
Theme 7: Relationships & New life

- BusyBodies (H.S.E) Health Promotion Videos 1 and 2 will be **shown to pupils of 4<sup>th</sup> Classes with worksheets and discussions to support them.**
- BusyBodies (H.S.E) Health Promotion Videos 1 – 5 will be **shown to pupils of 6<sup>th</sup> Classes with worksheets and discussions to support them.**

### **Resources**

Resource Material for Relationships and Sexuality Education, DES.  
The Stay Safe programme.  
The Walk Tall Programme.  
BusyBodies (H.S.E) Health Promotion Materials

All resources are available for parents/guardians to view if they so request prior to the delivery of the lesson.

**This policy was completed by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ and will be reviewed annually.**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal/Secretary)