



## RSE POLICY

### Relationships & Sexuality Education

#### Introduction

The Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy details how RSE is taught at St. Sylvester's Infant School, including the sensitive aspects of the programme. It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within the Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum, both formally and informally. RSE is an integral part of the SPHE curriculum and must be taught in this context. It aims to provide opportunities for children and young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them to think and act in a moral, caring, and responsible way. This policy was revised in 2014, and again in 2021.

#### School Philosophy/Ethos

St. Sylvester's Infant school is a mixed Catholic school. Our mission is to provide an environment and experience that nurtures our pupils spiritually, physically, mentally, morally, and socially. Our school aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the pupils, including their relationship with God, with other people and with the environment. We value the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring community that promotes respect, tolerance, and openness through the lived experience of the children and the school community.

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. SPHE and RSE are key components in supporting our school and children to develop into healthy young adults. 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

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.

## Relationship of RSE to SPHE

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. RSE lessons take place within the context of the SPHE programme.

## School Provision

The SPHE curriculum is presented in three strands:

- Myself
- Myself & Others
- Myself & the Wider World

All the strands are taught over a two-year cycle.

A number of programmes are used to support the teaching of SPHE, both formally and informally. These include:

- SPHE lessons (provided through discrete curricular time and integration)
- RSE Education: DES Resource manual for Junior & Senior Infants
- Stay Safe Programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Grow in Love (Religious Education)

These programmes have been in use in our school for several years.

RSE lessons take place in the strand *Myself*, under the strand units *Growing and Changing* and *Taking Care of my Body*.

Topics covered as part of the RSE programme in Junior & Senior infants and first class: Sensitive/specific content are denoted in **bold**.

**SPHE is taught over a two year period in Junior and Senior Infants and again in First Class. The RSE body parts lesson is taught in Senior Infants in our school and revisited in the senior cycle in Pope John Pauls.**

- Keeping safe
- **Bodily changes from birth**
- 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 body parts of the male/female body using appropriate anatomical terms**

## Aims of the RSE Programme

The home is the natural environment in which RSE should take place. The school has a role to play in supporting and complementing the work of the parents.

Our aims are:

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and wellbeing of the child
- To help pupils understand and develop friendships and relationships
- To foster, nourish and expand social skills to develop positive social interactions with peers
- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem, and well-being of the child
- To help foster an understanding of and a healthy attitude to human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework
- To develop and promote in the child a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life
- To provide opportunities for pupils to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that helps them to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way

### **Policies which support SPHE & RSE**

- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Substance Use Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Ethos Policy
- Religious Education Policy
- Parents as Partners Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- Internet and Digital Learning Acceptable Use Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Intimate Care Policy
- SNA policy

### **Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE at St. Sylvester's I.S.**

#### **Teaching the RSE Programme**

Each teacher will be responsible for the delivery of the programme to his /her own class.

#### **Methodologies**

When implementing the RSE programme, staff at St. Sylvester's Infant 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 teaching methods will be child-centred and based on sound educational principles as applied in all areas of the curriculum. A variety of methodologies will be used when teaching R.S.E., such as classroom discussion, circle time, drama and role play, using stories, songs and poetry.

#### **Informing and Involving Parents**

A summary of the R.S.E Programme is brought to the attention of the parents at the September Group Parent Teacher meetings.

A copy of this policy is available on the school website <https://stsylvestersinfantschool.com>

Parents will be informed **one week** in advance via email of the formal lessons on the sensitive areas of the programme **sent from Aladdin**.

Anatomically correct body part names (penis, vulva, breasts) are introduced during the Stay Safe Programme, taught in the second term of Junior Infants. The lesson occurs during Topic 3 which explores *Touches*. Parents will be informed in advance of the commencement of the Stay Safe Programme (See Appendix 1).

Anatomically correct body part names (penis, vulva, breasts) are revised in Senior Infants, as part of the RSE Programme. They are taught as part of the strand unit *Taking Care of my Body* and this lesson is taught in September. Parents will be informed in advance of the formal lesson on the sensitive areas of the programme via email (See Appendix 2).

The Stay Safe Programme is taught in the second term of First Class. During Topic 3, *Touches*, children learn anatomically correct body part names including penis, vulva, breasts. Parents will be informed in advance of the commencement of the Stay Safe Programme (See Appendix 1).

### **Withdrawal of pupils from the RSE Body Parts lesson**

Parents are informed in advance of lessons on the sensitive aspects of the RSE programme, which gives them the opportunity to inform themselves of the programme content and the opportunity to discuss the content with the class teacher or principal if they have any concerns. The school acknowledges that parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children about growing and changing. Following discussion with the class teacher or principal, if a parent wishes to withdraw their child from the sensitive lessons it should be given in writing stating their reasons for doing so. Parents may make arrangements to bring their child to school at 10am on the morning that the lesson is being taught. However, the school encourages parents to allow their child to participate in the lesson so that the child may learn the correct vocabulary for certain body parts akin to their peers, which will be used by the teachers following this lesson.

### **Pupils with Special Educational Needs**

Children with Special Educational Needs may need more help than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up. They may also need more guidance both to help them distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and to warn and prepare them to recognise abuse by others. If necessary, adaptations 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.

### **Language**

The SPHE curriculum provides a context in which children are given opportunities to develop and enhance their language skills and to increase their vocabulary related to SPHE. 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 can hurt, diminish and demean. Children need to recognise and become sensitive to the ways in which they themselves use language in their relationship and their everyday

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

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

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

### **Answering questions**

Teachers will aim to create an atmosphere where children feel comfortable to ask important questions. The relationship fostered in RSE lessons is open, controlled and safe for all pupils. While the teacher may not be able to answer all questions, he/she will not invalidate questions, but will use limits. The teacher will remind the class that not all questions asked during these lessons may be answered. Questions arising from lesson content will be answered in an age-appropriate manner. Suggested answers from the teacher to questions unsuitable for infant/first class lesson may include:

“That’s something you’ll learn about as you get older”

“Perhaps you could talk to your mum or dad (or appropriate guardian) about that”.

“I can’t answer that now because that is not what we are discussing at the moment”.

### **Confidentiality**

At the beginning of the school year, the teacher will emphasise to the class the importance of confidentiality during R.S.E. lessons. This point will be returned to during the year, and particularly before the lesson regarding body parts. The privacy of each individual child will be respected with sensitivity and care.

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 during these lessons.

### **Child Protection**

The school follows *Children First Guidelines 2017* and *The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017*.

In cases of disclosure the Designated Liaison Person, will follow the *Child Protection Procedures 2017*.

### **Assessment**

Assessment is essential in RSE to enable the teacher to modify curriculum content according to the needs of the child and so maximise the learning potential of each individual.

The teacher may use

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

## **Provision for Ongoing Support, Development and Review**

- All teachers are qualified to teach the SPHE Curriculum
- Parents are made aware of and offered opportunity for input into policy

- Relevant RSE resources are available in the school and if the need arises, others are purchased
- Teachers will be encouraged to attend CPD in RSE
- Staff meetings and group planning meetings are utilised as a platform for discussion and development of RSE materials
- Support is available from a PDST Advisor
- Promotion and communication of resources available from [www.pdst.ie](http://www.pdst.ie).
- A review of this policy and programme will take place on a regular basis. Any amendments necessary as a result of such review will be undertaken

## **Ratification and Review**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 12th October 2021. This policy will be reviewed in June 2023.

The Board of Management reserves the right to add to or amend this policy from time to time as deemed necessary. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made.

Signed:



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Mr M. McKenna  
Chairperson  
Board of Management

Date: 12th October 2021



## Stay Safe Programme

Dear Parents/Guardians

We are planning to teach a personal safety programme called Stay Safe over the next few weeks.

The aim of the programme is to teach the children personal safety skills so they can look after themselves in situations which could be upsetting or dangerous. It deals initially with common situations which most children will experience at some stage or other e.g. getting lost or being bullied.

The programme also teaches children the safety skills necessary to protect themselves from physical or sexual abuse and emphasises the importance of telling a trusted adult about any problems they have. This includes the teaching of anatomically correct body part names, including penis, vulva, and breasts.

The Stay Safe Programme is part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum which all primary schools are required to implement. Co-operation between parents and teachers is essential to the success of the programme. It is important that parents are aware of the content of the Stay Safe lessons and are able to discuss the lessons with their children. Your child will bring home a Stay Safe Booklet which will inform you on the topics being covered in class and how you can reinforce the message at home. When you have had time to discuss and sign each worksheet, please return the booklet to school so it is ready for the next lesson.

You can familiarise yourself with the content of the Stay Safe lessons at <http://www.staysafe.ie/parents.htm>

Please contact the school if you wish to discuss the programme further.

Thank you for your co-operation

*S. Dunne*

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Mrs. S. Dunne,  
Principal



## ST. SYLVESTER'S INFANT SCHOOL

### Relationships & Sexuality Education Lesson

Dear Parents/Guardians,

We wish to inform you that your child will soon take part in a RSE (Relationships and Sexuality Education) lesson regarding the body parts. The aim of this lesson is to help children learn about their bodies in a child friendly, age-appropriate manner and in this context to learn the correct names for all parts of the body. Children are usually given “baby” words for their private parts, or they may have learned “slang” terms, but it is recommended that they are given the correct names, as naturally as possible and without undue emphasis or fuss.

This lesson will involve reading and discussing the story “The Big Red Bath”. The teacher will talk about the picture of the children in the bath and ask questions similar to those below:

- What do you think is happening in the picture?
- Do you think they are having fun?
- Why do you think this?
- Do you like having baths?
- What do you need when you're having a bath? Do you bring toys?
- How do you dry yourself?
- What parts of their bodies can you see?
- What parts can you not see?

In accordance with the school R.S.E. Policy and R.S.E. Guidelines, the parts the children cannot see will be taught which include tummy, blood, bones, heart and so forth, as well as the external parts of the male and female body, i.e. penis, testicles, vulva, breasts. These terms will be the ones used in school from then on.

**This lesson will take place on \_\_\_\_\_**

If you wish to withdraw your child from this lesson, please inform the class teacher and bring your child to school at 10am. Children arriving at 10am will not be marked absent.