



Clocha Rince NS

Relationships

and

Sexuality Education Policy

& Guidance Notes for Parents and Teachers

A. Introduction

This policy was remitted to parents in draft form and their input, queries and comments were requested via an online survey which was posted on the school website.

The policy was further developed by staff at a staff meeting in November and was subsequently brought to the Board of Management for further development and ratification.

The formulation of this policy was also informed by the 'RSE Guidelines of the Department of Education', the 'RSE Guidelines; A Resource for Teachers and Boards of Management' (Veritas) and by the 'Resource Pack for RSE for Primary Teachers' (PCSP now known as the PDST)

This policy was ratified by the Board at a meeting on 12th December 2013.

B. Ethos & Practice

Clocha Rince NS is a Catholic school.

In our school we aim to provide opportunities for children to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

We recognise parents as the primary educators of their child and aim to work together with them throughout the RSE programme.

'Our curriculum aims to enable each child;

- To live a full life as a child and to realise his or her potential as a unique individual.
- To develop as a social being, through living and co-operating with others and so contribute to the good of society.
- To prepare for further education and life-long learning" (Clocha Rince NS Mission Statement)

'The policies, practices and attitudes of the school are inspired by Gospel values' (Clocha Rince NS Mission Statement)

'Everyone who is involved in the task of Relationships and Sexuality Education in a Catholic school should be guided by a number of basic principles.

1. The school should be seeking to communicate the Christian vision of human life and human relationships.
2. The school must recognise that, in this area above all, its role is subsidiary to that of parents.'
3. The Catholic school, in the formation of its policy, should reflect Catholic moral teaching on sexual matters.
4. The dignity, privacy and modesty of each individual child must be respected.'

(Relationships and Sexuality Education in Catholic Schools – A Resource for Teachers and Board of Management)

C. Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

What is RSE?

RSE is part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). RSE provides children with structured opportunities to develop the knowledge, attitudes, values, beliefs and practical skills necessary to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships as children and, subsequently, as adults.

At primary school level RSE aims to help children learn, at home, and at school, about their own moral and physical development and about their friendships and relationships with others,

This work will be based on:

- ◆ *Communication skills*
- ◆ *A good self-image*
- ◆ *Confidence and self-esteem*
- ◆ *Respect for themselves and others*
- ◆ *Appropriate information*

RSE aims to help children think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

D. Relationship of RSE to Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE):

RSE 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 relationships and human sexuality through processes that will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework.

In particular, it addresses relationships and the meaning of human sexuality, growth and development, relevant personal and social skills and aspects of parenting.

E. What the School Provides:

The school currently provides:

- ◆ *Code of Behaviour & Discipline Policy*
- ◆ *Anti- Bullying Policy and the 'Bully Off' Programme*
- ◆ *The "Alive O" series*
- ◆ *The Stay Safe programme*

- ◆ *Workshop on Growing Up and Sexuality (6th Class)*
- ◆ *Department RSE Guidelines*

F. The Aims of RSE are to:

- ◆ *Enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child*
- ◆ *Help the child to develop healthy friendships and relationships*
- ◆ *Foster and understanding of, and a respect for, human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction (6th class)*
- ◆ *Develop and promote in the child a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life*
- ◆ *Enable the child to be comfortable with the sexuality of self and others while growing and developing (3rd - 6th class)*
- ◆ *Help children learn how to communicate, make decisions and express feelings*
- ◆ *Gain an understanding of the influences of peer groups and culture upon his/her behaviour.*

Going Forward Together

Topics for pupils from Junior Infants to Second Class will include:

- ◆ *expressing opinions and listening to the opinion of others*
- ◆ *the different changes taking place in the children's bodies as they grow and develop*
- ◆ *caring for themselves regarding hygiene, exercise and sleep*
- ◆ *keeping safe, knowing what to do if they get lost*
- ◆ *recognising and expressing feelings like happiness and sadness*
- ◆ *appreciating and understanding family life*
- ◆ *making and having friends*
- ◆ *coping with "falling out " with friends*
- ◆ *making responsible choices appropriate to their age*

G o i n g f o r w a r d t o g e t h e r

Topics for pupils from third to sixth classes will include:

- ◆ caring for themselves regarding hygiene, exercise and sleep
- keeping themselves safe
- changes in their bodies as they mature and develop
- how babies are conceived and born (6th class programme)
- their feelings and the appropriate expression of these feelings
- extended family relationships
- making healthy and responsible decisions
- the nature of friendship
- handling conflict in friendships
- evaluating the portrayal of relationships and sexuality in the media.

Ratification & Review

This policy was ratified at a meeting of the Board of Management on 12.12.13.
It will be reviewed during the 2014/2015 school year.

Guidelines for Teachers

1. Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School

The RSE programme is taught every second year in Clocha Rince NS. The 'Puberty & New Life' lessons are taught to 6th Class every year in the last term. The content of the RSE programme will be taught in both a structured and integrated manner. Since this will be done in partnership with parents/guardians, who are the primary educators in all matters, they are strongly encouraged to consult with the class teacher at the beginning of each year regarding areas of concern. If desired, withdrawal from specific parts of the programme can be arranged in a confidential and sensitive way. Such a decision to accommodate withdrawal will be taken in the context of the legal obligation on the school to ensure the pupil accesses all areas of the school curriculum.

Before starting any programme of SPHE with a new class, the teacher is advised to help the class draw up a list of agreed rules of behaviour, sometimes called a Class Contract. This may need to be reviewed prior to teaching some of the lessons such as the 'Puberty & New Life Lessons'

The school may invite qualified visiting speakers to work with pupils. These speakers will work within the confines of the school policy and parents/guardians will be notified in advance of their attendance.

Since the school is a Catholic school the teaching will be in accordance with the moral teaching of the Catholic Church.

Puberty & New Life – 6th Class

Under the Strand Unit 'Taking Care of My Body' (Pg. 56 in SPHE Curriculum Document) pupils in 5th/6th Class are expected to be able to 'identify and discuss the physical and other changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty and understand that these take place at different rates for everyone'

Under the Strand Unit 'Growing and Changing' (Pg. 58 in the SPHE Curriculum Document) pupils in 5th/6th Class are expected to be able to understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of loving committed relationships'.

The 'Puberty & New Life Lessons' on the Sexuality Strand of RSE will take place in the last term of 6th class. A letter will be remitted to all families with a copy of the material to be covered, Families will be asked to work in partnership with the school in delivering the content.

The 6th class will be segregated into a single sex groups for the workshop on 'Growing up and Sexuality' to provide more open learning opportunities and to limit self-consciousness. A male teacher will work with the 6th class boys and a female teacher will work with the 6th class girls.

Naming the Private Parts of the Body

Under the Strand Unit 'Taking Care of My Body' (Pg.17 in the SPHE Curriculum Document) pupils in Senior Infants are expected to be able to 'name the parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms'. Penis and Vagina are the appropriate words to give

pupils for the parts of their bodies. Teacher should explain that we use the term private parts because we usually keep these parts of the body covered up.

In the event that Junior and Senior Infants are in the same classroom, these lessons may be taught to both classes, but only in the last term of the school year.

Two possible methodologies are

1. The lesson 'My body' on Pg. 148 of the Junior and Senior Infants RSE Resource Materials.

2. Use an image of a boy or girl on a beach in swimwear as a prompt to ask questions such as

'What are the children doing?'

'What are they wearing?'

'What parts of the body can you see?'

'What parts of the body can you not see?'

This exercise can be used to generate a variety of vocabulary for parts of the body including genitals.

Some feedback we received from parents in this regard which will inform lesson planning included;

"I believe children should know the appropriate name for their private parts as soon as they start to ask questions about it or them! I think it's important for children to know the correct terminology and then for parents to choose to either use these words or pet words i.e. penis (Willy) Breasts (Boobs). When children have been exposed to the correct terminology it is in my opinion that they become more mature and capable of both listening and talking about these body parts without "ignorance" or fear!" **(Parental Feedback from online Survey of Parents October 2013)**

"Yes, I think it is very important that children are taught the correct terminology for the private parts of the body and from an early age. When children start school they are exposed to many new experiences, one of which may be the use of slang words for their private parts (this especially may be the case when some of their peers have older siblings) Children need to be educated in this area from an early age in the appropriate manner – this should eliminate any confusion for them and also possibly get over the use of 'dirty' words for these private parts of the body" **(Parental Feedback from online Survey of Parents October 2013)**

"Using the correct terms for private body parts from an early age will teach the child that these are not parts of the body to be embarrassed about nor are they parts that are a taboo subject. Apart from making sex education a little easier when the child is older by not having to refer to private parts by names that they are unfamiliar with it would hopefully help the child to understand exactly what are their private parts, allowing them to discuss any issues with the appropriate people and so helping them to stay safe." **(Parental Feedback from online Survey of Parents October 2013)**

The Baby Growing in the Womb

Under the Strand Unit 'Growing and Changing' (Pg41 in the SPHE Curriculum Document) pupils in 3rd/4th class are expected to be able to discuss the stages and sequences of the development of the human baby from conception to birth.

Methodology:

'Preparing for New Life' - Pg. 69 in 3rd and 4th Class RSE Resource Materials'.

'The Wonder of New Life' on Pg. 169 of 3rd & 4th Class RSE Resource Materials using Resource Cards on Pg. 173 – 178 of RSE Resource Materials.

In the event that a pupil asks how the baby got into the womb, the teacher can respond by saying that the baby grew from a little seed and/or by saying that we will get to that part of the story when they are in 6th class.

How should a teacher respond to a query regarding content that is not covered in the RSE Primary programme?

Topics such as homosexuality, contraception, and abortion are not in the primary RSE/SPHE programme. A teacher may respond in one of two ways to a query from a child on such a topic;

1. "We are not going to talk about that now. That is something that you will learn about later from your parents and in secondary school"
2. Partial answer in an age appropriate way. An example of this may be on the topic of 'What is homosexuality?'; a teacher may respond that it is when a man loves a man or a woman loves a woman in the same way as a man can love a woman.

However, the topics listed above should never form the content of any RSE lesson outside the Reproduction Lessons in the last term with 6th class.

2. RSE for Pupils with Learning Disabilities and/or pupils with Autism

Teachers will consult the 'NCCA Guidelines for Students with General Learning Disabilities' for the SPHE Guidelines.

A structured SPHE/RSE programme will assist all pupils develop

- Positive Self esteem
- Social & Communication Skills
- Appropriate Expression of Feelings
- Safety & Protection Skills
- An understanding of their body and the changes that take place at puberty.

'When planning a RSE programme, it should be remembered that the extent to which the content is treated will be dependent on the emotional and intellectual maturity of the children. Thus a degree of flexibility is advisable. Some adaptations of the curriculum guidelines may be required where it is considered that pupils are not emotionally ready to deal with the sensitive issues such as conception, intercourse and physical changes at puberty. However it is envisaged that all of these sensitive areas will be dealt with before the end of a child's primary schooling.'

The school recognises that with the delivery of these lessons to pupils with Autism;

- Delivery should be needs led, meaning that the teacher should try to establish what the needs of the student are and that this will be agreed with the parents as part of the formulation of the Individual Education plan for that pupil.
- Close and on-going co-operation with parents is advisable.
- The development of interpersonal skills and knowledge about one's body is dependent on the development of communication and language skills. This is the fundamental skill that students need in order to describe themselves, to relate to their peers, and to interact with the outside world.
- Inappropriate behaviour is not necessarily sexual but may stem from the fact that the child is stressed, bored, lonely or lacks access to other sensory experience. This should be borne in mind when helping a pupil to understand the boundaries between public and private behaviour.