



Our Lady's Grove Primary School

Relationships and Sexual Education Policy

Introduction

Our Relationships and Sexuality Education policy has been drawn up by a committee including BOM/teachers and parents. It is now being reviewed (April 2023). This policy is an agreed approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). Our RSE policy informs teachers and parents as to the content and the approach in the delivery of the RSE programme within Social, Personal, and Health Education curriculum both formally and informally.

Mission Statement

Our Lady's Grove Primary School is a Catholic community rooted in the educational philosophy of St. Claudine Thévenet. In Our Lady's Grove we strive to create a happy, safe, loving, caring and nurturing environment conducive to the attainment of the educational, creative, moral and spiritual potential of each child, enabling them to participate as responsible citizens at home, in school and within the school community at present, and ultimately within our society.

School Ethos

Our Lady's Grove is a Catholic Primary School. Religious Education, under the Patron's Programme, includes preparation for the sacraments of First Confession, First Holy Communion and Confirmation, is delivered to the Catholic children in our school. Children of no Faith and other Faiths participate in alternative educational activities during the Patron's Programme.

Our Lady's Grove strives to be a school of educational excellence with a commitment to develop and enrich each child's personality through a child-centred education which promotes inclusion, tolerance, respect, and an openness to the world around us.

- The children experience the love of living life together within our school community
- The children are nurtured so that they develop self-esteem and confidence to reach their full potential
- Our school seeks to promote healthy interpersonal relationships throughout the community with an appreciation and respect of others who are different to ourselves

- The well-being of every child is our priority. Children are supported to face the future with hope and confidence. They are nurtured in a spirit of mutual respect and responsibility for themselves, for others and for the environment
- Close contact between home and school is maintained. Guardians and school staff support one another and collaborate with each other in leading and supporting the children to the fullness of their potential at the different stages of their primary education
- Teaching and learning are characterised by love, patience and understanding, encapsulating the overall development of the children, their individuality and their life circumstances
- In fostering an openness to our world, our teaching and learning encourages the children to build a more sustainable, just and tolerant society

Social, Personal and Health Education

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

Our school values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. In upholding our ethos, we value and promote 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. The SPHE curriculum including the RSE curriculum are key components in supporting our children to become healthy young adults.

Definition of Relationships and Sexual Education (RSE)

RSE is an important part of the education of young people, and schools provide a safe context within which young people can learn about themselves and the wider world. Relationships and Sexuality Education is an integral part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and is 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, and social framework. It addresses the meaning of human sexuality, relationships, growth and development, relevant to personal and social skills.

Relationships and Sexual Education is an integral part of **Social, Personal and Health Education**:

- RSE 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
- 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
- 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

In an ever-changing world, RSE encourages children through consistent messages that are taught in line with SPHE. 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.

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 taught through school atmosphere and culture, integration, and discrete teaching time. Formal RSE lessons and informal RSE messages must be consistent with the whole school approach to SPHE.

SPHE/RSE is:

- **A lifelong process and a continual process** throughout primary school and is not confined to once off inputs or solitary lessons
- **A shared responsibility and collaboration** 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
- A curriculum subject which develops **the child's skills, attitudes, values and understanding** relevant to a range of social, personal and health issues
- **Child-centred and spiral in nature**, taught through **active learning methodologies**
- **Free of bias**

Current Provision included in the Curriculum is:

Strands	Year 1 (odd September)	Year 2 (even September)
Myself	Safety and Protection Growing and Changing Self-Identity Taking Care of my Body	Safety and Protection Growing and Changing Making Decisions
Myself and Others	Myself and my Family	Myself and my Family My Friends and Other People Relating to Others
Myself and the Wider World	Developing Citizenship	Media Education

Resources

- Stay Safe Programme
- Walk Tall Manual
- Weaving Well-being Programme
- PDST website- SPHE/RSE
- Relationships and Sexuality Education Manuals (DES). Each class teacher has a copy of the appropriate manual
- Anatomically correct dolls
- Busy Bodies booklet. This DVD and booklet were developed to support the teaching of the 5th and 6th class component of RSE within the context of SPHE. It is available for download at www.healthpromotion.ie
- Adapted resources for SEN from www.pdst.ie

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

Aims of our RSE Programme

- Enhance the personal development, self-esteem and wellbeing of the child
- Help the child to develop healthy friendships and relationships
- Foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral and social framework
- 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
- 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

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 the members of the school community.

Policies which support SPHE/RSE

- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- GDPR Policy

This policy is cognisant of all aspects of our current Child Protection Policy. The school follows the DES Child Safeguarding guidelines and adheres to Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment; Principal acts as Designated Liaison Person and a member of the Leadership Team acts as Deputy DLP. Where a child protection concern is raised, the procedures outlined in the school's Child Protection Policy will be followed.

Management and Organisation of RSE in our School

The curriculum as developed by NCCA will be followed as published and will be taught from infants to 6th class. All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school, the whole school plan for SPHE and the RSE policy. Each class teacher will teach the content for their class level each year as laid out in the curriculum and utilising the RSE manuals to complement their teaching.

The RSE 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 sensitive / specific content. These are outlined in RSE Overview, (Appendix 1)
Some aspects of RSE will be taught through several discrete lessons, with the remainder being taught in a cross-curricular manner. Teachers will identify the appropriate links with other subject areas to

ensure that children receive a broad-based approach to RSE. Sensitive lessons will be taught throughout the school during Term 2 of the school year.

- If a teacher has concerns about teaching the sensitive elements in RSE they should consult with the principal. Any teacher has the right to opt out of teaching the sensitive elements of RSE. It is the responsibility of the BOM to ensure content is covered by another teacher or an outside speaker.
- Special consideration will be taken to ensure that the needs of children with SEN are met. Considering the pupil's social and emotional development, instruction will be based on individual needs where possible. Parents will be consulted around sensitive issues if deemed necessary
- The Stay Safe programme will be implemented throughout the school during Term 1 of the school year

Parental Involvement

- 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. Going Forward Together (Parents Booklet) states that – “As a parent, you are the first teacher of your child. You hand on values and attitudes to each new generation of children”
- Parents will be informed in advance of the content of the lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme to be taught at their child's class level. Parents will have 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/Guardians are encouraged to engage with all SPHE links provided in Appendix 3
- It should be noted in line with the Education Act 1998, section 30 subsection 2 (e) shall not require any student to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parent of the student or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years. Therefore, parents have the right to withdraw their child out of the sensitive aspects of RSE if they so wish

- In the class situation children will be encouraged to recognise that certain information is for them only and it would be inappropriate to discuss this with younger siblings/children for example
- As RSE is an integral component to SPHE, consent is not required
- Regarding matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom

Approaches and Methodologies

The curriculum will be always taught in a developmentally appropriate manner. The teaching materials and methodologies used will reflect the needs of the children.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories and poems • Classroom discussion • Group work • Games • Art activities • Reflection • Circle time • Describing photographs • Question Box • Visiting speakers • Viewing and discussing videos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role play • Survey of attitudes • Modelling • Writing captions • Projects • Interviews • Analysing and evaluating media • Engagement with restorative practices • Designing advertisements • Ranking statement
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Visiting Speakers

- It is school policy, and considered best practice, that the RSE programme is best discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by the pupils. However, visitors can enhance the quality of the provision when they are used in addition to, not instead of, a planned RSE programme
- Where an outside speaker is used, a teacher will remain in the classroom, as per circular 22/2010. The speaker will work closely with the Principal and class teacher and will be made aware of the school's RSE policy

Differentiation

Teachers use assessment and professional judgement to differentiate the curriculum objectives and content to best suit the needs of all pupils.

Teachers can:

- Ensure that objectives are realistic
- Ensure that learning tasks build upon prior knowledge
- Provide opportunities for interacting with other students
- Organise the learning task into smaller chunks
- Ensure that the language used is pitched at the children's level of understanding.
- Use higher and lower order questioning
- Employing active learning methodologies
- Creating a learning environment through the use of concrete, and where possible, everyday materials
- Displaying word lists and charts with pictures

Dealing with Questions

It is natural that children should wish to ask questions around RSE. All questions answered will reflect the parameters of the curriculum. Questions to the teacher may be oral or written within the group setting and answered within boundaries of the curriculum and school policy. If any questions asked by children are deemed to be inappropriate, the teacher will refer the child to their parents/guardians, or state that this information may be available at a later stage of the curriculum, or in post primary school.

The school cannot guarantee confidentiality if a child asks a question of a personal nature or discloses personal information. Regarding matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom outside of the RSE lesson.

The following considerations will be made when responding to children's questions:

- Awareness of circumstances in which the question has arisen
- Clarification of what information is required
- Determination of whether the question is appropriate or relevant/who it is relevant to
- Provision of an age-appropriate answer
- Deferral of the question to be answered at home or in the future

Simple principles when fostering discussion and questioning:

- No personal questions of the teacher
- The Question Box will be availed of by children in all classes in an age-appropriate form (See appendix 2)
- The teacher will be mindful of their reaction to any questions
- Questions do not have to be answered straight away

During RSE lessons, teachers will aim not to invalidate any questions, but must use limits. **Teachers will only answer questions which come within the scope of the agreed programme for each class level.**

Sample responses:

- I'll do my best to answer your questions, but I may not be able to answer all of them
- That's something you'll learn about as you get older
- Is that something you could talk to your parents / guardians / trusted adults/ family about?
- We agreed in our contract that we wouldn't ask anyone personal questions
- Somebody asked a question and the language they used was slang language, what they meant to ask was....

As mentioned above, a 'question box' will be used as part of a structured RSE lesson. Teachers can follow up on the written questions later, thus allowing time to prepare suitable answers, consult with colleagues, etc. Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents themselves if they feel that a question is very inappropriate or needs to be communicated with home because of other reasons. If issues arise which might be seen to contravene Children First Guidelines, the teacher will notify the Designated Liaison Person in the school.

Language

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. The acquisition of appropriate language in RSE is crucially important to enable children to speak confidently about themselves and their relationships.

Acquiring the appropriate vocabulary related to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, feeling etc. facilitates the child when these issues are discussed in an age-appropriate way. The RSE programme will encourage the use of the formal terms for body parts from the earliest age so that these terms are given status and acceptability. Language reflects values, attitudes, beliefs, prejudices, and principles. It not only helps to express a culture but influences and shapes that culture as well. It is essential that children are enabled to use language in a precise and appropriate manner. The use of slang will be discouraged.

Teachers will consider:

- What language you model in your classroom
- What language you use to promote a positive, inclusive classroom environment for all
- Becoming aware of binary language or language that implies gender stereotyping
- If the correct anatomical terms are used in a consistent way across all class levels
- What strategies you use to tackle derogatory language in your classroom (e.g. when a child misuses the word 'gay' or 'lesbian') how are they corrected
- What strategies you use to teach correct anatomical terms (e.g. when a child misuses the word 'willy' or 'pee-pee") how do you respond

Assessment

Teachers will employ the following assessments 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

Confidentiality

Our Lady's Grove follows the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017.

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

- Opportunities provided by our Education Centre will be brought to the attention of staff members. Teachers will be encouraged to attend CPD in RSE
- Application for in-school support from PDST sought as necessary
- Staff meetings utilised as a platform for discussion and development of RSE materials

Review

Our Lady's Grove 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.

This plan was ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting on 7/11/2023.

Signed: Maureen Feely
Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: Anne Kernan
Principal/Secretary to the BoM

	Strand/Strand Unit	Content Objectives	Language	Resources to use
Jl/SI	Myself: 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 ▪ Name parts of the male and female body using anatomical terms 	womb breastfeeding penis vulva	Anatomically correct dolls Picture books of new baby Visit of baby to class PDST Health and Wellbeing website
1 ST /2 nd	Myself: 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 ▪ 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	Picture books of going to the doctor Tom's Power Flower Book Activities on Life cycles Birth and new life in nature PDST Health and Wellbeing website Question Box
3 rd /4 th	Myself: 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 • 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 all above and umbilical cord changes in puberty uterus <i>menstruation/ovulation*</i> *4 th Class only	Body Systems Picture books on growing and changing PDST Health and Wellbeing website Question Box
5 th /6 th	Myself: 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 ▪ 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 all above and testosterone oestrogen foreskin scrotum breasts develop vagina vaginal discharge hips get wider testicles clitoris pubic hair circumcision bladder semen	*sexual intercourse *wet dreams *erection *ejaculation *conception *caesarean Busy Bodies (videos and workbook) PowerPoints recap Question Box Puberty Quiz PDST Health and Wellbeing website

Appendix 1 - SE Overview of Sensitive Content

* These topics are included in 6th class RSE programme. However, they may be discussed or briefly defined depending on the context and time allowed (classroom activities naturally involve open discussion and questions).

Appendix 2 - Question Box

During the delivery of each section of the sensitive lessons – children will be encouraged to place their questions into a box in the classroom.

These questions will then be monitored and screened with the teacher answering the questions the following week taking into account the following;

- Questions arising from lesson content will be answered in an 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 if a question / issue is not on the programme and they will be advised to talk with their parents
- Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents themselves if they feel that a question is very inappropriate or needs to be communicated with home because of other reasons
- No personal questions will be answered, and children will be reminded not to share personal information about their families or others – but can share with the teacher after the lessons
- If issues arise which might be seen to contravene Children First Guidelines, the teacher will notify the Designated Liaison Person (Anne Kernan) in our school

Appendix 3- Useful Links for Parents

Useful links:	
SPHE Curriculum	https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Primary/Curriculum-Areas/Social,-Personal-and-Health-Education/
OIDE (PDST) supports	https://www.pdst.ie/node/811
RSE Manual	https://www.pdst.ie/sites/default/files/RSE%20Manual%201st%20and%202nd%20V2.pdf
Stay Safe Curriculum	https://www.staysafe.ie/index.htm
Making the Big Talk many Small Talks (Age 4-7)	https://www.pdst.ie/sites/default/files/4-7%20year%20olds.pdf
Making the Big Talk many Small Talks (Age 8-12)	https://www.pdst.ie/sites/default/files/8-12%20year%20olds.pdf