



# **St. Ita's N.S**

## **Relationship & Sexuality Education Policy**

### **February 2019**

#### **Introductory Statement:**

This policy is an approved approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in St. Ita's NS. It was developed by the St. Ita's RSE Policy Committee which included two teachers, two representatives of the Board of Management and two parent representatives. It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE.

#### **School Philosophy:**

St. Ita's N.S. is a Catholic school and therefore this RSE policy was developed and will be implemented in ways which are in keeping with the ethos of the school.

The ethos of the school is characterised by the following:

- Sensitive to reality of our children's lives in a changing world.
- Mutual respect between all partners in education.
- Child-centred
- Aims to ensure each child reaches full potential in the holistic sense.
- Hopes that children are equipped with high self-esteem to enable them to go to live happy and fulfilled lives.

#### **St. Ita's School Vision:**

St. Ita's N.S. values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. We provide a safe, caring school environment where every child is cherished and helped to achieve their maximum potential intellectually, spiritually, physically and emotionally. We recognize that SPHE is intrinsic to the holistic learning and teaching that occurs both formally and informally in the school and in the classroom.

Through our SPHE programme we wish to assist children develop feelings of self-worth and self-confidence while encouraging their ability to relate to others in a positive way. The programme encourages children to be aware of their rights as individuals while at the same time accepting responsibility for their actions as members of the school and the wider 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.

### **Definition of RSE:**

RSE is an integral part of Social, Personal and Health Education and must be thought in this context. It provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality and relationships through processes which enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework.

- *(p.5 NCCA interim curriculum and guidelines for RSE)*

### **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.

- *(p.5 NCCA interim curriculum and guidelines for RSE)*

### **Current Provision:**

Included in the school curriculum in St. Ita's is:

- SPHE lessons (provided through discrete curricular time and integration)
- Use of the RSE Manuals and Busy Body resources
- Stay Safe Programme / Walk Tall Programme
- Religious Education- Grow in Love Programme

### **Aims of our RSE Programme:**

- To help young people develop healthy friendships and relationships
- To promote a healthy attitude to sexuality and to relationships
- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child
- To foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework
- To understand the physical changes taking place with the onset of puberty- Senior Classes
- To enable the child to acquire an understanding of, and respect for, human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction- Senior Classes.
- 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.

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
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy

### **Child Protection:**

This policy is cognisant of all aspects of our current Child Safeguarding Statement. The school follows the DES Child Protection Guidelines 2017 and has a Child Safeguarding Statement with the Principal, Mr. Patrick Coyle as Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and the Deputy Principal, Mrs. J. Glynn as the Deputy DLP. Where a child protection concern is raised, the procedures outlined in the school's Child Safeguarding Statement will be followed.

### **Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School:**

#### **Curriculum Matters:**

- Curriculum Content –The curriculum by NCCA will be followed as published, and will be taught from Infants to 6<sup>th</sup> 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.
- Where an outside speaker is used, the class teacher will remain in the classroom, as per circular 0042/2018. The speaker will be made aware of the school's RSE policy.
- The Stay Safe programme will be implemented throughout the school every year in Term 2 (January/February).
- The class teachers will co-ordinate the teaching of Stay Safe during the school year

#### **Topics covered up to 2<sup>nd</sup> class include:**

- Keeping Safe
- Bodily changes during growth and birth (birth to 9)
- Making age-appropriate choices
- Appreciating family life
- 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 (1<sup>st</sup> / 2<sup>nd</sup>)

### **Topics from 3<sup>rd</sup> to Sixth include:**

- Bodily changes
- Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise
- Keeping Safe
- Expressing Feelings
- Family relationships
- Making healthy and responsible decisions
- Forming Friendships
- Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (*Fourth class*)
- Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (*Fifth and Sixth Class*)
- Reproductive system of male/female adults (*Fifth and Sixth Class*)
- Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship (*Fifth and Sixth Class*)

### **Organisational Matters:**

- Parents will be informed by letter in advance of lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme.
- If children are withdrawn from the lessons pertaining to the sensitive elements of the RSE programme, they must give a notice in writing to the school that they are withdrawing their child. While the lesson is taking place the child will be accommodated in another teacher's classroom in the school.
- Parents have a responsibility 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.
- 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.
- With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom.
- 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 B.O.M. 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. Taking into account the pupil's social and emotional development, instruction will be based on individual needs where possible. Parents will be consulted around sensitive issues.

### **Dealing with Questions:**

It is natural that children should wish to ask questions in the area of RSE.

All questions answered will reflect the parameters of the curriculum. Certain topics are not in the primary RSE/SPHE programme and will not be discussed i.e.: abortion, masturbation, homosexuality, contraception.

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. With regard to 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

### **Parental Involvement:**

- Parents will be informed by letter in advance of lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme. (c/f Appendix 1)
- Parents will be informed in advance when formal lessons on the sensitive areas of the programme will be taught and will be asked to discuss these issues with their child prior to the lessons in school.
- Parents are welcome to view the curriculum and resources if they wish.
- Regular contact will be made with parents during the teaching of lessons involving the 'sensitive elements' of the RSE programme, in the form of the RSE manual home/school links page.
- The school acknowledges that parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children in sexual matters. The school RSE programme acts as a support to parents, and parents retain the right to withdraw their children from classes.

### **Resources:**

Each class teacher has a copy of the following manuals:

- Making the Links
- Relationships and Sexuality Education Manuals (DES)
- Stay Safe programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Busy Bodies DVD and booklet.
  - This DVD and booklet were developed to support the teaching of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class component of RSE within the context of SPHE. It is available for download at [www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie)
- All resources are available for parents/guardians to view if they so request prior to the delivery of the lesson.

### **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 when necessary. (PDST advisor visited the school in Feb. 2019).
- Staff meetings utilised as a platform for discussion and development of RSE materials.

**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 on: **10<sup>th</sup> July 2019**

**Signed:** Monsignor Cathal Geraghty  
*Chairperson of Board of Management*

**Signed:** Patrick Coyle  
*Principal*

**Date:** 10/07/2019

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