

Scoil San Treasa

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Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

Introductory Statement

This policy informs teachers and parents about our approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in Scoil San Treasa, with specific reference to the material that is covered in our programme. It helps to ensure that RSE is taught in a consistent and agreed way in our school. The policy was developed in consultation with the school community and with specific input from the RSE Policy subcommittee which included two nominees from each of the following groups: teachers, parents and Board of Management.

Background Information/Our approach to RSE

Scoil San Treasa is a Catholic school. It is a co-educational school with classes from Junior Infants to Sixth Class. Our approach to RSE is underpinned by our Mission Statement and the Schedule for Catholic Schools.

Mission Statement:

At Scoil San Treasa, our mission is the provision of primary education of the highest quality for all our pupils in a happy, safe, Christian environment. While we value high academic achievement, the social, personal and moral development of our pupils is of primary importance and we view the school as a learning organisation which is open to change and innovation while it cherishes the best educational, cultural and religious traditions of our society. Acknowledging that their parents are the primary educators of our children, we are inspired by a shared vision of excellence and we espouse a partnership approach in its pursuit.

Schedule for Catholic Schools

A Roman Catholic school (which is established in connection with the Minister) aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person of the pupil: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual, including a living relationship with God and with other people. The school models and promotes a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Catholic school provides religious education for the pupils in accordance with the doctrines, practices and tradition of the Roman Catholic Church and promotes the formation of the pupils in the Catholic Faith.

In line with the Department of Education and Skills Anti-Bullying Procedures, Scoil San Treasa supports a positive school climate and culture that is welcoming of difference and diversity, that is based on inclusiveness, and which promotes respectful relationships across the school community.

Our practice is informed by

- the Guidelines for RSE as prepared by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA i.e. the statutory body recognised for the production of curricular and associated materials) and as approved by the Department of Education and Skills (DES)
- the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference *Guidelines on RSE (2014)*
- the Department of Education and Skills Circular 22/10
- *Children First Act 2015*

These documents make clear that RSE policies and materials must be in accordance with the principles enunciated by the NCCA which stress the importance of a school's ethos and collaboration between parents, teachers, the principal and the Board of Management. The importance of material being age and stage appropriate is also emphasised.

RSE – An Overview

Relationship and Sexuality education aims to provide opportunities for children and young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way (*Going Forward Together Parent's Information Booklet, page 4*). It is an integral part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). RSE is an important part of a child's education and requires great sensitivity on the part of school personnel.

Current Provision for RSE in the school includes the following

- *SPHE lessons (provided through discrete curricular time and integration with other curricular areas) and SPHE via the overall school day/events*
- *Use of the official Department of Education and Skills (DES) materials (RSE Manuals)*
- *ACCORD RSE programme for pupils in fifth and sixth class and girls in fourth class, with ACCORD presentation for parents every second year*
- *Stay Safe Programme / Walk Tall Programme*
- *Religious Education*

Aims of our RSE programme

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child
- To help young people to develop healthy friendships and relationships
- To promote a healthy attitude to sexuality and to relationships
- To foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework
- To help the child to understand the physical changes taking place with the onset of puberty - Senior Classes (fifth and sixth class) and girls in fourth class – at *age-appropriate level*
- To enable the child to be comfortable with the sexuality of oneself and others while growing and developing.
- 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 develop the appropriate language with reference to the above.

Policies which support SPHE/RSE include the following:

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

Child Protection

Where a child protection concern is raised, the procedures outlined in the school's Child Protection Policy will be followed.

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School

Curriculum Matters

Curriculum Content

- The curriculum as prepared by the NCCA will be followed, and will be taught from infants to sixth class.
- All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school, the whole-school approach to SPHE and the RSE policy.

- Ordinarily, each class teacher will teach the content for their class level. However, the school engages trained facilitators for the more sensitive elements of the programme for fourth class girls and for boys and girls in fifth and sixth class. Any teacher has the right to opt out of teaching the sensitive elements of RSE. (If a teacher has concerns about teaching the sensitive elements in RSE they must consult with the Principal in a timely way.) In such cases, or for other sound operational reasons, arrangements will be put in place to enable the content to be covered by another teacher or external facilitator. In cases where an external facilitator is used, the class teacher (or another teacher) will remain with the class, as per circular 22/2010. The facilitator will be made aware of the school's RSE policy.
- The Stay Safe programme is implemented in all classes throughout the school. This is coordinated by the class teachers.
- Cognisance will be taken of the needs of pupils with special educational needs in the delivery of the programme.

Topics covered in infant classes, and first/second class include:

- Respecting his/her own body and that of others
- Realising that each individual has some responsibility for taking care of himself/herself
- Self-care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep
- Realising that growth and change are part of the process of life and are unique to each individual
- Keeping safe
- Making age appropriate choices
- Recognising and expressing feelings
- Appreciating family life
- Expressing opinions and listening to others
- Naming parts of the male and female body, using appropriate anatomical terms (Junior/Senior Infants)
- Naming parts of the male and female body, using appropriate anatomical terms and identifying some of their functions (First and Second Class)

Topics covered from third to sixth class include:

- All of the topics above at an age-appropriate level
- Uniqueness of each person
- Bodily changes – at an age-appropriate level (see below).
- Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise
- Keeping Safe
- Expressing Feelings
- Family relationships
- Making healthy and responsible decisions; peer pressure
- Forming Friendships
- The stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (Fourth class)
- A very gentle introduction to the physical development that can be expected to occur during the onset of puberty (Fourth Class girls)
- 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 (Sixth Class)

*Please refer to the table overleaf with regard to the more sensitive elements of the RSE programme. **It is important to remember that the content listed in that table refers only to the more sensitive elements and not the entire RSE programme as outlined above.***

Note: Sensitive Issues of the RSE programme are ordinarily covered during the Spring term.

The RSE programme includes a number of sensitive issues, listed in the table below. It is school policy to deal with these issues through structured lessons, without undue emphasis. Listing the issues here, along with the classes in which they are first taught, enables parents to prepare their children in advance for a particular topic, if they so wish.

(Page numbers referenced in the table below relate to 'Resource Materials for Relationships & Sexuality Education' DES for the relevant class grouping – available at www.education.ie)

Class	Lesson	Strand Unit	Language
Jun. Infs.	Theme 6 Caring for new life p.137	Growing and changing	
Jun. Infs.	Theme 7 My Body p.147	Taking care of my body	Penis/Vagina or Vulva Naming parts of male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms
Sen. Infs.			As above
1 st	Theme 6 The wonder of new life p.59/p.151 Theme 7 How my body works p. 67 When my body needs special care p.161 Theme 8 Growing means changing p.77/p.171	Growing and changing Taking care of my body	As above: introduce womb, breast, breast feeding, urethra. Naming as above and identify some of the functions.
2 nd			As above
3 rd			As above
4 th	Theme 6 Preparing for new life p.69 Theme 6 from 4th class The wonder of new life p.169 Theme 8 As I grow I change p.93 Theme 8 (girls only in 4th class) Growing and changing p. 195	Growing and changing	Discuss the stages and sequence of development of human baby in the womb in broad terms. Umbilical cord. Any questions as to how the baby got there cannot be answered by the teacher. <i>Periods, menstruation</i>
5 th	Theme 6 My body grows and changes p.81 Theme 7 The wonder of new life p.93 Theme 8 Caring for new life p.103 Theme 2 Different kinds of love p.141	Growing and changing Taking care of my body	Changes that occur in boys and girls at the onset of puberty. Reproductive system of male/female adults.
6 th	Theme 6 My body grows and changes p.81 Theme 7 The wonder of new life p.93 Theme 8 Caring for new life p.103 Theme 2 Different kinds of love p.141	Growing and changing Taking care of my body	Changes that occur in boys and girls at the onset of puberty. Reproductive system of male/female adults. Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within context of a committed relationship.

Organisational Matters:

- We regard RSE is an important element of the children's overall learning.
- The attention of parents is drawn to the school's RSE policy and accordingly parents know in advance that formal lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme are addressed during the spring term.
- If parents do not give consent for their child to participate in lessons pertaining to the sensitive elements of the RSE programme, parents must give notice in writing to the school that they are withdrawing their child. Where relevant, parents are advised to do this prior to the end of the first term (i.e. before January). The child will then be accommodated in another teacher's classroom in the school during formal lesson/s specifically directed towards the sensitive elements of the RSE programme. .
- Parents have a responsibility to familiarise themselves with the RSE Policy. They should prepare children appropriately for the information they will acquire around the sensitive areas and discuss areas covered in RSE/SPHE. They may contact the class teacher should they have any concerns or queries regarding the RSE programme.
- 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 in a timely way. 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 addressed. 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.

Sanitary Requisites

While girls are encouraged to be independent with regard to their own sanitary requirements, a supply of sanitary pads is kept in the First Aid room for emergency use. Girls in fourth class are alerted to this during the ACCORD talk in fourth class, and girls in fifth and sixth class are reminded of this by a class teacher and/or female teacher early in the school year, as a matter of course. Should the need arise, girls may ask their own class teacher, a neighbouring class teacher, the Deputy Principal, the Principal or any teacher for assistance with obtaining sanitary requisites during the school day. In the case of children with special educational needs, a special needs assistant (SNA) may assist in line with agreed protocols in place at that time. A sanitary disposal bin is located in each of the last three cubicles on the right hand side* in the girls' toilets upstairs and in the last cubicle on the right hand side in the girls' toilets downstairs. **Note: process is underway to upgrade facility to this level in toilets upstairs.*

Dealing with Questions:

All questions answered will reflect the parameters of the curriculum. However, certain topics are not in the primary RSE/SPHE programme i.e. abortion, masturbation, homosexuality, contraception. Questions to the teacher/external speaker may be oral or written within the group setting and are 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. Some questions may be answered at a later date, allowing, for example, teachers to prepare suitable answers or to confer with colleagues.

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 outside the RSE lesson.

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

- Awareness of circumstances in which the question has arisen
- Clarifying 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

- Should a parent have a query regarding curriculum materials/resources, it should be directed to the relevant teacher i.e. the class teacher.
- A list of resources readily available on the Internet is contained in Appendix A. This may be added to over time.
- Parents know in advance when formal lessons on the sensitive areas of the programme are being taught and they are encouraged to discuss these issues with their child prior to the lessons in school.
- 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 arrangements will be made for child/ren to be withdrawn from certain lessons if this is requested by parents in writing in advance. (See 'Organisational Matters' above).

This RSE Policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 12th June 2017.

Appendix A

References Section

- Curriculum documents for SPHE – available at www.ncca.ie
- Resource Materials for Relationships & Sexuality Education – available at www.education.ie
- '*Relationships and Sexuality Education – Going Forward Together*' – available at www.education.ie
- NCCA Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities – available at www.ncca.ie
- '*Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*' – available at www.education.ie
- Stay Safe materials – available at www.staysafe.ie
- '*Guidelines on Relationships and Sexuality Education*' - *Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference* – available at www.catholicbishops.ie