

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

St. Anthony's School is an all boys' Catholic Primary School, with classes from Junior Infants to 6th class. School policies are created through a process of consultation and collaboration between the staff, the Parents Association and the Board of Management.

Introductory Statement

All schools are required to have an RSE policy to detail how RSE is taught in the school, including the sensitive aspects. This policy is an approved approach to teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE both formally and informally. The first RSE policy was first developed in 2002 with a committee, revised in 2011, 2018, 2020, 2021 and 2022.

School Philosophy

Our aim is to provide a happy and secure environment which is conducive to the learning and personal development of each child. To help us achieve this aim, the support and co-operation of all teachers, pupils and parents is essential. It is hoped to inculcate in each pupil a sense of belonging to, and pride in St. Anthony's school. The pupil is expected to uphold the ethos of the school and to be co-operative, courteous and respectful at all times.

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. St. Anthony's school values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. Our ethos means we value respect, tolerance and openness through the lived experience of the children and the school 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. SPHE and RSE are key components in supporting our school and children to develop into healthy young adults.

Definition of RSE

RSE is an integral part of SPHE and will 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. It addresses the meaning of human sexuality, relationships, growth and development, relevant to personal and social skills.

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.

Social Personal and Health Education:

- Is a lifelong process and consequently RSE is a continual process throughout primary school and is not confined to once off inputs or lessons.
- Is a shared responsibility between family, school, health professionals and the school community.
- RSE should include an input from all, and collaboration can be fostered through the teaching and delivery of materials.
- Is a generic approach. It is not so much about the specific content of RSE but rather the relationship with a child's skills, attitudes, values and understanding relevant to a range of social, personal and health issues.
- Is based on the needs of the child, therefore RSE should prioritize the needs of the child and his environment, with appropriate adaptations made within the curriculum to suit individual requirements and individual school situations.
- Is spiral in nature. RSE is revisited at different stages throughout a child's time in school. this will provide opportunities to consolidate and build on prior learning. This allows for issues and topics to be explored and treated in a manner appropriate to a child's needs, abilities and levels of maturity.
- Engages children to be involved in activity-based learning (where possible). 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 enacted to enhance their self-esteem and well-being 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, p.25). 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.

Current Provision included in the School Curriculum:

- Social, Personal and Health Education lessons (provided through discrete time and integration)
- Use of RSE Manuals
- Busy Bodies resources for 5th and 6th classes only – selecting the content appropriate to class level i.e. 5th & 6th only use the Busy Body Puberty video
- 6th Class may revise puberty video and use other relevant videos from the Busy Body Programme
- Busy Body Workbook, as developed by the PDST, only to be used by 6th class
- Links to Busy Body video may be sent to parents/guardians in advance of the teaching of sensitive lessons
- Stay Safe Programme
- Weaving Well-being Programme (2nd-6th)
- Mindful Matters SPHE programme (Junior and Senior infants)
Welcome to Well-being Mo and Ko (First Class)
- Walk Tall Programme available as a supplementary resource
- All Together Now – Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying lessons
- RESPECT Guidelines (suggested approaches to teaching about different families)
- Adapted resources for children with special educational needs (from www.pdst.ie and www.ncse.ie)
 - Religious Education

Aims of our RSE Programme:

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child.
- To help the child to develop healthy friendships and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- To enable the child to acquire an understanding of, and respect for human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction.
- 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.

(Interim Guidelines for RSE Education, 1996)

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 well-being 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 well-being of all of the members of the school community.

Policies which support RSE:

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

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School

Curriculum Content

- The curriculum content by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment will be followed and 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 (Juniors-4th) will teach the content for their class level in the two-year cycle, as laid out in the curriculum, using 'Making the Links' guidelines and utilize the RSE manuals to complement their teaching. 5th and 6th class will be taught the entire RSE programme for their class level annually. RSE to be taught in the Spring Term of 2023 and 2025 from Juniors – 4th class inclusive. RSE will be taught in each Spring term for 5th and 6th classes. However, in case a child were to make a disclosure, it is best to avoid the teaching of sensitive lessons prior to any school closure, for example, Easter Break.

Management of RSE

- The strands Growing and Changing, and Taking Care of my Body are covered in Year 2 of a two year, SPHE plan. 2023 and 2025 for example for Juniors – 4th class
- The sensitive lessons are covered as part of these broad topics (see Appendix 1).
- Special arrangements may be considered for the delivery of the sensitive elements for 6th class.
- 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 – with content to be differentiated appropriately. Parents will be consulted around sensitive issues.
- The S.E.N. teacher will support and assist the teaching of R.S.E. and include it in the pupil's support plan.
- **Absent pupils who miss sensitive lessons: If a child misses a sensitive lesson then the class teacher will send home the content of that lesson to the parents/guardian (in digital format).**

Parental Involvement

- Parents will be informed that the school fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE programme including sensitive aspects of the programme at enrolment.
- Parents will be informed in advance of lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme, with a letter relevant to what will be taught at their child's class level, see Appendix 2.
- The Home-School Links letters will be sent to parents/guardians in advance, giving parents an opportunity to contact the relevant class teachers if they wish, to discuss or clarify what is covered and to prepare their children. It also gives parents 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 are invited/welcome to view the curriculum and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns at any time during the year. The school acknowledges that parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children about growing and changing.
- Following discussion with the principal and class teacher, if a parent wishes to withdraw their child from the sensitive lessons, notice should be given in writing stating their reasons for doing so and this will be centrally filed.

- The school will consult with parents on how to manage the opting out process in the best interests of the child.
- If a child has been withdrawn from the sensitive RSE lessons, St. Anthony's school takes no responsibility for what the child may hear from peers following on from the teaching of the lessons. eg. What they may hear on yard etc.

Organisation and Curriculum Planning

RSE forms part of the national curriculum for SPHE by NCCA and will be taught from infants to 6th class. RSE will be covered under the following strands and strand units of the SPHE curriculum:

Myself
Growing and Changing
Taking care of my body

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 any sensitive /specific content covered through RSE strands and strand units. The sensitive aspects are in **bold**.

Topics covered up to 2nd include:	Topics from 3rd to 6th include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Keeping Safe · Bodily changes from birth (birth-9yrs) · 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 parts of the male/female body using appropriate anatomical terms <p>(Junior /Senior Infants)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Naming parts of the male/female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions (1st/2nd) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Bodily changes · Healthy eating, personal hygiene and exercise · Expressing feelings · Appreciating the variety of family types with our school and community and how these family relationships shape us · Making healthy and responsible decisions · Forming friendships · Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (3rd/4th class) · Introduction to puberty and changes following the appropriate content for relevant standard (3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th) · Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (5th class) · Reproductive system of male/female adults Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship (5th/6th class only)

Sensitive Content

- Sensitive content is taught as per 2-year SPHE plan. However, RSE sensitive content pertaining to 5th and 6th class (Puberty and Reproductive systems, Sexual Intercourse, conception and birth) will be taught annually.
- St. Anthony's Boys School may use an outside facilitator to assist in the teaching of the sensitive content in 6th class.
- The outside facilitator will be informed of the school ethos and the school's RSE policy and will have agreed to teach and present his/her material in that context.
- The classroom teacher will be present in the classroom with the outside facilitator for the full duration of the sensitive content lessons.
- In an exceptional circumstance where a teacher is unable to be present for the delivery of the sensitive content, the matter will be dealt with in a sensitive manner by management and other arrangements will be put in place.

Approaches and Methodologies

When implementing the RSE programme, staff at St. Anthony's BNS will endeavour to display respect for and sensitivity towards the different cultural and family backgrounds experienced by the children. Books and Resources that foster inclusivity and diversity will be used in the delivery of the R.S.E. programme. The curriculum will be taught in an age-appropriate manner at all times. The curriculum will be taught from Junior infants to 6th class. It will be taught through a spiral curriculum (key topics will be revisited in a developmental manner at regular intervals). The materials taught will reflect the needs of the children.

The RSE curriculum will be taught through:

- Stories and poems
- Class discussion

- Group work
- Games
- Art Activities
- Reflection
- Circle Time
- Outside Facilitator (The class teacher will stay in the room at all times in accordance with Circular 22/2010)

Differentiation

Teachers will use assessment and professional judgement to differentiate the programme and content to suit the needs of the class. Some techniques used:

- Ensuring the objectives are realistic for students.
- Ensuring the learning task is compatible with prior learning.
- Providing opportunities for interacting and working with other students in small groups and spending more time on tasks.
- Organising the learning task into small stages and ensuring that the language used is pitched at the student's level of understanding.
- Understanding of the activity using task analysis, outlining the steps to be learned/completed in any given task, posing key questions to guide students through the stages/processes, and to assist in self-direction and correction.
- Having short and varied tasks creating a learning environment through the use of concrete, and where possible everyday materials, and by displaying word lists and laminated charts with pictures during the RSE lessons.

Sometimes the stage of development in a class can vary widely and strategies to differentiate in class can support gradual and appropriate teaching.

- Group work and discussion
- Higher and lower order questioning in groups
- Moderated whole class discussions through the use of a Question Box

Disruptive and inappropriate behaviour which inhibits the teaching and learning of RSE will not be tolerated and will be dealt with, within the best interests of the child and in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs

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 in anticipation of the children's learning needs will be central to ensuring learning is meaningful.

- Children may be pre-taught language or concepts in anticipation of whole class work
- Children may work in groups or 1:1 on adapted and suitable material
- Any different or specific objectives related to the pupils own learning needs will be detailed in their Student Support Plan in consultation with parents/guardians

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 relationships 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
- Appropriate vocabulary informal teaching
- Relating to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, parts of the body and feelings will be used, the use of slang will be discouraged
- Anatomical terms and language introduced is consistent with RSE Materials/Books

Questions

Staff/facilitator will not invalidate questions but use limits. Simple principles will be adopted when fostering discussion and questioning.

- No personal questions of the teacher.

- 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.
- 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 the children will be reminded not to share personal information about their families or others, but can share with the teacher after the lessons.
- The Question Box will be availed of by the children in 5th and 6th class during the teaching of the sensitive content of the RSE lessons. All children must contribute to the question box irrespective of whether their contribution is left blank or not to provide anonymity for all.
- The teacher will be mindful of their reaction to any questions.
- Questions do not have to be answered straight away.
- Teachers cannot answer questions directly in relation to:
 - Masturbation
 - Contraception
 - Abortion

Questions on these three topics will not be read aloud in class. The teacher will explain that if a question is unanswered the teacher will explain it is not applicable to the primary school curriculum. The teacher can ask the children to ask their parents if they still seek answers to their unanswered questions.

If issues arise which might be seen to contravene Children First Guidelines (2017), the teacher will notify the Designated Liaison Person, the principal, Mr. Seán Lyons who will report directly to the Child and Family Agency, Túsla. If the DLP is not present the teacher will report to the DDPLP, Fiona Angland.

Assessment

Assessment in RSE is important to enable the teacher to pitch the lessons correctly to their respective class group. The teacher uses:

- Observation and questions to assess the children's engagement and interest.
- Use of teacher-designed tasks such as worksheets, quizzes and games.

- Use of a reflection or learning log.

Monitoring

Each teacher will account for the teaching of the relevant lessons of the RSE programme for his/her class standard in the cuntas míosúil. They will then verify and sign a letter of completion of the RSE lessons in the two-year cycle. The Board of Management will then verify that the R.S.E. lessons have been taught in the given year.

Confidentiality

- St. Anthony's boys school follows the Children First Guidelines (2017) and The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (2017).
- If a parent withdraws a child from the teaching of sensitive issues, we cannot guarantee that the other children will not tell or inform him/her about what happened.

Resources

Relationships and Sexuality Education Resource Materials (DES)- Each class teacher has a copy of the appropriate manual or access to it online /pdf format. Other resources that support the broader aims of RSE include:

- Stay Safe programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Making the Links SPHE Manual (PDST.ie)
- Toms Flower Power (PDST)
- Anatomical Dolls and Story books
- Busy Bodies resources which were developed to support the teaching of the 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th class component of RSE within the context of SPHE.
- Picture books across the nine grounds of equality
- INTO Different Families, Same Love Poster
- RESPECT Guidelines

Provision of Ongoing Support

- Opportunities provided by Education Centres and PDST will be brought to the attention of staff members. Teachers will be encouraged to attend Continuing Professional Development in RSE.

- Class standard meetings will be utilized as a platform for discussion and development of RSE materials.
- Support from PDST advisor.
- Promotion and communication of resources available from www.pdst.ie and www.healthpromotion.ie.

Review

This 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 6th February 2019. It was further reviewed in May 2021. This plan was reviewed by the Board of Management at a meeting of February 4th 2022.

Kieran Hastings

Chairperson Board of Management

Date:04/02/2022

Seán Lyons

Principal

Date: 04/02/2022

Appendix 1

<p>Topics covered up to 2nd include:</p>	<p>Topics from 3rd to 6th include:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Keeping Safe · Bodily changes from birth (birth-9) · 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 parts of the male/female body using appropriate anatomical terms <p>(Junior /Senior Infants)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Naming parts of the male/female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions (1st/2nd) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Bodily changes · Healthy eating, personal hygiene and exercise · Expressing feelings · Appreciating the variety of family types with our school and community and how these family relationships shape us · Making healthy and responsible decisions · Forming friendships · Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (3rd/4th class) · Introduction to puberty and changes (3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th) · Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (5th) · Reproductive system of male/female adults (5th/6th class) · Understanding Sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship (5th/6th class)

Appendix 2

Dear

Relationships and Sexuality education is an integral part of the S.P.H.E. programme. The sensitive elements of the Relationships and Sexuality education programme are covered under the Strand Units, 'Growing and Changing' and 'Taking Care of my Body'. We will be completing these Strand Units with all class levels in the forthcoming weeks.

Topics covered up to 2nd include:	Topics from 3rd to 6th include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Keeping Safe · Bodily changes from birth (birth-9) · 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 parts of the male/female body using appropriate anatomical terms <p>(Junior /Senior Infants)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Naming parts of the male/female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions (1st/2nd) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Bodily changes · Healthy eating, personal hygiene and exercise · Expressing feelings · Appreciating the variety of family types with our school and community and how these family relationships shape us · Making healthy and responsible decisions · Forming friendships · Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (3rd/4th class) · Introduction to puberty and changes (3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th) · Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (5th/6th class) · Reproductive system of male/female adults (5th/6th class) Understanding Sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship (5th/6th class)

The class teacher will send home the appropriate home school links pages from the RSE manual which outline the material that will be covered in class and encourage further discussion on the topics at home. If you have any concerns please make an appointment to see the class teacher.

Yours sincerely,
