**Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy**



**Dunboyne Senior Primary School**

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**Introduction**

The staff of Dunboyne Senior Primary School formulated this school policy on Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in consultation with our Board of Management and our Parents Association. This policy applies to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality. This policy applies to the school staff, pupils, Board of Management, parents/guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators. Our policy is in line with the RSE policy guidelines issued by the Department of Education and Skills in 1997.

**Relationship to Ethos**

Dunboyne Senior Primary School is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Bishop of Meath and therefore all policies developed are implemented in ways which are in keeping with the ethos of the school. Consequently this ethos is a guiding principle in the formulation and implementation of this RSE policy. Our ethos also acknowledges the cultural and religious values of all the pupils attending the school. The school recognises that the parents are the primary educators of their children and we support and complement them in that role. Our ethos recognises the value and dignity of each pupil and all those working in the school community, and aims to promote the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person.

**Rationale**

It is necessary to devise a policy on RSE:

* To comply with the statutory obligation on schools as stated in Section 9 (d) of the Education Act 1998:- “A recognised school...shall use its available resources to...promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and to provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school.”

RSE provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire a knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality through processes which enable them to form values and to establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework, appropriate to their age. The teaching methods used are child-centred and reflect the age and stage of development of each child.

**Definition of RSE**

RSE is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. This education is delivered formally and informally by parents, teachers, peers, adults, the parish community and the media.

RSE provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire a knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework, firstly as children and subsequently as adults.

This approach gives opportunities to children to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible manner.

RSE aims to help children learn, at home and in school, about their own development and about their friendships and relationships with others. This work will be based on developing a good self-image, promoting respect for themselves and for others, and providing them with appropriate information.

RSE is taught in the context of the Social Personal Health Education(SPHE) curriculum. SPHE contributes to developing the work of the school in promoting the health and well-being of children. This happens in the context of their emotional, moral, social and spiritual growth, as well as their intellectual, physical, political, religious and creative development. A supportive school climate, where the needs and well-being of all members of the school community are considered, is essential to the best possible provision for SPHE.

SPHE looks at issues such as relationships at home and at school, building self-esteem, and learning skills of communication, decision-making and expressing feelings in an appropriate way. It also gives clear information on a range of topics, including healthy eating, alcohol, drugs, human growth and development, safety and social responsibility, and environmental issues.

**Aims**

* 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 enable the child to acquire an understanding of, and respect for, human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction- Fifth and Sixth Class
* To understand the physical changes taking place with the onset of puberty- 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.

**Current Provision included in the school curriculum is:**

* SPHE lessons (provided through discrete curricular time and integration)
* Use of the RSE manuals and Busy Body resources
* Accord presentations in 5th and 6th Classes
* Stay Safe
* Walk Tall
* Friends for Life
* Weaving Well-being
* Religious Education: Grow in Love

There are nine themes in the RSE programme which are covered in 4th and 6th classes. The programme is spiral in nature, which means that key topics will be revisited in a developmental manner each year.

**Policies which support RSE:**

* Child Safeguarding Statement
* Code of Behaviour policy
* Anti-Bullying policy
* Anti-Cyber Bullying policy
* Enrolment
* Healthy Eating
* Acceptable Use
* Intimate Care Policy
* Health and Safety
* Special Educational Needs
* SPHE plan
* PE plan

**Child Protection**

This policy is cognisant of all aspects of our current Child Safeguarding Statement. The school follows the Department of Education and Skills child protection guidelines and has a Child Safeguarding Statement with the Principal as Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and the Deputy Principal as the Deputy DLP (DDLP). Where a child protection concern is raised, the procedures outlined in the schools 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 3rd 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.
* Where an outside speaker is used, the class teacher will remain in the classroom, as per circular 22/2010. The speaker will be made aware of the school’s RSE policy.
* The Stay Safe programme will be implemented throughout the school.
* The class teachers will coordinate the teaching of Stay Safe during the school year

**Topics from Third to Sixth Classes 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)*

Each mainstream class teacher is provided with a full kit of the *Grow in Love Programme for* *Religious Education* for the appropriate class.

The *Stay Safe Programme* is taught every second year in Third Class and Fifth Class. The teacher is provided with a copy of the programme at the class level.

Each mainstream class teacher is provided with a copy of the *Resource Materials for* *Relationships and Sexuality Education*, published by the DES in 2000. There are four books in the programme, in two year blocks. The material covered is age-appropriate. In Dunboyne SPS we teach the RSE programme every second year in Fourth Class and Sixth Class.

These materials are based on two strands of the SPHE curriculum, *Myself* and *Myself and Others:*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Strand** | **Strand Units** |
| Myself | Self-esteemGrowing and changingNew lifeFeelings and emotionsKeeping safeMaking decisions |
| Myself and others | Relationships with familyRelationships with friendsRelationships with other people |

**Organisational Matters:**

* Parents will be informed 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. 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 Board of Management 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 special educational needs 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.

**Outside agencies**

The school employs the services of Accord, the Catholic Marriage Advisory Service, to deliver the sensitive components of the RSE programme to all Fifth and Sixth Classes. This course usually takes place during February and March. Elements of the Sixth Class programme are not covered in the Fifth Class programme.

In accordance with the requirements of DES Circular 22/2010:

“External facilitators/tutors who contribute to the SPHE programme must be approved in advance by the Principal and Board of Management. Visitors must work under the guidance and supervision of the classroom teacher, who must remain in the classroom at all times and retain the central role in the delivery of the subject matter in SPHE lessons. Interventions without the direct involvement of the teacher are not appropriate. Visitors must never replace the class teacher. To do so would undermine the integrity of the curriculum, the credibility and professionalism of the teacher and school, and could compromise the safety and welfare of the pupils.”

Separate consent will be requested to allow pupils to participate in the Fifth and Sixth Class Accord courses.

In the event that a parent does not give or withdraws consent, the pupil will be facilitated in another class.

**Parental Involvement**

* Parents are welcome to view the curriculum and resources. These materials may be viewed on www.education.ie
* Parents will be informed in advance when formal lessons on the sensitive areas of the programme and will be asked 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 parents retain the right to withdraw their children from classes.

**Resources**

* Relationships and Sexuality Education Manuals (DES). Each class teacher has a copy of the appropriate manual.
* Stay Safe programme
* Walk Tall Programme.
* Busy Bodies DVD and 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
* 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.
* Staff meetings utilised as a platform for discussion and development of RSE materials.

**Review**

This policy will be reviewed at regular intervals or in response to new Department Circulars/Directives.

**Ratification**

This policy was ratified by:

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Chairperson, Board of Management