



ST. PATRICK'S NATIONAL SCHOOL
Greystones, Co Wicklow

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Principal: Rachel Harper Deputy Principal: Hannah O'Connor

Board of Management – Chairperson: Canon David Mungavin

Social, Personal and Health Education

2025

Introduction

A school policy in Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE), including RSE, was first developed in 1999 in conjunction with the publication of the Primary Curriculum (1999). There have been numerous reviews and developments since then, most recently in 2020.

Rationale

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) contributes to promoting the general health and well-being of children and young people in the context of their overall development whether it be emotional, moral, social, spiritual or intellectual.

SPHE takes place in a number of ways in the school. Children learn significantly through experiencing a positive school climate and atmosphere and exploring aspects of the curriculum through relevant subject areas, as well as in the designated time provided in the timetable.

The SPHE curriculum fosters in children respect for their own dignity and that of others and promotes a healthy lifestyle and a commitment to the democratic process. As SPHE has a moral and spiritual dimension it is always developed within the context of the ethos or characteristic spirit of the school. SPHE is a shared responsibility and the involvement of parents at all stages of the programme is essential for its effectiveness.

SPHE encourages active participation in a wide range of activities so that children will become increasingly responsible for their own learning and be able to apply what they have learned in a variety of situations in their own lives.

This plan is a record of whole-school decisions in relation to SPHE in line with the *Primary Curriculum* (1999). Its purpose is to guide the teachers in adopting a consistent and coherent approach to the teaching and learning of SPHE in our school. It is intended to guide teachers in their individual planning for SPHE, and to ensure appropriate coverage of all aspects of the curriculum from Junior Infants to Sixth Class.

Aims and objectives

Our school aims to provide a safe, caring, happy and disciplined environment where children's self-esteem, self-confidence, initiative and innovation can be nurtured within an atmosphere of mutual respect and appreciation, at all times valuing and celebrating the uniqueness of all individuals.

It is our aim to actively encourage children to care for themselves, their families and friends and their environment.

We aim to foster an understanding and cultural appreciation of the moral, spiritual, religious, social and cultural values which shape our society and to nurture respect for such values.

We endorse the aims and objectives of the Primary Curriculum for SPHE.

SPHE is intrinsic to the learning and teaching that occurs both formally and informally within the school, and in the classroom. Through our SPHE programme, we aim to help the children to develop feelings of self-worth and self-confidence, while nurturing their ability to relate positively to others. The programme encourages the children to be aware of their rights as individuals, while simultaneously accepting responsibility for their actions as members of the school and wider community.

Parents have the primary role in the social, personal, and health education of their children, and so their involvement is encouraged as much as possible.

Content

SPHE is planned so that children receive a comprehensive programme over a two- year cycle. At the end of each year, teachers will complete a checklist of areas they have covered from the SPHE curriculum. This ensures that any strand units not covered in Year 1 are included in the programme of work for the following year. In some cases, it may be necessary to revise specific objectives from the previous year.

The content objectives for the sensitive areas of the RSE and Stay Safe elements of SPHE will be addressed in discrete time in all classes, Year 2 of the cycle serving to revise the content covered in Year 1 (ref Appendix 1). Class teachers give a copy of their RSE and Stay Safe programme to the Learning Support/Resource Teacher (LS/RT) and RT who work with their class. Teachers keep each other informed of any issues of concern that arise within mainstream classroom, or LS/RT room.

Table 1: Stay Safe and RSE Programme of Study for Junior Infants and Senior Infants

Junior and Senior Infants	
<p><u>Junior Infants: RSE</u></p> <p>I Grow under Theme 8 pg. 79 of the RSE manual.</p> <p>Link with Science curriculum naming parts of the body (penis/vagina and breasts.)</p> <p>Caring for New Life under Theme 6 pg. 143 of the RSE manual.</p> <p>My Body under Theme 7 pg. 149 of the RSE manual.</p> <p>Teach from Term 2 as a whole class.</p>	<p><u>Senior Infants STAY SAFE</u></p> <p>Topic 1: Feeling Safe and Unsafe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson 1: Feelings • Lesson 2 and 3: Feeling Safe and Unsafe <p>Topic 2: Friendship and Bullying</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson 1: Friendship • Lesson 2: What is Bullying? • Lesson 3: What can we do to Stop Bullying? <p>Topic 3: Touches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson 1: Touches we like/do not like • Lesson 2: Never Keep a Touch Secret <p>Topic 4: Secrets and Telling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson 1: Secrets and Telling (Split into two lessons.) <p>Topic 5: Strangers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson 1: Strangers (Split into two lessons.)

Table 2: Stay Safe and RSE Programme of Study for First and Second Class

First and Second Class	
<p><u>First Class: RSE</u></p> <p>How My Body Works under Theme 7 pg. 68 of the RSE manual.</p> <p>The Wonder of New Life under Theme 6 pg. 152 of the RSE manual.</p> <p>When My Body Needs Special Care under Theme 7 pg. 163 of the RSE manual.</p> <p>Teach from Term 2 as a whole class.</p>	<p><u>Second Class: STAY SAFE</u></p> <p>Topic 1: Feeling Safe and Unsafe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson 1: Feelings are Important • Lesson 2: Sometimes I feel Safe, Sometimes I feel Unsafe • Lesson 3: What to do if I feel Unsafe <p>Topic 2: Friendship and Bullying</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson 1: Friendship • Lesson 2: What is Bullying? • Lesson 3: Exclusion • Lesson 4: The Effects of Bullying • Lesson 5: Class Agreement <p>Topic 3: Touches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson 1: Different Types of Touch • Lesson 2: Dealing with Inappropriate Touch <p>Topic 4: Secrets and Telling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson 1: Secrets and Telling (Split into two lessons if desired.) <p>Topic 5: Strangers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson 1: Strangers (Split into two lessons.)

Table 3: Stay Safe and RSE Programme of Study for Third and Fourth Class

Third and Fourth Class	
<p><u>Third Class: STAY SAFE</u></p> <p>Topic 1: Feeling Safe and Unsafe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson 1: Feelings • Lesson 2 and 3: Feeling Safe and Unsafe <p>Topic 2: Friendship and Bulling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson 1: Friendship • Lesson 2: What is Bullying? • Lesson 3: Other Types of Bullying • Lesson 4: Cyberbullying • Lesson 5: Coping with Bullying • Lesson 6: Class Agreement <p>Topic 3: Touches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson 1: Different Types of Touch • Lesson 2: Touches <p>Topic 4: Secrets and Telling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson 1: Secrets and Telling (Can be done over two lessons if desired.) <p>Topic 5: Strangers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson 1: Strangers (Split over two lessons.) 	<p><u>Fourth Class: RSE</u></p> <p>Preparing for new life under Theme 6 pg. 70 of the RSE manual.</p> <p>Puberty in girls including menstruation under Theme 8 'Growing and Changing' pg. 196 of the RSE manual.</p> <p>To be taught to both boys and girls separately at beginning of Term 2.</p> <p>Email to be sent to parents the week prior to teaching (please see sample email attached.)</p> <p>Revise elements of Stay Safe from 3rd class.</p>

Table 4: Stay Safe and RSE Programme of Study for Fifth and Sixth Class

Fifth and Sixth Class	
<p><u>Fifth Class: STAY SAFE AND RSE</u></p> <p>Topic 1: Feeling Safe and Unsafe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson 1: Feelings • Lesson 2: Feeling Safe and Unsafe • Lesson 3: A Child's Right to be Safe <p>Topic 2: Friendship and Bullying</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson 1: Friendship • Lesson 2: What is Bullying? • Lesson 3: Other Types of Bullying • Lesson 4: Cyberbullying • Lesson 5: Coping with Bullying • Lesson 6: Class Agreement <p>Topic 3: Touches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson 1 and 2: Touches <p>Topic 4: Secrets and Telling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson 1: Secrets and Telling (Can be done over two lessons if desired.) <p>Topic 5: Strangers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson 1: Strangers (online safety.) (Split over two lessons.) <p>Puberty in boys including wet dreams, erections and ejaculation as per Theme 6 'My Body Grows and Changes' pg. 88 of the RSE manual.</p> <p>To be taught to both boys and girls separately at beginning of Term 2.</p> <p>Email to be sent to parents the week prior to teaching (please see sample email attached.)</p>	<p><u>Sixth Class: RSE</u></p> <p>Revision of puberty Theme 7 (from 5th class section) 'The Wonder of New Life' pg. 87 of the RSE manual.</p> <p>Different Kinds of Love Theme 2 pg. 141 of the RSE manual.</p> <p>Sexual Intercourse and New Life Theme 7 'Relationships and New Life' pg. 200 of the RSE manual.</p> <p>To be taught as a whole class beginning Term 2.</p> <p>Email to be sent to parents the week prior to teaching (please see sample email attached.)</p> <p>Revise elements of Stay Safe from 5th Class</p>

Contexts for SPHE

SPHE will be taught through a combination of contexts:

- positive school atmosphere
- discrete time
- integration with other subject areas.

Positive school atmosphere

At the first staff meeting of the year, all members of staff are reminded of the importance of promoting a positive school atmosphere. These key messages are also included in the booklet for new families enrolling at the school and are referred to, as appropriate, during the year through in-school and home/school communication (assembly, classroom, meetings, newsletter, etc).

Key messages:

- a. We cater for the social, emotional, spiritual, physical and intellectual needs of the children. We strive to cater for the particular needs of the children through assessment, observation and discussion with parents.
- b. We provide opportunities to enhance the self-esteem of all members of the school community, recognising the 5 building blocks of self-esteem, as outlined in the curriculum, as a sense of identity, belonging, security, purpose, and competence.
- c. We aim to actively value diversity, and to prioritise inclusive and respectful language, racial, LGBTQ and gender equality, and respect for those with special needs.
- d. We work to develop an effective in-school and home/school communication system. Everyone is encouraged to express opinions and concerns, and to respond respectfully to the opinions and concerns of others.
- e. Our school's physical environment promotes a healthy lifestyle. Through various policies (e.g. those relating to PE, behaviour, lunch, environment, fire drill, special projects, etc) we actively promote a healthy lifestyle and safety awareness.
- f. We support democratic processes in all levels of school life, while recognising and balancing roles, rights and responsibilities. Children have opportunities to practice democracy (e.g. annual negotiation of class rules, shared responsibility, elections of representatives to Green School committee, etc).

Discrete time

SPHE may be timetabled for ½ an hour per week, 1 hour per fortnight, or blocks of 1 – 2 hours per month where feasible or appropriate. Children who are withdrawn for supplementary teaching must be included for as much of the SPHE programme as possible. This discrete time is used to develop and practice particular skills, deal with sensitive issues or explore issues that are not addressed in other areas of the curriculum. The content objectives dealing with RSE and child protection are addressed through discrete time (Appendix 1).

Integration with other subject areas

SPHE is integrated across the curriculum through connecting SPHE concepts and ideas with

those in other subjects, and by using skills developed in SPHE in other subjects.

Approaches and methodologies

Organisational settings

The organisational settings used in the teaching of SPHE include

- whole-class teaching
- group work
- pair work
- individual work with whole class teaching and group work being the most frequently used.

Effective organisational strategies for differentiating children's learning include

- group work
- circle work
- pair work.

Teaching strategies

A wide range of teaching strategies are used throughout the school for SPHE, including

- talk and discussion
- drama activities
- written activities (worksheets, lists, checklists, etc)
- media studies
- pictures, photographs and visual images
- the environment
- problem solving
- collaborative learning
- co-operative games
- looking at, and appreciating, children's work (e.g. projects, portfolios)
- ICT
- circle time.

Assessment

Children's progress in SPHE is assessed through

- teacher observation
- teacher questioning
- teacher-designed tests and tasks
- work samples, projects and portfolios
- self-assessment

Teacher observation

Teachers will observe:

- the ability of the child to co-operate and work in groups, or to work independently;
- the informal interactions between the child and adults, and between the child and other children;
- physical and emotional maturity;
- the participation and interest of the child in a variety of activities;
- the quality of work presentation.

Teacher questioning

Teachers will use questioning to assess the children's understanding and appreciation of topics covered in SPHE.

Teacher-designed tests and tasks

SPHE includes areas of knowledge and understanding that need to be assessed at regular intervals. Teachers set specific appropriate tasks to determine a child's ability to apply particular skills in different situations.

Projects and portfolios

Children will prepare and present projects. A scrapbook of SPHE work may be used in class to record the children's work.

Self-assessment

Within the school's AFL programme, children are encouraged to engage in assessing their own progress in SPHE, and to reflect on their learning.

Recording data from such assessment may contribute to the overall picture of a child's development and may be used as a reference for the teacher when planning for SPHE and in communicating with the child, parents, other teachers and the Principal.

Children with special/different needs

The SPHE programme aims to meet the needs of all children in the school. Teachers aim to ensure learning for all pupils by varying the pace, content and methodologies. Evidence of this differentiated approach is recorded in teachers' yearly schemes. The requirements of children with special needs are taken into consideration when planning class lessons and related activities. SNAs support particular children or groups as directed by the class teacher. Children who experience bereavement or loss, serious illness or major personal traumas are supported, and consideration is given to meeting their individual needs in the most appropriate manner. Each Class Teacher, and LS/RT is informed, through the Principal, of those pupils in their class with special circumstances known to the school, at the beginning of each school year. This information will also be marked on Aladdin with a colour indicator. All confidential matters are regarded as such and treated with sensitivity. It is hoped that parents will inform the principal of special circumstances (such as illness, bereavement, family separation, etc).

However, it is important to note that the school is not always made aware of such matters.

Equality of access and participation

The SPHE programme plays a key role in ensuring equality of opportunities for all pupils as laid out in the DES guidelines 2016 . The programme is flexible at each class level, so that learning needs of all children may be addressed. Equal educational experience is provided, and indeed promoted, for boys and girls. Children with special needs are included in all activities, with restrictions made in case of health and safety concerns.

Support policies and programmes

SPHE links with other school policies and programmes, eg *Stay Safe*, child protection, enrolment, *Behaviour Charter*, anti-bullying, substance use, *Health and Safety statement*, healthy eating, and care for the environment. Teachers are familiar with these policies and programmes and ensure that the school's agreed approach is followed when addressing the issues involved.

RSE and Stay Safe programmes

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) and Stay Safe are addressed within the context of SPHE. The content objectives that are addressed within discrete time for the sensitive areas of the RSE and Stay Safe elements of SPHE are listed in Appendix 1. These objectives are addressed in all classes. Each teacher has a list of the content objectives for their class level. All these issues are dealt with in the context of the development of attitudes and values consistent with the ethos of the school.

As part of the registration process, parents must confirm in writing whether they give permission for their child to follow the school's RSE and Stay Safe programmes. Each class teacher is provided with a class list noting those pupils in their class who have, or have not, permission to partake in the RSE and Stay Safe programmes, at the beginning of each school year. This information will also be available on Aladdin.

The Stay Safe and RSE programmes will be taught on alternate years, in all classes, in Terms 1 and 2.

Teachers decide the timetabling of RSE and Stay Safe lessons. When a child is being withdrawn from specific lessons on parents' request, arrangements are made for those children to be supervised elsewhere. Every effort is made to minimise attention being drawn to these children.

Dealing with questions

Teachers establish ground rules limiting discussion to material covered in present or previous lessons. In the older classes a question box may be used, a child can write down their questions and put it in the box. Teachers use their discretion to decide whether a question should be discussed in the classroom context or referred to parents.

Confidentiality

Teachers establish ground rules covering the limits of the discussion, the level of respect required, and the concept of confidentiality. All discussions remain within the parameters of planned material. If a matter is divulged to a teacher where either an accusation or a suggestion of a criminal act is made, the matter must be brought to the attention of the principal, the designated liaison person (DLP), who will refer it to the appropriate authorities (ref *Children First Guidelines*). In these matters, a teacher must never agree to keep a secret for a child.

Home/school communication re parents' choices

Parents have a right to choose whether their children receive instruction in the areas covered by the RSE and Stay Safe programmes. Parents must confirm in writing whether they give permission for their child to follow the school's RSE and Stay Safe programmes. This is done as part of the registration process. Parents may choose to withdraw their children from elements of the Stay Safe or RSE lessons but must do so in writing each year.

All parents are made aware of the RSE and Stay Safe topics that will be covered each school year, and the ethos within which they will be delivered. This will happen at the class meeting for parents in September.

Parents who have concerns should discuss them with the class teacher. Class teachers send a letter to parents prior to the commencement of RSE and Stay Safe lessons (ref RSE and Stay Safe, teacher guidelines)

Child protection

The school follows the Department of Education and Science (DES), *Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures*, which is based on *Children First, national guidelines for the protection and welfare of children*. The Principal is the designated liaison person (DLP). As part of the staff briefing at the beginning of each school year, the principal briefs the staff on the school's *Child Protection policy*, and the procedures to be followed in dealing with incidents related to child protection. Each teacher has a copy of the policy, and a copy is available for parents through the school office. Parents are informed of these procedures, at the time of their child's enrolment.

Homework

Homework reflects an active learning approach to SPHE. Parents are encouraged to become active participants by engaging with assignments, as appropriate.

Resources

Resources and materials are selected that are

- reflective of the school's ethos
- in line with the principles of the SPHE curriculum
- age appropriate
- closely matched to specific objectives
- free of bias, or racial/sexual stereotyping
- produced by a reputable agency.

Textbooks are not used in the teaching of SPHE. Materials and resources supporting each strand unit are updated on an on-going basis. Materials purchased with school funds remain the property of the school. The resources used include:

- Lust for Life, Walk Tall, Stay safe, RSE, Webwise, My Selfie, Land and Water Paws and Jigsaw.
- range of support material from numerous sources
- stories
- current news items and events
- materials, e.g. costumes, food, objects for improvisation
- on-line resource - when using the internet, teachers must adhere to the school procedures regarding safe internet usage
- audio/visual materials
- songs and poems
- special visitors
- community resources
-

Individual teachers' planning and reporting

Teachers base their yearly and short-term plans for SPHE on the approaches set out in this whole-school plan. Work covered will be recorded in teachers' monthly reports. Copies of all plans and reports are submitted to the principal.

Staff development

Teachers are made aware of any opportunities for further professional development through participation in courses available in Education Centres, Colleges of Education, and other venues. Skills and expertise within the school are shared and developed through input at staff meetings, SDP days, etc.

Parental involvement

SPHE is a shared responsibility between home and school. The following agreed arrangements pertain in this regard

- a copy of the school plan for SPHE is available from the school office
- key elements of the SPHE plan are outlined in the school's information pack, given to all families on enrolment.
- the SPHE programme for each level is outlined at class meetings each September. Parents are made aware of the content objectives that deal with sensitive issues. Opportunities for shared involvement between home and school are explored at that meeting
- parents may be included in the review process of the SPHE plan when dealing with aspects such as substance use, child protection, relationships and sexuality (RSE), and nutrition.

Community links

The school liaises with the Health Promotion Unit of the local Health Services Executive (HSE), and other agencies to assist in the delivery of the SPHE programme, as appropriate.

Success criteria

The success of this plan is measured by the following criteria

- implementation of the SPHE curriculum, as evidenced in teachers' work
- continuity of content and methodology as evident in teachers' planning, preparation and reports
- on-going assessment, showing that pupils are acquiring an understanding of concepts taught and an ability to engage with others in a manner appropriate to their age and personality.

Implementation - roles and responsibilities

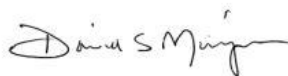
Class Teachers are responsible for the implementation of the SPHE programme for their own classes. A designated teacher who holds a post of responsibility, oversees the implementation of the SPHE programme and, along with the principal, is responsible for monitoring of this subject within the whole-school plan. Responsibility for dissemination of information regarding curricular developments to staff, and managing resources and equipment is shared within the in-school management (ISM) team.

Ratification, communication and implementation

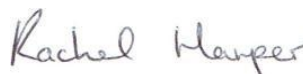
Following a review, the Board of Management ratified this revised plan in September 2025. The plan was available to teachers and parents and implemented in all classes from that date.

Review

This policy will be reviewed from time to time, as such need arises, or as deemed necessary by the Board of Management. A comprehensive review is scheduled for 2030.



Signed: _____



Signed : _____

Canon David Mungavin

Rachel Harper

Chairperson Board of Management

Principal

Date: 10th March 2025

Date: 10th March 2025

Appendix 1

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Introduction

As part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) has been defined as a life-long process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and in developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy.

Such education is delivered consciously and unconsciously by parents, teachers and peers, as well as by other adults and through the media. It is through schools, however, that RSE can be provided in a structured way, providing opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding through processes that will enable them to form values and establish behaviour within a moral, spiritual and social framework. It is reflected through the characteristic spirit of the school, thus helping the children to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible manner.

A policy on RSE was developed within our school, being conscious of recognising the parents' role as the primary educator of each child as outlined in Article 42.1 of the *Constitution of Ireland*. It is recognised that the children's first educational experiences are in the home and that the dominant influence on each child is that of their parents. Our school policies are developed by the education partners (teachers, parents and Board of Management). It is recognised, particularly in an area such as RSE, that parents bring unique expertise derived from the intimate knowledge of their own child's development and particular needs and interests in the context of their life outside the school. Our school's policy on RSE aims to promote and develop good self-image and self-respect and respect for others within our community, whether within the family, school, parish, local or wider community.

RSE is taught within the context of SPHE, which contributes to promoting the general health and well-being of children and young people in the context of their overall development whether it be emotional, moral, social, spiritual or intellectual.

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)

SPHE takes place in several ways in the school. Children learn significantly through experiencing a positive school climate and atmosphere, exploring aspects of the curriculum through relevant subject areas, as well as in the designated time provided in the timetable.

The SPHE curriculum fosters in children respect for their own dignity and that of others and promotes a healthy lifestyle and a commitment to the democratic process. As SPHE has a moral and spiritual dimension it is always developed within the context of the ethos or characteristic spirit of the school. SPHE is a shared responsibility and the involvement of parents at all stages of the programme is essential for its effectiveness.

SPHE encourages active participation in a wide range of activities so that children will become increasingly responsible for their own learning and be able to apply

what they have learned in a variety of situations in their own lives.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

As part of children's holistic development, RSE encourages children to explore the various relationships in their lives (such as family, friends and community) and to learn to develop relationships that are based on responsibility and mutual respect. Children can thus build on these foundations when developing more intimate relationships in later life.

Within the programme, children learn about themselves as whole human beings; about their spiritual, social, emotional and physical growth. They also learn about the changes that will occur as they progress towards adolescence and adulthood. The RSE programme encourages children's understanding of themselves and their communication with others, while developing a positive self-concept and the skills needed in decision-making or conflict resolution.

Children are equipped with the appropriate language to talk about themselves, their feelings, their development and their relationships with others.

All aspects of RSE are taught with the understanding that there will be students who identify as LGBTQ in the classroom or students who have members of their family who are a part of the LGBTQ community, as parents, siblings or other relatives. Consequently, language used throughout RSE will be inclusive to reflect this.

The mutual support and agreed positive approach and methodology of parents/guardians and teachers, with the support of the Board of Management, is essential to the success of the RSE programme.

Aims and objectives

The aims of RSE are:

- to enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child;
- to help the child to develop positive, healthy friendships and relationships;
- to promote a healthy appreciation and understanding of others, within the home, school and community;
- to foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to and respect for 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;
- to develop and promote a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life;
- to enable the child to be comfortable with one's own sexuality and that of others while growing and developing.

The RSE programme should enable the child:

- to acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self, leading to positive self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth;
- to develop an appreciation of the dignity and well-being of others;
- to understand the nature and development of relationships in families,

- friendships and other circumstances (e.g. school / clubs);
- to develop an awareness of differing family patterns;
 - to value family life and appreciate responsibilities of parenthood;
 - to develop approaches to decision making, problem solving and implementation of actions in different personal, social and health contexts;
 - to develop personal skills to help in establishing and sustaining healthy personal relationships;
 - to develop strategies for coping with and protecting from various forms of abuse;
 - to acquire and use appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development;
 - to 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.

Methodology

Many topics will be integrated into other subject areas e.g. RE; English; SESE; Circle Time; Visual Arts; and Drama. Oral and written work will be used to reinforce and develop subject matter.

Some issues will be specifically timetabled during the second term, and classes will be divided where necessary e.g. sexual development of girls / boys.

Timetable: RSE is part of the SPHE programme, which is allocated approximately 30 minutes per week, which includes implementation of various programmes, including *Stay Safe*; *Walk Tall*; and *Water Safety*.

Having phased in the implementation process, all classes follow their own designated programme.

Confidentiality

It will be stressed to the children that issues raised in class are discussed only in the classroom or with parents/guardians.

Sensitive issues

The teacher should take into account sensitive areas for each child within the class e.g. bereavement; fostering; adoption and different family patterns.

Procedure for possible withdrawal

Parents who have serious concerns regarding certain aspects of the programme must inform the school in writing if they wish their child/children to be withdrawn from

class, and to have alternative arrangements made.

Evaluation

Following its first year of implementation, the policy was reviewed by the teaching staff, in consultation with parents and the Board of Management. The policy will be reviewed tri-annually, or as deemed necessary by staff, parents or the Board of Management. This will include discussion on the overall positive and negative aspects of the policy.

Teachers review individual class material and where appropriate, changes are made. If necessary, further professional advice is sought and further resources obtained.

Recommendations for change are referred to the Board of Management for approval, before implementation.

Resources

Department of Education and Science (1995), *Charting our Education Future - White Paper on Education*, Dublin: Government Publications

Department of Education and Science (1995), *Report of the Expert Advisory Group on Relationships and Sexuality Education*, Dublin: Government Publications

Department of Education and Science (1997), *Relationships and Sexuality Education, a partnership between home and school - interim curriculum and guidelines* (pack), Dublin: Government Publications

Department of Education and Science (1997), *Relationships and Sexuality Education – going forward together* (parents' information booklet), Dublin: Government Publications

Department of Education and Science (1997), *Relationships and Sexuality Education – policy guidelines*, Dublin: Government Publications

Department of Education and Science (1998), *Resource materials for Relationships and Sexuality Education* (3 volumes), Dublin: Government Publications

Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough (1991), *The Church of Ireland Viewpoint – Diocesan Council for Mission*, Dublin:

Mid-Western Health Board (1995), *Bí Folláin*, Limerick: Mid-Western Health

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Morgan, Diane (1993), *Christian Perspectives on Contemporary Issues*, Norwich: The Canterbury Press

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) (1996), *Relationships and Sexuality Education, an aspect of Social, Personal and Health Education*, Dublin: NCCA

Past Students' Association of the Church of Ireland College of Education (1995), *Relationships and Sexuality Education in the primary school* – papers presented at a symposium in the Church of Ireland College of Education in 1995, Dublin: PSACICE

Department of Education and Science (1999), *Walk Tall – Drugs Awareness Programme* (8 volumes), Dublin: Government Publications

Development of RSE programme

An RSE policy was formulated during the period 1988 – 2000. It involved nominees from all the education partners in the school and included advice from an external expert who was a DES advisor.