



St Ailbe's National School

Emly

Co Tipperary

Roll No: 20467N

## Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

This policy for St Ailbes NS has been reviewed in consultation between staff, parent representatives, Principal, and Board of Management in March 2024.

While parents are the primary educators of their children, the school has a role to play in supporting and complementing the work of the home in this task.

In developing school policy provision should be made for the views of parents who hold conscientious or moral objections to the inclusion of Relationships and Sexuality Education on the school curriculum. In upholding the rights of these individual parents, the rights of the majority to have the programme implemented must also be upheld. Training is essential-Training for parents and parent associations, to include an element of joint training with teachers, is equally important and should be supported. Programmes should be co-ordinated and delivered by school staff, with community resources being used to enhance the programme in accordance with school policy. Review of both policy and programme should be undertaken at regular intervals.

### School Philosophy

St Ailbe's National School is a co-educational Catholic Primary School which strives to provide a well ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere where the intellectual, spiritual physical, moral and cultural needs of the pupils are identified and addressed. While St. Ailbe's is a Catholic school with a Catholic Ethos we also welcome and embrace children from all other religions. St Ailbe's also has 3 Special Classes for children with Autism and it is our aim to prepare all pupils to take their place in society as good and responsible citizens. The values and principles upheld in the school community are put into practise through the support of teachers of one another as mentors and through the example shown to children.

Visitors are always welcomed by polite friendly staff and pupils. All visitors / parents are expected to show appropriate example to the children when present in our school. The RSE programme will be implemented within this framework.

## **Definition of RSE**

RSE aims to provide opportunities for children to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way. This work will be based on developing a good self-image, promoting respect for themselves and others and providing them with appropriate information.

## **RSE in the context of our SPHE Programme.**

Throughout the year SPHE is taught from Junior Infants to 6th class. A wide variety of topics is included on the programme at age-appropriate levels (see overview-strands and strand units). It is a spiral curriculum which ensures that topics are taught in a developmental manner throughout the child's primary school years.

See end of document for contents per class level.

## **Aims**

The aims of St Ailbe's National School for the R.S.E programme are:

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and wellbeing of the child.
- To help the child to develop healthy friendships and relationships.
- 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.
- 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.

## **Objectives.**

The R.S.E education:

- Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self.
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth.
- Develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well-being of others.
- Understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and in wider contexts.
- Develop and 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 some coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse.
- Acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction.
- Acquire and use an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development.
- Develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making.

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

- Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme will be made by Principal.
- Informing and Involving Parents: Parents are the primary educators of their children and their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality is seen by the school as very important. This policy has been designed in consultation with representatives from PA and the views expressed by parents will be taken into account when reviewing the policy- A copy of this policy will be made available to any parent on request to the office, as well as on our school website.

### **Offering Advice**

The schools' function is to provide a general education about sexual matters and issues and not to offer individual advice, information or counselling or aspects of sexual behaviour.

### **Explicit Questions**

It may not be appropriate to deal with some explicit questions in class. Teachers may say that it is not appropriate to deal with that question at this time. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised, he/she should seek advice from Principal. When deciding to answer a question the teacher should consider the age and readiness of students, the RSE programme content and the ethos of the school and RSE policy.

### **Confidentiality**

It is school policy that in circumstances where a pupil is considered at some risk of any type of abuse or in breach of the law the teacher must refer this immediately to the Principal/DLP.

Principal will decide whether to inform parents/and or appropriate authorities.

The following is also school policy.

- Teacher must not promise absolute confidentiality
- Pupils must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the principal and possibly to parents if Principal decides that it is in the best interests of pupil to notify parents
- Teachers must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard information.
- Teachers must indicate clearly to pupils when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential – the pupil can then decide whether to proceed or not.

Child Protection Guidelines – must be adhered to at all time.

- If a member of staff receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been abused, or is being abused or is at risk of abuse he/she should without delay report the matter to the DLP – Michelle O'Brien or Deputy DLP Paula Hartigan. The need for confidentiality at all times should be borne in mind: the supports of the school should continue to be made available to the child.

If the DLP/Deputy DLP is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation he/she should report the matter to the relevant authority immediately.

### **Withdrawing Pupils from the RSE Programme.**

- Relevant sections of this policy are made available to parents. Parents are informed that it is their right to withdraw their child from sensitive aspects of the RSE.

Once a parents written request to withdraw is made that request must be complied with until revoked by the parent.

### **Using Visiting Speakers;**

- It is school policy that most of the RSE Programme is best discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by the pupils. However, visitors can enhance the quality of the provision.
- Principal will provide the visitor with a copy of the RSE policy, making them aware of the school ethos and the manner of delivery of the RSE programme.

Issues to be considered are

- The degree of explicitness of the content and presentation
- Visitor will be accompanied by teaching staff.
- Visit will be followed up by Class Teacher.

Visitors should be given advance notice of the composition of the class and an idea of how

their contribution fits into the scheme of work.

- Parental consent will be secured prior to the visit.
- Visitor will be thanked appropriately at end of visit. B.O.M will cover the cost of the visit.

### **Additional Needs.**

Children with additional needs may need more help than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up. They may also need more help in learning what sorts of behaviour are and are not acceptable and in being warned and prepared against abuse by others. Role Play, Social Stories will be used frequently to discuss appropriate behaviour and understanding of correct use of language at appropriate times.

Pupils in our Special Classes will join in with the mainstream RSE programme if and when it is appropriate to their stage of learning and understanding. If the mainstream content for the child's mainstream class level is deemed inappropriate, their class teacher will provide more individualised instruction to suit the child's needs at that time, in consultation with their parents.

### **Ongoing Support, Development and Review**

Training: All teachers implementing this programme do not necessarily have to be experts on the issues concerned. However, they do require sensitivity to the needs of the classes, an ability to deal with questions openly and honestly and a willingness to refer to more expert advice if necessary.

Continuous Professional Development is ongoing for all our teaching staff in many areas, including SPHE, RSE and Wellbeing.

We also employ a model of Team Teaching for SPHE in lots of our classes, which is beneficial for both pupils and staff.

### **Resources**

The school has purchased many useful books from Outside the Box and Thinking Toys. We are guided by the National SPHE and RSE curriculums, including Walk Tall, Stay Safe, and Making the Links. We also use programmes approved by NEPS and NCSE where relevant.

**Monitoring Evaluating and Reviewing the RSE Programme.**

We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this Programme. Specifically important to the RSE Programme are a) pupil feedback, b) staff review and feedback, c) parental feedback.

This policy was reviewed and updated in March 2024.

Chairperson signature .....

Date.....

## Relationships and Sexuality Education; Content of RSE programme by class level;

Relationships will be a key part in the SPHE programme.

- The child within the family and their relationship to parents/guardians and siblings – their unique place within the family.
- The child in school – relationships with their friends – showing friendship – returning friendship – spoiling friendship – forgiving – reconciliation – their sense of belonging within the class.
- Boy/Girl relationships – recognition and respect for others' feelings – uniqueness and value of each person – covering all ages – language that describes these feelings.

R.S.E also deals with the issue of human growth and development, human sexuality and human relationships.

- In the Senior cycle (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes) some very sensitive issues will be dealt with but the children will have been prepared for these issues by the cyclical nature of the syllabus. Each year their awareness and knowledge is growing and expanding and they now have reached a very important stage in their development.

Content and language are carefully selected so that children get the necessary factual knowledge in the context of Catholic moral teaching as befits the ethos of the school.

In order to allay any fears that parents have, it is important for parents to know exactly what will be taught to the children and at what stage it will be taught.

### **Junior Infants:**

- Naming body parts appropriately, specifically Penis, Breasts

### **Senior Infants:**

- Naming body parts appropriately, specifically Vagina

### **1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> class:**

- Pupils are expected to be able to name parts of the male and female body using appropriate names and identify some of their functions e.g.
- Mouth – swallowing, chewing food, breathing
- Vagina- opening where a baby leaves a mothers' womb

- Penis- passing urine
- Breasts – feeding a baby
- Naval- where a baby was joined to its mother before being born

### 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> class

- Pupils are expected to be able to discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby from conception to birth e.g.
  - Week 2 – the size of a full stop
  - Week 6- the size of a baked bean / would fit neatly on to a 1c piece
  - Week 8 – the size of an adult thumbnail/would cover a 10c piece
  - Week 14- the length of an adults' hand / size of a grape fruit

### 5<sup>th</sup> / 6<sup>th</sup> class

- Pupils are expected to be able to identify and discuss physical and other changes that occur in boys and girls during puberty and to understand the reproductive systems of male and female adults.
- Female:
  - Hormonal changes
  - Changing body shapes
  - Development of breasts
  - Appearance of pubic hair
  - Onset of menstruation (periods)
  - Beginning of ovulation
- Male:
  - Hormonal changes
  - Physical growth
  - Growth of testicles and penis
  - Appearance of pubic hair, underarm and facial hair
  - Breaking of the voice
  - Beginning of sperm production
  - Onset of nocturnal emissions (wet dreams)
- Pupils are expected to be able to understand conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship.

**Parents are informed fully about the content of these lessons and are required to prepare their child prior to the lessons and discuss any issues arising afterwards.**

**Parents will be informed about the specific names for the body parts which will be used e.g. in Junior Infants “penis, vagina, breasts” – First Class “introduction of term, womb, and some of the functions of body parts will be identified.**

Typically, the programme will be covered in 3-4 sessions depending on the size/maturity etc. of the class



**Overview of content**

<b>Strand</b>	<b>Infant Classes</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Classes</b>
	<b>Strand Units</b>	<b>Strand Units</b>
Myself	I am unique My Body As I grow I change New Life Feeling Safe Feelings and emotions Making decisions	I am unique My Body As I grow I change New Life Feeling Safe Feelings and emotions Making decisions
Myself and others	Myself and my family Myself and my friends Special people in my life Relating to others	Myself and my family Myself and my friends Other people Relating to others

<b>Strand</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Classes</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Classes</b>
	<b>Strand Units</b>	<b>Strand Units</b>
Myself	Accepting myself Physical development Growing and changing Birth and new life Feelings and emotions Personal Hygiene Personal Safety Making decisions	Accepting myself Physical development Becoming an adult Parenthood Feelings and emotions Personal Hygiene Personal Safety Making decisions
Myself and others	Roles and responsibilities in families Portrayal of sexuality and relationships Roles of males and females in society Relating to others	Changing relationships in families and friendships Group affiliation and loyalty Portrayal of sexuality and relationships Sexual stereotypes Relating to others