

Policy No: 22

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# St Francis National School

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## Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

*In reading this policy, it should be noted that the term "Parent(s)" also includes Guardians and should be interpreted as such.*

### Introductory Statement

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) encompasses the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, sexual identity and intimacy. In St Francis NS we seek to promote the overall development of the child which involves the integration of Relationships and Sexuality into personal understanding, growth and development within the context of our Catholic ethos.

RSE is a partnership involving parents, teachers and management. The school has a responsibility to put in place an RSE policy as part of the wider, Social, Personal and Health Education strand of the curriculum. It reflects our school philosophy as outlined in our Mission Statement.

### Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education

Relationships and Sexuality Education seeks to provide children with opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of relationships and human sexuality, through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework.

### Rationale

The need for this policy arises from our school's obligation to provide for all the needs of the student body and respond appropriately to sensitive and emotive issues relating to emerging sexuality.

## **Aims**

1. To enhance the personal development, well-being and self-esteem of each child.
2. To enable each child to gain an understanding of and respect for human love, reproduction and sexual activity in a sensitive and measured way.
3. To enable the child to develop healthy friendships and relationships.
4. To develop and promote a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life.

## **Relationship to School Ethos**

The school ethos affirms and supports close links between school and home. To this end parents are encouraged to play a meaningful role in this RSE policy formation. Although parents also have the right to withhold their children from participating in RSE classes, the school, through sharing materials and methodologies with parents, will encourage full participation.

## **Outline of Content**

### **Strand Units**

#### Myself

- Self-identity, taking care of my body, growing and changing, safety and protection.

#### Myself and Others

- Myself and family, friends and relating to other people.

#### Taking Care of My Body

- Naming parts of the male and female body using appropriate terminology (Lower and Middle classes).
- Identifying physical changes. Understanding puberty and the Reproductive System (Senior Classes)

#### Growing and Changing

- The stages of development of a baby from conception to birth (Middle Classes).
- Understanding sexual relations within the context of a committed loving relationship (Senior Classes).

### **Additional Resources**

- The Stay Safe and Walk Tall programme is taught in each class every year.
- Curriculum online SPHE/RSE Toolkit.
- PDST resources i.e. Busy Bodies, etc...
- Guest speakers may be invited to speak to Senior Classes where issues such as physical and emotional development, bodily changes and sexual awakening are explored. (The cost of these classes is borne by the Board of Management.)
- Grow in Love Religion Programme.

## Content

The content as outlined in the RSE programme will be covered as it is provided by the Department of Education. Senior pupils are treated in a mature way and are encouraged to discuss issues that arise with their parents.

## Organisation and Curriculum Planning:

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
  - Family
  - Self-Identity
  - Self-Esteem
  - Growing Up
2. The second section will deal with any sensitive/specific content covered through RSE strands and Strand Units.

Topics covered up to 2 <sup>nd</sup> include:	Topics from 3 <sup>rd</sup> to 6 <sup>th</sup> include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Keeping safe</li><li>● Bodily changes from birth</li><li>● Making age-appropriate choices</li><li>● Appreciating the variety of different family types and the variety of family life that exists in our school and community</li><li>● Recognising and expressing feelings</li><li>● Self-care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep</li><li>● Expressing opinions and listening to others</li><li>● Naming the parts of the male/female body using appropriate anatomical terms (Junior/Senior Infants)</li><li>● Naming the parts of the female/male body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions (1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> classes)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Growing &amp; Changing (3<sup>rd</sup> class girls only)</li><li>● Bodily changes</li><li>● Healthy eating, personal hygiene and exercise</li><li>● Keeping safe</li><li>● Expressing feelings</li><li>● Appreciating the variety of family types within our school and community and how these family relationships shape us</li><li>● Making healthy and responsible decisions</li><li>● Forming friendships</li><li>● Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> classes)</li><li>● Introduction to puberty and changes (3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> classes)</li><li>● Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> classes)</li><li>● Reproductive system of male/female adults (5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> classes)</li><li>● Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship (5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> classes)</li></ul>

## **Guidelines for Management and Organisation of the RSE Programme**

- The sections within the RSE programme which have been identified as sensitive issues will primarily be taught in May and June in each class. (The teachers' right to opt out of sensitive topics will be honoured which will not affect the teaching of the subject.)
- The programme is taught within the ethos of the school and contemporary issues/topics are dealt with by the teacher at a level appropriate to the age and stage of development of pupils within a moral framework.
- Relationships and Sexuality Education is an on-going process throughout life. A child's first experience of love, of intimacy and of relationships takes place in the family. Parents and the family are acknowledged as the primary educators of their children. We work in a supportive role with the parents of our school, by complementing their role with a school based programme in RSE.
- All the content objectives of the RSE Programme will be covered by the time children leave sixth class.
- Parents may be informed via Aladdin Notice prior to the teaching of sensitive issues in 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> Class. This will allow time for Parents to discuss topics with the child, meet the teacher if required and/or follow the appropriate procedure for opting out of the RSE programme.
- If a visitor or guest speaker is invited to a class to enhance the delivery of the RSE programme, parents will be informed via Aladdin message of such a visit and the content being addressed in advance of the visit. Parents are encouraged to use this opportunity to discuss these topics with their children beforehand. Parents are advised to inform childminders etc. that the sensitive topics are going to be discussed.
- Parents' right to withdraw a pupil from the sensitive issues process will be honoured on the understanding that the parent is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves. Parents withdrawing a child from the school's RSE programme will be asked to sign an undertaking to this effect.
- Parents are obliged to inform the school in writing of their decision to withdraw the child from the sensitive issues classes. Any parent who wishes to withdraw their child are asked to discuss with the principal how this may be facilitated.

- Teachers do not specifically cover topics such as contraception and same sex relationships. Children who ask questions in class on content outside the designated curriculum such as questions about contraception are encouraged to discuss the issue with their parents. Parents are informed and asked to talk to their child. Support is offered to the parents in the form of information to assist parents to inform their child in an accurate and suitable way.
- The school has no responsibility for any information which the pupil may receive outside the direct teaching of the RSE lessons.

### **Child Protection**

The school follows the DES child protection guidelines and has a Child Protection policy with Oreena Lawless as Designated Liaison Person. In cases of disclosure; the DLP will follow the procedures as set out in the St. Francis Child Protection Policy and in *Children First*.

### **Teacher Choice/Staff Development**

The teacher's right to choose is enshrined in this policy and teachers may wish not to teach specific aspects of the programme or require additional resources. In this case team teaching will apply whereby teachers will swap classes for specific lessons to cover the content as outlined by the class teacher. A suitable speaker may also be employed by the Board of Management.

The staff will be encouraged to engage in training in:

- The Child Abuse Prevention Programme (Stay Safe)
- Relationships and Sexuality Programme (RSE)
- Walk Tall Programme (Substance Misuse Prevention Programme)

This will be funded by the Board of Management.

Each teacher is responsible for his/her long term and short term planning comprising of a yearly and weekly/fortnightly scheme of work. A Monthly Report is retained in the Principal's Office as part of the Cúntas Mhíosúil. The revised resource book 'Making the Links' may be used to integrate the three programmes relevant to RSE: Stay Safe, Walk Tall and RSE.

### **Evaluation:**

- Feedback from all stakeholders

### **Communication**

This policy will be available in the Plean Scoile and on the school website.

### **Responsibility for Review:**

All members of staff, Parent Association, BoM.

**Timeframe for Review:**

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or as required to meet the needs of the school.

**Next review:** June 2027

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**Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy**

Ratified by the Board of Management on 17/6/2024 (Date)

Signed: *Siadraig Heene* (Chairperson, Board of Management)