



Policy for Relationships and Sexuality Education

Introduction

Definition of RSE

Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) aims to provide opportunities for children and young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

(Going Forward Together Parent's Information Booklet, page 4)

Introductory Statement

All schools have a responsibility to devise an RSE policy as part of the wider Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curricular area. It is a spiral curriculum which ensures that topics are taught developmentally throughout a child's primary school years.

This policy was originally drafted by the SPHE co-ordinator and the principal after attending RSE training with the PDST and under the guidance of a PDST advisor. When reviewed, It was then circulated, discussed and amended by the whole staff, school management and parent body of Citywest & Saggart Community National School. This policy was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE. It is in accordance with the Interim Curriculum and Guidelines for Relationships and Sexuality Education prepared by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and approved by the Department of Education and Science (1996).

Summary of this RSE Policy

General	This policy aims to ensure that the acquisition of appropriate language in RSE is taught to the children. It is crucially important to enable children to speak confidently about themselves and their relationships.
Curriculum Planning	An outline of which RSE topics are to be taught in each year band. Questions arising from lesson content will be answered in an age-appropriate manner.
Organisational Planning	The sensitive objectives of RSE should be taught in the second term to allow time for the teacher to establish a relationship with their class and to provide opportunities for reflection and questioning over the following months. These lessons should not be taught by a substitute or student teacher.
Roles and Responsibilities	A nominated teacher/ teachers will be encouraged to attend RSE training with the PDST at the local education centre which is Dublin West Education. After attending, they will feedback the information to the relevant teachers. The language of RSE will be explained to parents at the beginning of year meeting and two weeks before a lesson is due to take place.

Rationale

The acquisition of appropriate language in RSE is crucially important to enable children to speak confidently about themselves and their relationships. Acquiring the appropriate vocabulary for the discussion of sexuality, growing up, physical changes, feelings, etc. gives the child the means to discuss these issues in an age-appropriate way. The RSE programme will encourage the use of the proper terms for body parts from Junior Infants so that these terms are given status and acceptability. Many children get information and misinformation about relationships and sexuality from television, in the playground, from older friends – in many ways that parents cannot control and may not be happy about. For this reason, there is a need for a soundly based programme of RSE in schools.

Vision Statement

‘The vision of Citywest & Saggart CNS is to create a safe, calm, respectful and inclusive learning environment in which the school community works in close partnership to encourage children to develop skills which will allow them to participate to their full potential in school and society. We strive for the highest quality teaching and learning while fostering the holistic development of the individual child. Our school recognises and celebrates the individual abilities, talents and achievements of the children whilst also instilling a sense of belonging, respect and empathy towards those around them’.

The school operates under the values of DDLETB and the CNS model but places increased emphasis on the values of **Respect, Responsibility, Empathy, Creativity, Care, Belonging and Collaboration**. Aims and Objectives

The primary RSE programme aims:

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being 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
- 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 his or her own sexuality and that of others while growing and developing
- To assist parents in their role as the primary educators of their children
- To understand the physical changes taking place with the onset of puberty (4th class girls, 5th & 6th Class)
- To enable the child to acquire an understanding of, and respect for, human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction (5th / 6th Class)

We support the aims on which RSE is modelled. We encourage good behaviour, open communication, understanding and respect of differences, 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.

Curriculum Planning

Strands & Strand Units

RSE forms part of the national curriculum for SPHE by NCCA and will be taught from Junior Infants to 6th class. RSE will be covered under the strands *Myself and Myself and Others* of the SPHE curriculum. Please see appendix 1 for teacher planning support. Figure 1 shows the RSE topics to be taught in the Junior and Senior cycle of the school.

Figure 1

Topics covered up to 2 nd include:	Topics from 3 rd to 6 th include:
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping Safe • Bodily changes during growth and birth (birth-9 years) • Making age appropriate choices • Appreciating the variety of family types and a 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 (Junior/ Senior Infants) • Naming the 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, exercise • Keeping Safe • Expressing Feelings • Appreciating the variety of family types within 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(4th 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)***
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*Fourth class girls and boys will be taught the lesson on physical changes during puberty together, with a follow up lesson a week later in separated groups. Only the girls will receive information on menstruation in 4th class.

**Fifth class girls and boys will be taught the lesson on puberty together, with a follow up lesson a week later in separated groups to reteach and have space for questions and reflection.

***Sixth class girls and boys will be taught the lesson on reproduction together, and a week later will be separated for a follow up lesson to reteach and provide an opportunity for questions. There will be follow up lessons on responsibilities which are of equal importance to the context of these lessons.

When teaching about sexual intercourse, it is advisable for teachers to give young people information on the age of consent which, following the passage of the Criminal Law(Sexual Offences) Act, 2006 is 17 years of age for both males and females.

Topics such as sexually transmitted diseases, contraception, masturbation and abortion are not covered in the primary school RSE programme.

Approaches & Methodologies

When implementing the programme, staff at Citywest & Saggart Community National School will endeavour to display respect for and sensitivity towards the different cultural family backgrounds experienced by the children. 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
- Classroom discussion
- Group work
- Games
- Art activities

- Reflection
- Circle time
- Guest speaker

The teaching approach in school is child-centred and will always take the age and stage of development of the children into account. Appropriate vocabulary relating to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, parts of the body and feeling will be used. The use of slang will be discouraged. The RSE programme includes several possibly sensitive issues, listed in **Appendix 1**. It is school policy to deal with these issues through structured lessons, as naturally as possible and without undue emphasis. A contract is drawn up at the start of the year in each classroom to ensure respect and sensitivity to others at all times. The importance of this contract should be emphasised before each sensitive lesson.

While students should not be encouraged to disclose personal or private information in class, there may be times when they do talk about their own lives. Confidentiality should be respected unless a teacher becomes aware that a child is at risk, in which case the appropriate action should be taken e.g. follow the procedures set down in the Child Protection Policy, notify parents, etc. It is important that students are made aware of the limits of confidentiality and that teachers do not give unconditional guarantees of confidentiality.

Questions arising from lesson content will be answered at an age-appropriate manner. The class teacher cannot answer questions which do not relate to the particular curriculum objectives for a class. Pupils will be informed if a question/issue is not on the programme and they will be advised to talk with their parents. Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents themselves if they feel that a question is very inappropriate.

When deciding whether it is appropriate to answer a question or not the teacher should consider:

- If the question is a moral one, while being sensitive to the different religious and non-religious backgrounds, the teachers will refer the child to speak to their parents or guardians
- If a question is a factual one and within the current class curriculum, the teacher will answer it sensitively
- It will be our policy not to answer personal questions about ourselves
- A question is an opportunity to clarify, to teach and to reassure
- The teacher will use Socratic Questioning techniques to challenge children sensitively to develop critical thinking by facilitating appropriate discussion. See **Appendix 2a**

The following sample responses could be used when addressing questions:

- I will do my best to answer your questions, but I may not be able to answer all of them
- That is something you will learn about as you get older
- Is that something you could talk to your parents/guardians/family
- We agreed in our contract that we would not ask anyone personal questions.

Staff should not invalidate questions but use limits.

For older children, a 'question box' can be used as part of a structured RSE lesson. Teachers can follow up on the written questions at a later date, thus allowing time to prepare suitable answers, consult with colleagues, etc. If issues arise which might be seen to contravene Children's First Guidelines, the teacher will notify the designated liaison person in the school. The Equal Status Acts 2000 and 2004 protect against discrimination on nine grounds, one of which is sexual orientation. The Acts oblige those who manage schools to protect students and staff from discrimination or sexual harassment. In Citywest & Saggart CNS we implement an equality policy which promotes the inclusion of images and stories of different types of families from an early age. These include images of same-sex couples. Situations may arise where children have questions about sexual orientation or who are taunting others about being 'gay'.

- A teacher may ask a child or a class group what they mean by the word 'gay'

- It will be explained that the word gay has two meanings. It can mean happy. Or it can be used to describe when a man loves/is attracted to another man or a woman loves/is attracted to another woman. In senior classes the vocabulary 'gay', 'lesbian', 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual' may also be used.
- Homophobic insults will be treated in exactly the same way as racist or other insults. The teacher will explain that such insults are hurtful to the other person and are not acceptable. The school's Anti-Bullying Policy may need to be implemented.

Children with Additional Needs

Special consideration will be taken to ensure that the needs of children with special educational needs are met. Considering the pupil's social and emotional development, instruction will be based on individual needs where possible. Teachers must also be mindful of children who have been exposed to bereavement or sexual abuse and offer appropriate support. Parents will be consulted around sensitive issues. Some children may have sensory needs which result in behaviour that may be interpreted as inappropriate. This behaviour may not necessarily be sexual but may stem from the fact that the child is stressed, bored, lonely or lacks access to other sensory experience. This should be borne in mind when helping a student to understand the boundaries between public and private behaviour.

Equality of Participation & Access

Staff at Citywest & Saggart CNS recognise and value diversity and equality. We believe that all children are entitled to access the services, and facilities that are available in the school environment. Ours is a co-ed, multi-belief school and we endeavour to challenge traditional stereotypes and ensure that equal opportunities are given to all. The class teacher will try to ensure that the whole class is present during discrete RSE lessons.

Organisational Planning

Timetable

RSE is taught in our school every year. One half hour period per week or one-hour fortnightly is timetabled in each class for SPHE; some aspects of RSE will be included in the content taught during this time. Other aspects will be taught in a cross-curricular manner, e.g. the anatomical names of the male and female body parts will be taught during Aistear role play lessons in the baby clinic. The sensitive objectives of RSE should be taught in the second term to allow time for the teacher to establish a relationship with their class and to provide opportunities for reflection and questioning over the following months.

Individual Teacher's Planning & Reporting

This plan for RSE and the curriculum documents will inform and guide teachers in their long- and short-term planning in RSE. Objectives covered by discrete lessons will be included as well as new objectives covered throughout the day via the hidden curriculum or integration with other subjects. There will be thematic weeks throughout the year which will emphasise certain objectives of the RSE curriculum. These include Friendship Week, Intercultural Week, Human Rights Week. Teachers will ensure that all sensitive objectives are taught by the class teacher themselves. **No student teacher or substitute should engage in these lessons.** Each teacher will keep a Cuntas Míósúil and this will inform our progress and needs when evaluating and reviewing our progress in RSE.

Resources

Each teacher has access to the following materials:

- Relationships and Sexuality Education Manuals (DES)
- 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
- Picture Books on different families see **Appendix 3a**, INTO poster and RESPECT guidelines
- Anatomical dolls

All other resources used should be agreed at school management level, ensuring that the content is appropriate to the needs of their students in line with school policy, and suitable for school programmes as outlined by the NCCA. All resources are available for parents/guardians to view if they so request prior to the delivery of the lesson.

Policies

When implementing this policy, the school staff should be familiar with the content and procedures outlined in the following policies:

- Child Protection Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- SPHE Policy

Staff Development

A nominated teacher/ teachers will attend RSE training with the PDST at the local education centre which is Dublin West Education Centre. They will then feedback information to the relevant teachers. 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 B.O.M. to ensure content is covered by another teacher or an outside speaker.

Parental Involvement – Home School Links

We recognise that parents are the primary educators of their children and that the home is the natural environment in which RSE should take place. The role of the school, therefore, is seen as one of support for the work of the home in this area. Parents have a responsibility to become involved in educating their child in relation to the RSE curriculum. Parents should inform themselves of the programme content and prepare children for the information they will acquire around the sensitive areas.

The start of year information meetings will briefly cover the RSE content for the appropriate year group and there will be a specific RSE information session for parents to discuss the content in greater depth. Detailed information will be sent home in advance of, and no later than a fortnight before, the lessons begin describing the language and resources being used (**Appendix 4**). Parents are invited/welcome to view the curriculum and lessons and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns. Class teachers may provide copies of specific 'Home-school Links' letters to parents/guardians in advance of the teaching of the sensitive lessons and a copy of the Busy Bodies book about puberty will be given to parents with pupils in 5th and 6th class. Parents will also be directed to the Health Promotion website where they can view the videos from the programme which may be used in the classroom setting with their child.

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. Concerning matters of a confidential or sensitive nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what a child may say in the yard or classroom.

If in accordance with the Education Act, 1998, Section 30 (2)(e), a parent wishes to withdraw their child from the lessons pertaining to the sensitive elements of the RSE programme, they will first be informed of the following:

- That the school cannot prevent the child hearing the language being used or discussed by other children outside of these lessons
- That our recommendation would be that they attend, so that they learn the factually accurate information, rather than hearing inaccurate information from other sources
- It is their duty now to take full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves

If a parent wishes to withdraw their child for the sensitive lessons, they must first organise a meeting with the SPHE coordinator to discuss their concerns. If the parent is not satisfied with this meeting, they will then bring their concerns to the principal. If they still wish to withdraw their child, they must sign a withdrawal form (**Appendix 5**) and return it to the school principal. Their decision will be honoured on the understanding that the parent is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves. This form will need to be completed each year that the child is withdrawn. The child will be accommodated in another teacher's classroom in the school.

Implementation

Success Criteria

The success of this plan will be evaluated through teacher's planning and preparation, and if the procedures outlined in this plan have been consistently followed. We will also judge its success if the children have been enabled to achieve the aims outlined in this plan.

Implementation, Review, Ratification & Communication

The Board of Management of Citywest & Saggart Community National School supports and fosters the development of this RSE policy.


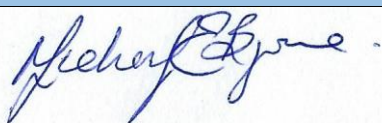
- The school principal has overall responsibility for the implementation of the plan.
- The class teacher has the responsibility for implementing this policy within their classroom.

- All teachers have the responsibility to be aware of the content of this plan and the limitations and responses to be used with children when conversations happen outside of the discrete RSE lessons.
- The SPHE coordinator has the responsibility to:
 - Maintain and supplement the relevant resources agreed at school management level
 - Advise on and monitor the implementation of the RSE programme in the second term of school
 - Initiate and lead the review of the policy informally at planning meetings and formally on an annual basis, at the end of each academic year.
- Parents/guardians have the responsibility to familiarise themselves with this policy and support the learning of their child.

As with all our policies, parents have access to this policy on our school website and upon request to the school office. Parents will be informed about the policy on enrolment and again before the implementation of the lessons each year.

Timetable for Review

This policy will be reviewed and, if necessary, amended in the academic year 2023/2024 or sooner if required.

This policy was ratified by the school's Board of Management	
Signed:  Chairperson	Signed:  Principal
Date: 21.1.21	Date: 21.1.21

Appendices

Appendix 1: RSE Sensitive lessons overview

Appendix 2a: Socratic questioning prompts

Appendix 3: SPHE resource list

Appendix 3a: Book resource list

Appendix 3b: Book resource list (continued)

Appendix 4: RSE leaflet overview

Appendix 4a: RSE parents information leaflet

Appendix 4b: Tom's flower power RSE PowerPoint

Appendix 4c: RSE busy bodies booklet

Appendix 4d: RSE parent's presentation

Appendix 5: Letter for RSE withdrawal

