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

**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 Scoil Mhuire Naofa 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.

The process was initiated in Scoil Mhuire Naofa by the staff at a staff planning day and was further developed following whole staff training.

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 schools obligation to provide for all the needs of the student body and respond appropriately to sensitive and emotive issues relating to emerging sexuality.

Aims

To enhance the personal development, well being and self esteem of each child.

To enable each child to gain an understanding of and respect for human love, reproduction and sexual activity in a sensitive and measured way.

To enable the child develop healthy friendships and relationships.

To develop and promote a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life.

Relationships to School Ethos

The school ethos affirms and supports close links between school and home. To this end parents were encouraged to play a meaningful role in the RSE Policy formation through discussion, feedback through the BOM and Parents Association and the ratification of the finished product. Parents also have the right to withhold their children from participating in RSE classes.

Guidelines for Policy Development

Step 1: Study relevant RSE documents

Step 2: Review current provision in the school which falls within the broad categories of SPHE and RSE.

Step 3: Draft the Policy Statement

Step 4: Publicise, amend and finalise draft policy

Step 5: Circulate RSE policy Statement

Step 6: Initiate RSE programme

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.

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).

Methodologies

Circle time is used in all classes to build confidence and address fears. Senior pupils are treated in a

mature way and are encouraged to discuss issues that arise with their parents.

The Stay Safe Programme is taught in each class every year.

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 the

lectures is borne by the BOM.

**Topics covered in 1st and 2nd class**

* Making and keeping friends
* Making age appropriate choices
* Appreciating family life and developing an understanding that reproduction, birth, life, growth and death are all part of the circle of life
* Recognising and expressing feelings
* Self care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep (link with PE Healthy Eating Policy and SPHE)
* Expressing opinions and listening to others
* Keeping safe

**Topics covered in 3rd and 4th classes** include:

* Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise
* Keeping safe
* Expressing feelings
* Family relationships
* Making healthy and responsible decisions
* Forming friendships
* Bodily changes
* The stages and sequence of development of a baby from conception to birth (4th class)

**Topics covered in 5th and 6th classes** include:-

* Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise
* Keeping safe
* Expressing and coping with changes in feelings
* Family relationships including the responsibilities of being a parent
* Making healthy and responsible decisions
* Different types of love
* *Bodily changes in adolescence (5th class)*
* *Reproduction (6th class)*

**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 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 and spiritual 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.
* The teachers’ right to opt out will be honoured which will not affect the teaching of the subject.
* Parents will be informed by letter at the beginning of the third term prior to the teaching of sensitive issues. 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, the class teacher will remain present in the class. Parents will be informed 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.
* A parent’s right to withdraw a pupil from the sensitive issues process will be honoured on the understanding that the parent(s) is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves.
* Parents are obliged to inform the school in writing of their decision to withdraw the child from the sensitive issues classes. The school strongly recommends that the child remains part of the class however, any parent who wishes to withdraw their child is asked to discuss with the principal how this may be facilitated.
* Teachers do not cover topics such as contraception and same sex friendships. Children who ask questions in class on content outside the designated curriculum are encouraged to discuss the issue with their parents.
* In 5th and 6th class the Busy Bodies programme can be sent home on loan for a night so that parents have an opportunity to view the content in advance. The children will view the parts of the programme relevant to their class level in school as part of the RSE programme.

**Child Protection**

The school follows the DES child protection guidelines and has a Child Protection Policy with Anne Marie Moylan as Designated Liaison Person. In cases of disclosure; the DLP will follow the procedures as set out in Children First.

**Teacher Choice/Staff Development**

The teacher’s right to choose is enshrined in the policy and teachers may wish not to teach specific aspects of the Busy Bodies programme or require additional resources. In this case either team teaching will apply whereby teachers will swap classes for specific lessons to cover the content as outlined by the class teacher or a suitable speaker may be employed by the BOM. The teacher may need to plan the specific material to be covered and should be present during the talk.

The staff will be encouraged to engage in training in:-

The Child Prevention Programme (Stay Safe)

Relationships and Sexuality Programme (RSE)

SPHE