

# St. Nessian's National School



## Relationships & Sexuality Education Policy

## School Details:

St. Nessian's National School is under the patronage and management of the Catholic Church. It is a mainstream, mixed school, located in the Parish of Raheen

## Introductory Statement

All pupils enrolled in St.Nessian's National School are equally valued and respected irrespective of gender, social background, religious belief, family circumstances, educational achievement, physical characteristics or level of intellectual functioning. The school seeks to foster the spiritual, moral, intellectual, social and cultural development of the pupils and is currently in the process of developing a whole school approach to the promotion of the wellbeing of the child in line with the DES *Wellbeing policy statement and framework for Practice (circular 0042/2018)*.

The school is a community where moral values such as honesty, truthfulness, justice, fairness, sensitivity to others, and civic responsibility are nurtured and developed. These values are underpinned by our Catholic ethos.

This policy is an approved approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in St.Nessian's NS. It was developed in consultation and discussion with the staff, the Board of Management and parent representatives. It is intended to inform teachers and parents as to what material is taught in the RSE programme within the SPHE curriculum.

## 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*).

RSE is an integral part of SPHE and must be taught in this context. It provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality and relationships through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework. In particular. It addresses the meaning of human sexuality, relationships, growth and development, relevant to personal and social skills.

## Relationship of RSE to SPHE

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) provides opportunities for pupils to learn basic personal and social skills which foster integrity, self-confidence and self-esteem while nurturing sensitivity to the feelings and rights of others.

SPHE:

- Is a lifelong process and consequently RSE is a continual process throughout primary school and is not confined to once off inputs or lessons.
- Is a shared responsibility between family, school, health professionals and the community.
- Is a generic approach. It is not so much about the specific content of RSE but rather the relationship with a child's skills, attitudes, values and understanding relevant to a range of social, personal and health issues.
- Is spiral in nature. RSE is revisited at different stages throughout the child's time in school. This will provide opportunities to consolidate and build on previous learning. This allows for issues and topics to be explored in a manner appropriate to the children's needs, abilities and levels of maturity.

Through SPHE and RSE, members of the school community should be enabled to enhance their self-esteem and wellbeing through

- A sense of identity
- A sense of purpose
- A sense of belonging
- A sense of security
- A sense of competence
- A sense of respect

The school has a responsibility to ensure that the curriculum is free of bias and that issues of inequality in any form are addressed and dealt with (SPHE Teacher Guidelines, p25). In learning about cultures and traditions of others, the children in St.Nessan's NS can develop a sense of respect for difference and appreciate the contribution that such has to offer. It will encourage them to be inclusive with each other, challenge prejudice and learn how to live in an intercultural society.

## School Philosophy

The Education Act (1998) states that: a recognised school shall promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of the students and provide health education for them, in consultation with the parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school.

The school's characteristic spirit is influenced by the teaching and traditions of the Catholic Church. Although the position taken in regard to moral issues, which arise in the teaching of secular subjects such as RSE is informed by Catholic teachings and traditions, the work of the School is conducted in an atmosphere of tolerance and respect for religious differences. The school nurtures freedom of thought and a personal relationship with God. This is most evident in the teaching of religious education and in the prayer life of the school community.

St Nesson's NS supports the aims of the RSE programme. We encourage good behaviour, open communication, understanding and tolerance of differences, and respect for 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.

## Aims of our RSE programme

The child will be enabled to

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

## Parental Involvement:

The RSE programme in St. Nessian's National School will seek to build on what the children experience at home and outside school. Parents are therefore encouraged to support the programme as appropriate.

- By discussing attitudes, beliefs and values with their children in order to clarify issues and develop relevant general skills in this area.
- By the encouragement of responsible, informed and age-appropriate decision making and the recognition that decisions have consequences.
- By encouraging a positive sense of self-worth in their children.
- By discussing issues with regard to bullying, with the class teacher and or the Deputy Principal/ Principal as appropriate
- By using the proper names for parts of the body and bodily functions from the earliest appropriate age.
- By discussing with their children changes in their bodies as they mature and develop, how babies are conceived and born, and other sensitive aspects of the programme. Such discussions should ideally take place both before and after such topics are dealt with in school.

Parents will be informed that the school fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE programme including sensitive aspects of the programme at enrolment.

Information on the RSE policy guidelines will be provided at the point of entry to the school, so that all new parents may be fully informed.

The lesson plans as devised by the Department of Education and Skills, and relevant videos, will be available to parents on request to the Principal.

Parents will be informed in advance of lessons on the sensitive elements of the RSE programme with a letter relevant to what will be taught at their child's class level (example of letter Appendix 2).

The letter will be issued in advance, giving parents the opportunity to meet with the relevant class teachers if they wish, to discuss or clarify what is covered and to prepare their children. It also gives parents an opportunity to become involved, to inform themselves of the programme content and to prepare children for the information they will acquire around the sensitive elements of the RSE programme/SPHE curriculum.

Parents have a responsibility to become involved, to inform themselves of the programme content and to prepare children for the information they will acquire in RSE/SPHE. Parents are invited/welcome to view the curriculum and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns.

The school acknowledges that parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children about growing and changing.

Should you wish your child to be withdrawn from sensitive RSE lessons, you must inform your child's class teacher in writing before the end of September of any given school year.

Parents have the right to withdraw their child from sensitive RSE lessons, however they are encouraged to take responsibility for educating their child in this aspect of the curriculum. In making this decision, parents are urged to distinguish between innocence and ignorance. Lack of correct and appropriate information can leave children vulnerable, anxious and confused. Parents are welcome to seek guidance from the Principal/ SPHE co-ordinator on approaches and resources to use.

If a parent wishes to withdraw their child from the sensitive lessons, the reasons for doing so should be given in writing before the end of September of any given school year and this will be centrally filed. The school is responsible for implementing the RSE programme, so in order to account to the Department of Education & Skills for pupils not participating, supporting documentation is required.

If a child has been withdrawn from the sensitive RSE lessons, the school takes no responsibility for what the child may hear following on from the teaching of the lessons eg. What they may hear on yard from other pupils.

### Current Provision of RSE included in the school curriculum:

- SPHE lessons (provided through discrete curricular time and through integration with other subject areas)
- Use of the RSE Manuals and Busy Body resources
- Stay-Safe Programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Webwise resources
- Religious Education
- Adapted resources for SEN from [www.pdst.ie](http://www.pdst.ie)

## Policies and processes which support SPHE/RSE

- Child Protection Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Code of Behaviour and Excellence
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Enrolment & Admissions Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Wellbeing Promotion Process (currently in the early stages of development)

### Child Protection

This policy is cognisant of all aspects of our current Child Protection Policy & Child safeguarding statement. In keeping with DES child protection guidelines, the school has assigned the Principal as Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and the Deputy Principal as the Deputy DLP. Where a child protection concern is raised, the procedures outlined in the schools Child Protection Policy will be followed.

### Management & organisation of the teaching of RSE curriculum:

#### Curriculum Content

The curriculum as devised by the NCCA will be followed as published, and will be taught from Infants to 6<sup>th</sup> class. All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school, the whole school plan for SPHE and the RSE policy. Each class teacher will teach the content for their class level as laid out in the curriculum, and utilising the RSE manuals to complement their teaching.

- The strands *Growing and Changing*, and *Taking Care of my Body* are covered in Year 1 of a 2 year SPHE plan.
- The sensitive lessons are covered as part of these broad topics (refer to appendix 1)
- Where an outside speaker is used (usually 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>), the class teacher will remain in the classroom, as per circular 0042/2018. The speaker will be made aware of the school's RSE policy & Wellbeing Promotion Process (currently in developmental stage). Parents will be informed if an outside speaker will deliver content information to pupils & parental consent will be

requested. Where possible, an outside speaker will address the parents in a separate meeting before he/she delivers content to the pupils.

- Special consideration will be taken to ensure that the needs of children with SEN are met. Taking into account the pupil's social and emotional development, instruction will be based on individual needs where possible. Parents will be consulted around sensitive issues.
- Parents have the right to withdraw children from the sensitive RSE lessons. These children will be supervised in another classroom as they engage in other curricular activities.
- Children will be encouraged by the class teacher/ speaker to recognise that certain information is for them only and it would be inappropriate to discuss this with younger siblings/children for example.
- If a Teacher has concerns about teaching certain elements in RSE they should consult with the Principal. Any teacher has the right to opt out of teaching elements of RSE. It is the responsibility of the B.O.M. to ensure content is covered by another teacher or an outside speaker.

### Dealing with Questions

It is natural that children should wish to ask questions in the area of RSE. All questions answered will reflect the parameters of the curriculum.

Questions to the teacher may be oral or written within the group setting and answered within boundaries of the curriculum and school policy. If any questions asked by children are deemed to be inappropriate, the teacher will refer the child to their parents/guardians, or state that this information may be available at a later stage of the curriculum, or in post-primary school.

The school cannot guarantee confidentiality if a child asks a question of a personal nature or discloses personal information. With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom outside of the RSE lesson.

The following considerations will be made when responding to children's questions:

- Awareness of circumstances in which the question has arisen
- Clarification of what information is required
- Determination of whether the question is appropriate or relevant/who it is relevant to
- Provision of an age appropriate answer
- Deferral of the question to be answered at home or in the future



The RSE programme is divided into two main parts:

1. The general programme which contains content covered through the SPHE strands and strand units and compliment the aims and objectives of RSE - Friendship, Self-identity, Family, Self-esteem, Growing up
2. The second part will deal with any sensitive/specific content covered through RSE strands and strand units. These sensitive aspects are in **bold**.

Topics covered up to 2<sup>nd</sup> class include:

- Keeping Safe
- **Bodily changes during grown and birth (birth to 9)**
- Making age appropriate choices
- Appreciating family life
- 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 (*1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>*)

Topics from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class include:

- **Bodily changes**
- Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise
- Keeping Safe
- Expressing Feelings
- Family relationships
- Making healthy and responsible decisions
- Forming Friendships
- **Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (4<sup>th</sup> class)**
- **Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Class)**
- **Reproductive system of male/female adults (5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Class)**
- **Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship (5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Class)**

## Language

SPHE curriculum provides a context in which children are given opportunities to develop and enhance their language skills and to increase their vocabulary related to SPHE. Children should become aware of the power and influence of language. When used positively, language can build up, affirm and show respect to another human being but if used in a negative manner can hurt, diminish and demean. Children need to recognise and become sensitive to the ways in which they themselves use language in their relationship and their everyday interactions. Language is a powerful tool and should be used with respect and integrity for the dignity of each person.

There are two areas where the use of language is applied in RSE lessons:

- The formal use and teaching of language generally throughout the school.
- The use of language in discussion through formal RSE lessons.

The use of slang will be discouraged. Anatomical terms and language introduced is consistent with RSE materials books (appendix )

## Assessment

Assessment in RSE is important to enable the teacher to pitch the lessons correctly to their respective class group.

The teacher may use:

- Observation and questions to assess the children's engagement and interest
- Use of teacher designed tasks such as worksheets, quizzes or games
- Use of reflection or a learning log.

## Resources

- Relationships and Sexuality Education Manuals (DES). Each class teacher has a copy of the appropriate manual.
- Stay Safe programme
- Walk Tall Programme.
- Busy Bodies DVD and booklet. This DVD and booklet were developed to support the teaching of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class component of RSE within the context of SPHE. It is available for download at [www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie)
- All resources are available for parents/guardians to view if they so request prior to the delivery of the lesson.

## Provision of Ongoing Support

- Opportunities provided by our Education Centre will be brought to the attention of staff members. Teachers will be encouraged to attend CPD in RSE.
- Application for in-school support from PDST sought when necessary.
- Staff meetings utilised as a platform for discussion and development of RSE materials.

### Appendices:

1. Sensitive lessons and classes they will be taught in
2. Sample letter
3. RSE Vocabulary taught
4. Standard 2 year plan
5. Approaches and methodologies - suggestions

## Review

The policy will be reviewed after every two years. The policy may also be reviewed at an earlier time should a need arise. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made.

This plan was ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting on:

Date: 1st April, 2019.

Signed: John J. Murphy.  
(Chairperson)

Date: 1st April 2019

Signed: Marie McKeogh  
(Principal)

Class	Strand /strand Unit	Sensitive Content Objectives   consult curriculum – for complete objectives in <u>Growing and changing</u> and <u>Taking care of my body</u>	Language	Pages in RSE Resource Materials Book for sensitive objectives	Pages in Walk Tall for sensitive objectives	Supplementary resources
Junior /Senior Infants	Myself Growing and changing Taking care of my body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growing and changing</li> <li>Become aware of new life and birth in the world</li> <li>Develop an awareness of human birth</li> <li>Taking care of my body</li> <li>Name parts of the male and female body using anatomical terms</li> </ul>	womb breastfeeding penis vulva	New Life p68 My Body p147 Caring for new life p137	Our Amazing Bodies p94 (Senior Infants book)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anatomically correct dolls</li> <li>Picture books of new baby</li> <li>Visit of baby to class</li> </ul>
First/ Second Class	Myself Growing and changing Taking care of my body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growing and changing</li> <li>Begin to understand that reproduction, birth, growth and death are all part of new life cycles</li> <li>Taking care of my body</li> <li>Name the parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions</li> </ul>	penis vulva vagina womb breastfeeding urethra	The Wonder of new life p59 /151 How my body works p67 / 161 Growing means changing p77/171	Our Amazing Bodies p37 (2 <sup>nd</sup> class book)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Picture books of going to the doctors</li> <li>Tom's Power Flower Books / activities on Life cycles</li> <li>Birth and new life in nature</li> </ul>
Third/ Fourth Class	Myself Growing and changing Taking care of my body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growing and changing</li> <li>Understand the physical changes taking place in both the male and female body</li> <li>Realise that changes do not occur at the same time but nonetheless are predictable and natural and that being different is normal</li> <li>Taking care of my body</li> <li>Recognise and discuss how feelings and emotions are affected by the physical changes that take place during puberty</li> <li>Discuss the stages and sequence of development of human baby from conception to birth</li> </ul>	Revise above umbilical cord changes in puberty	Preparing for new life p69 The wonder of new life p169 As I grow and change p83 Growing and changing p195	As I grow I change p175 (3 <sup>rd</sup> class book) Changing and Growing p140 (4 <sup>th</sup> class book)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Body Systems</li> <li>Picture books on Growing and Changing</li> <li>Body Systems</li> <li>Picture books on Growing and Changing</li> </ul>
Fifth/ Sixth Class	Myself Growing and changing Taking care of my body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growing and changing</li> <li>Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a loving committed relationship</li> <li>Taking care of my body</li> <li>Identify and discuss the physical changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty and understand that these take place at different rates for everyone</li> <li>Understand the reproductive system of both male and female adults</li> </ul>	Revise above wet dreams Busy Bodies language semen sexual intercourse periods	My body grows and changes p81 The wonder of new life p92 Caring for new life p103 Different kinds of love p141	My Amazing body p345 (5 <sup>th</sup> class book) Creation p121 (6 <sup>th</sup> class book)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Busy Bodies</li> <li>Power points recap</li> <li>Question Box</li> <li>Puberty Quiz</li> <li>Busy Body DVD</li> <li>Power points recap</li> <li>Question Box</li> <li>Puberty Quizzes</li> </ul>