

# Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy



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### Introductory Statement & Rationale

This policy statement is an approved approach to the teaching of RSE in Ballina Primary School. It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE.

### School Philosophy/Ethos

Ballina Primary School is a Roman Catholic School in the Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly. It aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual, including a living relationship with God and with other people. The school models and promotes a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The school provides religious education for the pupils in accordance with the doctrines, practices and tradition of the Roman Catholic Church and promotes the formation of the pupils in the Catholic Faith.

While Ballina Primary School is a Roman Catholic School, we welcome pupils of all faiths and none. Enrolment is open to all pupils living in the parish.

Our school identifies itself with the Parish of Ballina and Boher. The pupils are prepared for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Holy Communion and Confirmation.

Pupils are taught to appreciate and respect people of different religious affiliations and of different nationalities in the world.

### Definition of RSE

RSE aims to provide opportunities for children to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social frame work. It is an integral part of the Social, Personal and Health Education and is taught in this context. RSE aims to help children learn, at home and in school, about their own development, about their friendships and relationships with others. This work is based on developing a good self-image and self-esteem and providing them with appropriate information.

## **RSE in the context of our SPHE programme**

SPHE is a subject on the school curriculum that 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. It is taught from Junior Infants up to 6<sup>th</sup> class. RSE forms part of this programme. It is a spiral curriculum which ensures that topics are taught in a developmental manner through the child's primary school years. SPHE aims to develop the child's emotional, moral, social and spiritual growth as well as their intellectual, physical, political, religious and creative development. The content of the school's SPHE programme covers a wide range of topics such as healthy eating, alcohol and drug awareness, environmental issues, safety and social responsibility as well as RSE.

## **Including RSE in the Curriculum**

RSE is facilitated in the following ways

- in the context of a positive school climate and atmosphere
- in the context of an effective code of behaviour and anti-bullying policy
- as part of religious education
- as part of timetabled SPHE
- on an integrated cross curricular basis

## **Aims of our RSE programme**

- To help young people develop healthy friendships and relationships
- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child.
- 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.

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

### **Content**

We recognise that the 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 of the work of the home in this area. The content objectives covered will be taught as laid down by the Department of Education and Skills in the SPHE Curriculum 1999.

- RSE will be taught in all classes
- The SPHE/RSE curriculum will be of a spiral nature and all content objectives will be covered by the time children leave 6th class
- Questions arising from lesson content will be answered in an age-appropriate manner.
- All resources used in the teaching of the programme will be in keeping with the ethos of the school and in the spirit of this policy
- RSE will be delivered to the 6<sup>th</sup> class boys and girls (separately) by a trained mid-wife. Parents of these pupils will be invited to attend a talk on the content of these lessons prior to them being taught
- For an outline of the RSE programme - see Appendix I
- For the vocabulary to be taught in the sensitive areas - see Appendix II

### **School Policies and Curricular Plans which support our RSE**

Traditionally, we are a child-centred school. The educational and emotional needs of the children in our care are central to our curricular planning and policy making processes.

- Grow in Love
- SPHE Curriculum
- Stay Safe Programme
- School's Code of Behaviour and Discipline Policy
- Anti –Bullying Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- ICT and Social Media Expected Use Policy
- Administration of Medicine Policy

In keeping with the sentiment and spirit of these policies, we informally support many of the aims on which RSE is modelled. We encourage good behaviour, open communication, understanding and tolerance of differences and respect for staff 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 well-being of all the members of the school community.

## **Timetabling**

One half hour period per week is timetabled for each class for SPHE. RSE will be included in the programme taught during this time. It is envisaged that some aspects of RSE (including the sensitive issues, will be taught through a number of core periods while some material may be taught in a cross curricular manner. The “sensitive issues” of RSE will be taught in each classroom during the Second Term.

## **Parental Involvement**

RSE is an ongoing process throughout life. Parents are acknowledged primary educators of their children and the school work in partnership with them in a supportive role. On enrolment of their child, parents will be provided with an overview of the SPHE/RSE programme and with a copy of this policy document. Each year prior to implementation of the RSE programme parents will be informed when the teacher will begin to teach the programme. The curriculum books and resource materials are available online on [www.pdst.ie](http://www.pdst.ie) and parents are welcome to view these if desired.

## **Withdrawal from RSE**

Since RSE is an obligatory requirement of the Department of Education and Skills it should be inclusive. However, a parent's right to withdraw a pupil from themes pertaining to sensitive issues will be respected on the understanding that the parent is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education. Parents are obliged to inform the school in writing of their decision to withdraw the child from the classes based on sensitive issues. The school cannot be responsible for any information which a child may receive outside the direct teaching of RSE lessons.

## **Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN)**

Consultation with parents of pupils with SEN may be required. At the request of parents of pupils with SEN, the school will facilitate the teaching of the lessons on ‘sensitive issues’ on another occasion individually or in a small group setting. A variety of teaching methodologies may be required for some children.

## **Confidentiality and Child Protection**

Where there is disclosure by a child of abuse, the school will follow the Department of Education and Skills child protection guidelines and guidelines as set out in "Children First".

## **Resources**

Stay Safe Programme

RSE Manuals

Busy Bodies

Mindfulness Matters Juniors- 6<sup>th</sup> Class

Making the Links

Other resource material as deemed appropriate by class teachers in consultation with the Principal

## Provision for Ongoing Support

For parents

- Parents are welcome to view the curriculum if they wish
- There will be contact with parents prior to and during the teaching of lessons involving "sensitive issues". Parents of 6<sup>th</sup> class pupils will be invited to a briefing on the lessons which will outline the RSE programme for those pupils. Copies of the 'Busy Bodies' booklets will be available to parents at this meeting.

For teachers

- The Board of Management will support in-career development in the area of SPHE/RSE as opportunities arise

## Implementation

This policy will be implemented during school year 2023/2024.

## Review

This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis or sooner should a need arise. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made.

## Ratification

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July 2023.

**Signed:**

Chairperson of Board of Management

**Mr. Tom Moore**

**Date:** 18/07/23

**Signed:**

Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

**Príomhoide Bernice O' Connell**

**Date:** 18/07/23

## Overview of content Strand

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

Strand	3rd and 4th Classes	5th and 6th Classes
	Strand Units	
Myself	Accepting myself	Accepting myself
	Physical development	Physical development
	Growing and changing	Becoming an adult
	Birth and new life	Parenthood

**Myself and  
others**

Feelings and emotions

Personal Hygiene

Personal Safety

Making decisions

Roles and responsibilities in families

Portrayal of sexuality and  
relationships

Roles of males and females in society

Relating to others

Feelings and emotions

Personal Hygiene

Personal Safety

Making decisions

Changing relationships in families and  
friendships

Group affiliation and loyalty

Portrayal of sexuality and relationships

Sexual stereotypes

Relating to others

## Appendix II

Class	Language Taught
Junior/Senior Infants	“womb”
	“penis”, “vulva” and “urethra”-taught as obvious physical differences between boy/girl
	“breast-feeding” may be used in conversations as a means of feeding a baby.
	“penis” and “urethra” taught in terms of passing urine
First/Second Class	(See DES Resource Materials p 70-71)
	“vagina”
	Revision of terms listed above.
Third/Fourth Class	“developing foetus”
	“umbilical cord”
	“navel”
	“growth spurt”
	“menstruation”
	“development of breasts”
	“ovaries”
	“fallopian tubes”
	“sperm production”
	“erection”
Fifth/Sixth Class	“wet dreams”
	“sexual intercourse”
	“conception”
	“puberty”, “human reproduction” and “sexual intercourse” in the context of a loving family
	“pregnancy”
	Development of baby in womb
	“contractions”

Birth of baby

(See DES RSE resource materials for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>)