



Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

Introductory Statement

This Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy is a review of our existing policy of 2022 and is the result of collaboration between staff, management and parents.

All schools are required to have an RSE policy to detail how RSE is taught in the school, including the sensitive aspects. This policy is an approved approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE both formally and informally.

School Philosophy

The school community of Coole National School is committed to providing a safe, happy and nurturing context where our children are enabled to develop emotionally, physically, spiritually and cognitively. Our Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy seeks to ensure this aspiration is realised. We recognise that SPHE is intrinsic to the teaching and learning that occurs both formally and informally in school and in the classroom. Through our SPHE programme and subsequently through RSE, we wish to assist children to develop feelings of self-worth and self-confidence while encouraging their ability to relate to others in a positive way. The curriculum also encourages children to be aware of their rights as an individual while at the same time accepting responsibility for their actions as members of the school and the wider community. Our school values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. Our ethos means that we value respect, tolerance and openness through the lived experience of the children and school community. Parents have the primary role in the social, personal and health education of their children so their involvement will be encouraged as much as possible. SPHE and RSE are key components in supporting our school and children to develop into healthy young adults.

Context

The R.S.E. Programme will be delivered in the context of the Catholic Ethos of Coole National School.

Definition of RSE

Relationships and Sexuality Education 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.

RSE is an integral part of SPHE. SPHE is taught through school atmosphere and culture, integration and discrete teaching time. Formal RSE lessons and informal RSE messages must be consistent with the whole school approach to SPHE.

Guidelines

- 1) The teaching methods for R.S.E. will be as used in other areas of the curriculum. These methods will be child centered and appropriate to age and development of child.
- 2) The school will seek to communicate the Christian view of human life and human relationships in the context of the school ethos.
- 3) Sensitive subjects will be dealt with in a manner that takes into account the dignity, privacy and modesty of each child.
- 4) The programme will be taught by the class teacher in appropriate groupings.
- 5) The programme will follow N.C.C.A. guidelines
- 6) The resource materials used will be those provided by the Department of Education and Science.
- 7) There will be consultation with parents concerning children with special needs.
- 8) A degree of flexibility is advised as not all children are at the same emotional or maturity level.
- 9) The R.S.E. curriculum will be a spiral curriculum, revisiting key topics in a developmental manner and allowing for children who may not have embarked on earlier sections of the programme.

Aims of our RSE Programme

To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and wellbeing 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 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.

Broad Objectives

When due account is taken of abilities and varying circumstances, the RSE education curriculum should enable the child to (in conjunction with the SPHE curriculum)

- Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self
- Develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and wellbeing of others
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-worth
- Understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and wider contexts
- Develop an awareness of differing family patterns
- Come to value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood
- Develop strategies to make decisions, solve problems and implement actions in various personal, social and health contexts
- Become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change and understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity
- Develop personal skills which help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships
- Develop coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse
- Acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction
- Acquire the use of appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development
- Develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making.

We support the aims on which RSE is modelled. 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

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School

Curriculum Content –The curriculum by NCCA will be followed as published, and will be taught from infants to 6th 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 each year as laid out in the curriculum, and utilising the RSE manuals to complement their teaching.

Management of RSE

The strands Growing and Changing, and Taking Care of my Body are covered in Year One of a 2-year SPHE plan.

Special arrangements exist for the delivery of the sensitive elements from 4th class up. 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.

Parental Involvement

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

Parents will be informed in advance of lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme, with a letter relevant to what will be taught at their child's class level. The letter will be issued in advance, giving parents an opportunity to meet with relevant class teachers if they so 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 areas and discuss areas covered in RSE/SPHE.

Parents are invited/welcome to view the curriculum and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns at any time during the year. The school acknowledges that parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children about growing and changing. Following discussion with Principal and Class Teacher, if a parent wishes to withdraw their child from the sensitive lessons it should be given in writing stating their reasons for doing so and this will be centrally filed.

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.

Organisation and Curriculum Planning

RSE forms part of the national curriculum for SPHE by NCCA and will be taught from infants to 6th class. RSE will be covered under the following strands and strand units of the SPHE curriculum: Myself: Growing and changing: Taking care of my body

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
- Self-identity
- Family
- Self-esteem
- Growing up

2) The second section will deal with any sensitive / specific content covered through RSE strands and strand units. The sensitive aspects are in **bold**.

Topics covered up to 2nd include	Topics covered from 3 rd to 6 th include
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping safe • Bodily changes from birth (birth-9) • Making age-appropriate choices • Appreciating the variety of family types and the 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 and 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) • Introduction to puberty and changes (4th, 5th and 6th class) • Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (5th and 6th Class)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reproductive system of male/female adults (5th and 6th class) • Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship (5th, 6th class).
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Approaches & Methodologies

When implementing the programme, staff at Coole National School will endeavour to display respect for and sensitivity towards the different cultural and 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 class teacher will stay in the room at all times in accordance with Circular 22/2010).

Differentiation

Teachers use assessment and professional judgment to differentiate the programme and content to suit the needs of the class. Some techniques used in our school include:

- ensuring that objectives are realistic for the students
- ensuring that the learning task is compatible with prior learning
- providing opportunities for interacting and working with other students in small groups and spending more time on tasks

- organising the learning task into small stages and ensuring that the language used is pitched at the student's level of understanding
- understanding of the activity using task analysis, outlining the steps to be learned/completed in any given task, posing key questions to guide students through the different stages/processes, and to assist in self-direction and correction
- having short and varied tasks creating a learning environment through the use of concrete, and where possible every day materials, and by displaying word lists and laminated charts with pictures.

Sometimes the stage of development in a class can vary widely and strategies to differentiate in class can support gradual and appropriate teaching.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs

Adaptions to the way in which the content is delivered will be made for children with Special Educational Needs. Consultation with parents/ guardians in advance and anticipation of the children's needs will be central to ensuring learning is meaningful.

- Children may be pre-taught language or concepts in anticipation of whole class work
- Children may work in smaller groups or 1:1 on adapted and suitable material
- Any different or specific objectives related to the pupils own learning needs should be detailed in their IEP or IPLP in consultation with parents/guardians.

Language

The 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. During formal and informal RSE lessons the following will apply:

- Appropriate vocabulary will be used in formal teaching
- Relating to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, parts of the body and feelings will be used, the use of slang will be discouraged
- Anatomical terms and language introduced will be consistent with RSE Materials Books.

Assessment

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

In Coole School the teachers will use:

- Observation and questions to assess the children's engagement and interest
- Teacher-designed tasks such as worksheets, quizzes or games
- Reflection or learning log.

Confidentiality

The school follows Children First Guidelines 2017 and The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017.

If a child is withdrawn from the teaching of sensitive issues, we cannot guarantee that the other children will not tell or inform him/her about what happened.

Resources

Relationships and Sexuality Education Resource Materials (DES) - Each class teacher has a copy of the appropriate manual or access to it in online / pdf format. Other resources that support the broader aims of RSE include:

- Stay Safe programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Anatomical Dolls and Story books
- Busy Bodies DVD and Booklet. This DVD and booklet were developed to support the teaching of the 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th class component of RSE within the context of SPHE.
- Picture books across the 9 grounds of equality
- INTO Different Families, Same Love Poster

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
- Staff meetings utilised as a platform for discussion and development of RSE materials
- Support from a PDST Advisor
- Promotion and communication of resources available from www.pdst.ie.

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.

Next Review: 2026

Signed: Helene Quigley _____

Chairperson of Board of Management.

Coole N.S.

Signed: Lisa Doyle _____

Principal

Coole N.S.

April 2024