

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

St Aidan's National School, Kiltimagh

School

This policy on RSE relates to St. Aidan's National School, Kiltimagh, Co. Mayo.

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Our School Philosophy

St. Aidan's N.S. is a Catholic primary school catering for children from Kiltimagh and surrounding areas. The Principal and teachers, in co-operation with parents and the B.O.M., who are all partners in the education of our children, aim to promote a positive and caring culture which values, challenges, supports, encourages and affirms pupils, teachers and the school community and upholds the Christian/Catholic ethos and values of the school.

Definition of RSE

RSE is part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). RSE provides children with structured opportunities to develop the knowledge, attitudes, values, beliefs and practical skills necessary to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships as children and subsequently, as adults.

RSE 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. RSE is a lifelong process.

Relationship of RSE to SHPE

RSE will be taught in the context of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). SPHE looks at issues such as relationships at home and in school, building self-esteem, and learning skills of communication, decision-making and expressing feelings in an appropriate way. It also includes giving clear information on a range of topics, including healthy eating, alcohol, drugs, human growth and development, safety and social responsibility and environmental issues.

Sexually Sensitive Issues within the RSE programme

Junior / Senior Infants

P17 SPHE Curriculum

Name parts of the male/female body using appropriate anatomical terms

First / Second Class

P27 SPHE Curriculum

Name parts of the male/female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions

Third / Fourth Class

P 41 SPHE Curriculum

Discuss the stages and sequence of the development of the human baby in the womb

Fifth Class

P 56, 58 SPHE Curriculum

Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty

Reproductive system of male/female adults

Sixth Class

Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship such as marriage.

The following aspects of the RSE Policy will be covered annually.

4th. Class: Changes that occur in girls with the onset of puberty.

6th. Class: Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship such as marriage .

This content is covered under the strand units Taking Care of the Body and Growing and Changing of the SPHE Curriculum. These units, apart from the 4th Class content and the 6th Class content as previously mentioned, will be covered every second year in keeping with SPHE policy. All content objectives will be covered by the time the children leave 6th Class. The content may be modified to meet the needs of pupils in multiple class settings, children with special needs and pupils from various ethnic/cultural backgrounds. Regard shall be had by the school in the implementation of the RSE programme, for any pupil with special needs. In consultation with the parents, the school will facilitate the implementation of the RSE programme in accordance with his/her needs.

What the school currently provides

The SPHE programme currently implemented in St. Aidan's is in accordance with the Primary School SPHE Curriculum and the school also includes initiatives such as the Stay Safe, Be Safe, Alive O and the Walk Tall Programmes. St Aidan's also supports SPHE/RSE informally by creating a supportive climate which fosters self-esteem, respect, tolerance and fairness.

Aims of our RSE Programme

The aims of our RSE Programme are as follows:

1. To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child;
2. To help the child develop healthy friendships and relationships;
3. To foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework;
4. To enable the child to acquire an understanding of, and respect for, human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction;
5. To develop and promote in the child a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life;
6. To enable the child to be comfortable with their own sexuality and that of others while growing and developing.

Guidelines for the Management and Organization of RSE in our school

1. The school realises that, by its nature, RSE explores issues which give rise to differing views and sensitivities. The Primary School curriculum and guidelines shall be implemented in the school in consultation with the school community and shall be open to review at regular intervals. Issues of concern may be raised, discussed and decided upon with a view to achieving clarity and consensus on how issues are to be approached in the school.

2. The school shall adopt a flexible approach to the RSE programme bearing in mind the likely difference in emotional and intellectual maturity of the children and their readiness for understanding certain matters.
3. The school shall, at all times, in the implementation of the RSE programme fully respect the rights and responsibilities of the parents of each pupil. The school acknowledges the role of parents/guardians as the primary educators of their children. Children should receive this education/information at home in the first instance. Parents/guardians will be informed in advance when these lessons will be timetabled. Details shall be provided to the parents/guardians of the matters to be discussed in the lesson and the context of same. The teacher shall, if requested, discuss the matter with any parent/guardian in advance of the lesson. If a parent/guardian has concerns about any aspect of the RSE programme then the school will facilitate his/her/their right to withdraw that child from that aspect of the RSE programme on the understanding that the parent is taking responsibility for this education themselves. This decision will be submitted in writing to the Principal by the parent. Parents/guardians are assured of confidentiality when discussing such matters with the Principal or any member of staff.
4. While we acknowledge the significant role the classroom teachers plays in the RSE programme, a teacher may, if he /she so wishes, opt out of teaching any of the sensitive issues of the programme. The school may, from time to time, engage guest speakers to cover topics in the RSE programme with 5th/6th class and parents shall similarly be notified and informed. Any such speaker shall be made aware of this policy and the

ethos in which the RSE programme is being implemented. Parents will be invited to meet with the speaker before the speaker talks to the classes. The class teacher must remain present when the guest speaker is speaking.

5. Furthermore, depending on the sensitive nature of the topics to be discussed and the emotional and intellectual maturity of the pupils, the school may feel on occasion that it may be necessary to divide classes into single sex groups at first and then bring the entire class together afterwards or it may feel that it is necessary on occasion to deal with certain topics in a multi-class environment. The latter may be particularly so whenever it is felt appropriate to invite a guest speaker. However, in keeping with the over-riding principle of informing parents, all parents will be fully notified in advance of any such arrangements.

6. Any matters outside of the curriculum shall not be covered in the school as part of our RSE programme and any question raised by a pupil in any discussion surrounding the RSE, which is on a matter outside the curriculum, will not be answered. Pupils may be referred back to their own parents for answers. The school has no responsibility for any information which the pupil may receive outside the direct teaching of these lessons.

Provide for Ongoing Support, Development and Review

The school's policy on RSE shall be subject to review within the first year after implementation and then every 3-4 years thereafter. All members of the school

community shall be invited to the Policy Review Meeting where issues of concern can be raised and discussed. Any amendments necessary as a result of such review shall be undertaken and all relevant partners informed. The school shall support its teachers, pupils, parents and Board members who are involved in drafting RSE policy and implementing the RSE programme. The school commits itself to (1) enabling access to in-career development opportunities for teachers and the policy committee; (2) support efforts of parents to provide educational opportunities for other parents and (3) provide relevant RSE school resources.

Resources

1. Relationships & Sexuality Education Manual
2. Alive O
3. Video Material eg Sex Education for Boys/Girls - Angela McNamara, Busy Bodies

Signed : Peter Kilcayre
28-6-10