



Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy Guidance Notes for Parents and Teachers

Introduction:

- This policy was originally formulated in 2021 under the guidance of a PDST advisor & subsequently ratified by the Parents Association and Board of Management in September 2021.
- The policy was reviewed in June 2024.
- All staff were involved in the development of the plan. The formulation of this policy was also informed by the 'RSE Guidelines of the Department of Education', the 'RSE Guidelines; A Resource for Teachers and Boards of Management' (Veritas) and from the Policy Guidelines for RSE (PDST)
- This policy supports the school's work in the area of safeguarding our children. As a policy explicitly required under the Education Act 1998 and the DES Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017, it will be reviewed by the Board of Management every two years.
- This policy serves to inform parents of the nature of RSE education in our school and establishes guidelines for teachers whilst teaching lessons of a sensitive nature.

Ethos/Practice:

- Ravenswell Primary School is a Catholic school.
- In our school we aim to provide opportunities for children to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.
- We recognise parents as the primary educators of their child and aim to work together with them throughout the RSE programme.

What is 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.

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
- RSE education should include an input from all, and collaboration can be fostered through the teaching and delivery of materials

- 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 based on the needs of the child, therefore RSE education should prioritise the needs of the child and his/her environment, with appropriate adaptations made within the curriculum to suit individual requirements and individual school situations
- Is spiraling 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 and treated in a manner appropriate to the children's needs, abilities and levels of maturity
- Engages children to be involved in activity based learning. RSE should provide a range of learning opportunities that include working together, learning about one's own feelings and those of others, developing a sense of empathy and experiencing and supporting healthy relationships.

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.

The school has a responsibility to ensure that its 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, children can develop a sense of respect for difference and appreciate the contribution that such has to offer. It will encourage children to be inclusive with each other, challenge prejudice and learn how to live in an intercultural society.

Current Provision Included in the School Curriculum is:

- SPHE lessons (provided through discrete curricular time and integration)
- Use of the RSE Manuals and Busy Bodies resources
- Stay Safe Programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Webwise resources
- Religious Education

Aims of RSE: taken from the *Interim Guidelines for RSE Education, 1996*

- 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: taken from *Interim Guidelines for RSE Education, 1996*

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.

Policies which support SPHE/RSE:

- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Substance Use Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Digital Learning/Acceptable Use Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy

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 as per 2 year SPHE plan. The sensitive lessons are covered as part of these broad topics (as outlined below and see appendix 1)
- Special arrangements exist for the delivery of the sensitive elements from 3rd class up (see below)
- 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:

The way in which RSE is being introduced offers parents the opportunity to participate fully in planning and working with the school in supporting this aspect of the child's education.

- Parents will be informed about the RSE Programme for their child's level every September.
- As part of that meeting, Relationships and Sexuality language is given to parents for that class group and the language for the previous years' work is also mentioned.
- Prior to the Relationships and Sexuality module being taught a letter is sent out to all parents advising them of the upcoming lessons (see Appendix 2)
- Parents are then in a position to support the lessons in school by talking to their children prior to, during or after the lessons.
- All worksheets are sent home after each lesson.
- If a parent is concerned about any aspect of RSE, the first step will be to discuss these concerns with your child's class teacher or the school principal.
- If following that meeting you still choose to provide RSE at home, the parent is asked to record this request in writing to the Board of Management. Your rights as a parent with regard to your child's participation in the school's RSE programme will be respected. .

Organisation & 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

Myself > 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 class include:	Topics covered from 3rd class:
<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)	<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

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identifying some of their functions (1st/2nd). 	<p>womb(3rd, 4th class) • Introduction to puberty and changes (3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th class)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (5th and 6th Class) • 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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Sensitive Content (3rd-6th Class):

Sensitive content is taught as per 2 year SPHE plan – here is Ravenswell Primary School’s standard 2-year plan for SPHE:

Month	Classes <i>Junior Infants</i> 1st class 3rd Class 5th Class	Classes <i>Senior Infants</i> 2nd Class 4th Class 6th Class
September-October	Strand:Myself Strand Unit:Self Identity	Strand:Myself Strand Unit:Taking Care of my Body
November-December	Strand:Myself Strand Unit:Growing and Changing	Strand:Myself Strand Unit: Safety and Protection*
January - February	Stay Safe - All RSE - Sensitive Lessons**	Stay Safe - Sensitive Lessons RSE - Sensitive Lessons**
		<u>Infants - 2nd</u> Strand:Myself Strand Unit:Growing and Changing <u>3rd - 6th</u> Strand:Myself Strand Unit:Making Decisions
March - April	Strand: Myself and Others Strand Unit:Myself and My Family	Strand: Myself and Others Strand Unit: My Friends and Other People
May - June	Strand: Myself and Others Strand Unit:Relating to Others RSE - Sensitive Lessons (3rd Class)***	Strand: Myself and the Wider World Strand Unit: Developing Citizenship
	Strand: Myself and the Wider World Strand Unit: Media Education	

A copy of the *Busy Bodies* can be distributed to parents to support the implementation of the sensitive objectives in class

Tom's Flower Power (HSE story booklet for Junior classes) can be referenced to/ordered in and distributed to parents prior to RSE lessons each year -available on www.pdst.ie / www.healthpromotion.ie websites

* 4th class don't have many lessons for Safety and Protections in the Making the Links document so could do a few more Taking Care of my Body lessons if they wished

**These lessons can be integrated with SESE lessons, especially for 3rd class and up

***Some of these lessons may be taught later in the year based on the maturity of the third class. This is up to the teachers' discretion.

Approaches & Methodologies:

When implementing the programme, staff at Ravenswell Primary School will endeavor 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 42/2018)

Pupils with Special Educational Needs:

Adaptations 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 could be detailed in their Student Support Plan in consultation with parents/guardians.

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 your formal RSE lessons
- Appropriate vocabulary 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 is consistent with RSE Materials Books (see Appendix 1)

Questions:

We use some simple principles when fostering discussion and questioning;

- No personal questions of the teacher
- The Question Box will be availed of by the children
- The teacher will be mindful of their reaction to any questions
- Questions do not have to be answered straight away

Sample responses;

- I'll do my best to answer your questions but I may not be able to answer all of them
- That's something you'll learn about as you get older
- Is that something you could talk to your parents / guardians / family about?
- We agreed in our contract that we wouldn't ask anyone personal questions
- Somebody asked a question and the language that was used was slang language, what they meant to ask was....

For older children a 'question box' will be used as part of a structured RSE lesson. Teachers can follow up on the written questions at a later date, thus allowing time to prepare suitable answers, consult with colleagues, etc.

Question Box

During the delivery of each section of the sensitive lessons– children will be encouraged to place their questions into a box in the classroom.

These questions will then be monitored and screened with the teacher answering the questions the following week taking into account the following;

- Questions arising from lesson content will be answered in an age-appropriate manner.
- The class teacher cannot answer questions which do not relate to the particular curriculum objectives for a class.
- Pupils will be informed if a question/issue is not on the programme and they will be advised to talk with their parents.
- Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents themselves if they feel that a question is very inappropriate or needs to be communicated with home because of other reasons.
- No personal questions will be answered and children will be reminded not to share personal information about their families or others – but can share with the teacher after the lessons.

If issues arise which might be seen to contravene Children First Guidelines, the teacher will notify the Designated Liaison Person in the school

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 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 Booklet. This booklet was developed to support the teaching of the 3rd, 4th , 5th and 6th class component of RSE within the context of SPHE
- Tom's Flower Power Booklet/Resource
- Picture books across the 9 grounds of equality
- INTO Different Families, Same love Poster.
- RESPECT guidelines (Homophobic/Transphobic bullying)

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.
- This plan was ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting on 11th June 2024.

Signed:  ANN QUINLAN - Chairperson

Date: 11th June 2024

Appendix 1: Sensitive Language Grid

Class	Strand /Strand Units	Content Objectives <i>Consult curriculum for complete objectives in Growing and changing and Taking care of my body</i>	Language	Pages in RSE Resource Materials Book	Pages in Walk Tall	Supplementary resources	Picture Books
Junior Infants Senior Infants	Myself Growing and changing Taking care of my body	Growing and changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Become aware of new life and birth in the world Develop an awareness of human birth Taking care of my body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name parts of the male and female body using anatomical terms 	womb breastfeeding penis vulva	New Life p68 My Body p147 Caring for new life p137 At the beach or swimming pool p.153	Our Amazing Bodies p94 (Senior Infants book)	Anatomically correct dolls Picture books of new baby Visit of baby to class Tom's Flower Power	
First class Second Class	Myself Growing and changing Taking care of my body	Growing and changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin to understand that reproduction, birth, growth and death are all part of new life cycles Taking care of my body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name the parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions 	womb breastfeeding penis vulva vagina urethra	The Wonder of new life p59 /151 How my body works p67/ 161 Growing means changing p77/171 A Visit to the Doctor p.164	Our Amazing Bodies p37 (2 nd class book)	Picture books of going to the doctors Tom's Power Flower Books / activities on Life cycles Birth and new life in nature	
Third Class Fourth Class	Myself Growing and changing Taking care of my body	Growing and changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the physical changes taking place in both the male and female body Realise that changes do not occur at the same time but nonetheless are predictable and natural and that being different is normal Taking care of my body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise and discuss how feelings and emotions are affected by the physical changes that take place during puberty Discuss the stages and sequence of 	Revise above umbilical cord <u>Changes in puberty</u> Menstruation / periods Pubic hair Sperm Semen Erections Wet dreams Ejaculation Ovulation	Preparing for new life p69 The wonder of new life p169 As I grow and change p93 Growing and changing p195	As I grow I change p175 (3 rd class book) Changing and Growing p140 (4 th class book) The Wonder of New Life p.150	Body Systems Picture books on Growing and Changing Busy Bodies PDF pg 1 - 32 (puberty section) Busy Bodies videos Busy Bodies	

		development of human baby from conception to birth	Sanitary towel / pad Tampon Reusable products (pads, cups, pants) <u>Male Body Parts</u> Testicles Scrotum <u>Female Body Parts</u> Breast Nipples Clitoris Labia Cervix Fallopian Tube Uterus Ovary			Workbook Twinkl Powerpoints Roots of Empathy	
Fifth Class Sixth Class	Myself Growing and changing Taking care of my body	Growing and changing ▪ Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a loving committed relationship Taking care of my body ▪ 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 ▪ Understand the reproductive system of both male and female adults	Revise above <u>Busy Bodies language</u> Sexual intercourse Conception Fertilise Gender identity Biological sex Gender stereotyping Transgender Consent Sexual orientation	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 th class book) Creation p121 (6 th class book)	Busy Bodies PDF Busy Bodies videos Busy Bodies Workbook Power points recap Question Box Puberty Quiz Twinkl Powerpoints	
The Cedars SEN	Myself Growing and changing Taking care of my body	Cedars teachers liaise with children's mainstream class teachers to discuss level of comprehension and differentiate language and lessons accordingly. Lessons will be differentiated by expectation and outcome. Eg. one to one discussions, small group lessons, visuals, social stories, picture books.					

Appendix 2: Letter to parent



Ravenswell Primary School

Ravenswell, Bray

Co. Wicklow

Eircode A98 X8X7

Date:

Dear Parents/Guardians of _____ (class)

Relationships and Sexuality education is an integral part of the S.P.H.E programme. The sensitive elements of the Relationships and Sexuality education programme are covered under the Strand Units, 'Growing and Changing' and 'Taking Care of my Body'.

We will be completing these Strand Units with all class levels in the forthcoming weeks.

Please refer to the Ravenswell S.P.H.E & R.S.E School policies available on www.ravenswell.ie which outlines the material that will be covered at each class level and encourage further discussion on the topics at home.

If you have any concerns please make an appointment to see the class teacher.

Yours sincerely

Class Teacher

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Chairperson:
Principal:
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Ms Ann Quinlan
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