



George's National School

RSE Policy

Rationale

As a school we recognise the responsibility to provide our children with accurate information about health related matters. We must understand that children must have the opportunity to acquire the knowledge needed to follow a healthy lifestyle. The children will do this within a personal, spiritual and moral framework, in relation to the ethos of the school. Parents are continually informed as to the nature of this programme and have, to date, wholeheartedly supported the handling of this curricular initiative. The wellbeing of the whole school community is central to St. George's ethos and mission statement and school leaders and management actively promote wellbeing. The relationship between academic achievement and a child/young person's wellbeing is understood by all staff in the school.

Definition of RSE

RSE aims 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. This work will be based on developing a good image, promoting respect for themselves and others, and providing them with appropriate information.

RSE in the context of our S.P.H.E. programme

Throughout the school year, Social, Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E.) is taught as a subject from Junior Infants to 6th class. A wide variety of topics are included in this programme, at age-appropriate levels. RSE forms a part of this programme; it is a spiral curriculum that ensures that topics are taught in a developmental manner throughout a child's primary school years.

Aims of our RSE programme

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of each child.
- To help children 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 older 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 of the RSE programme

The RSE programme should enable the child:

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

Morals and Values

We acknowledge the importance of self-respect and the respect for others in relationships. It is also important that children recognise that they must learn to take responsibility for their own actions. The children should be encouraged to show responsibility towards their families, friends and the wider community.

The school will teach that ideally adult sexual relationships should be within the context of a lifelong loving commitment, while respecting and being sensitive to those for whom this is not a personal experience.

Equal Opportunities

We are committed to working towards equality of opportunity in all aspects of school life. School sex education should be relevant and accessible to all children. We are committed to ensuring that all information is disseminated to both gender groups.

Sex Education Programme

The RSE programme is taught in all classes in the school during the month of **March** each year. All of the teaching staff manage our sex education curriculum and take overall responsibility for the planning and delivery of the programme. Opportunities should be created for staff to work collaboratively in order to draw upon another's skills and expertise. The delivery of this programme should be flexible. It may be delivered through topics, planned aspects of science, through class discussions or circle time.

Infant Classes

Pupils in the infant classes will consider self-esteem, promoting good behaviour, caring for one another, countering gender stereotyping and promoting good personal hygiene.

Senior Level

Pupils at senior level are able to build upon self-esteem, relationships, social pressures, media pressures and human growth and development. A variety of teaching strategies and styles are used to reflect the needs of the individual.

Objectives

Strand Unit: Taking Care of my Body (Knowing about my body)

Infants and 1st/2nd class pupils are expected to be able to:

- name the parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terminology

5th and 6th class pupils are expected to be able to:

- identify and discuss physical and other changes that occur in girls and in boys at puberty and understand that these changes take place at different rates for everyone
- understand the reproductive systems of male and female adults

In some cases, 4th class girls are expected to be able to:

- identify and discuss the physical and other changes that occur in girls at puberty and understand that these changes take place at different rates for everyone

(It is at the discretion of the 4th class teachers as to whether this should be taught to girls in their class as some girls begin menstruating at this age)

Strand Units: *Growing and Changing*

(As I grow I change, Birth and new life, Feelings and emotions)

3rd and 4th class pupils are expected to be able to:

- discuss the stages and sequence the development of the human baby from conception to birth

5th and 6th class pupils are expected to be able to:

- understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed and loving relationship

Overview of what topics are taught at each class level:

Class Topic	Infants	1st	2nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th & 6 th
Knowing About My Body	X	X	X	X	X	X
New Life	X	X	X			
Personal Safety	X	X	X	X	X	X
As I grow I change	X	X	X	X	X	X
Birth and new life				X	X	X
Feelings and Emotions	X	X	X	X	X	X

Assessment

Assessment of RSE will take place informally in both the S.P.H.E. and Science curriculum.

Management and organisation of RSE in St. George's National School

We recognise that 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 for the work of the home in this area.

The approach in school is child-centered and will always take the age and stage of development of the children into account. Appropriate vocabulary relating to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, parts of the body and feelings will be used. The use of slang words will be discouraged.

Questions arising from lesson content will be answered in an age-appropriate manner. **The class teacher cannot answer questions that do not relate to the particular curriculum objectives for a class.** Pupils will be informed if a question or an issue is not on the

programme and they will be advised to speak with their parents about this issue. Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents themselves if they feel that a question is very inappropriate.

It is our school policy to not to answer personal questions and to discourage disclosure of personal or family information throughout this programme.

Our RSE programme is inclusive and so we actively discourage withdrawal. Should a parent seek to have their child withdrawn from the RSE lessons, the school will take account of parental concerns, and parents' right to withdraw their child from themes pertaining to sensitive issues will be honoured on the understanding that the parent is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves. The parent will be encouraged to come in to the school and speak to the teacher and/ or the principal about their concerns and will have an opportunity to view the RSE programme and the materials that will be used.

In the last week of February, a letter is sent home to parents making them aware of the content in advance. If, for whatever reason, a parent **does not** wish for their child to take part in the RSE programme, the bottom section of this letter should be signed by him/her and returned to the class teacher **prior to** the commencement of the programme.

Confidentiality

As a teaching staff we will endeavour to respect a child's confidence, unless we consider the child to 'be at risk'. Where confidentiality has to be breached, reasons should be given. Teachers **should not promise** a child that they will 'keep a secret'.

Ongoing support and development

The Board of Management of St. George's National School supports the implementation of the RSE programme. We recognise that our school has a supportive role to that of the home and we have a commitment to ensuring that:

- Our teachers have access to in-career development opportunities
- Relevant teaching materials are provided (Relevant RSE school resources will be sourced, stored and updated by the school's SPHE coordinator)

Specific Issues

Child Sexual Abuse

The Principal, Elaine Browne, is the named Child Protection Officer and Designated Liaison Person and any identification of child sexual abuse should be reported

immediately. If she is absent for any reason, the Deputy Principal, Laura Broadhead, should receive the report.

Homosexuality/Contraception/Abortion

Topics such as homosexuality, contraception and abortion are not in the primary RSE/SPHE programme, but children may ask questions about these subjects.

If such topics arise the class teacher will explain to the child that these are topics that they will learn about as they get older or a brief age-appropriate response can be given. The child will also be encouraged to discuss any questions they have in relation to these topics with a parent.

Answering Difficult Questions

Teachers will handle with **sensitivity** any explicit or difficult questions. They need not be answered directly and can be answered individually later or by a family member.

Reference to other policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Science Policy
- SPHE and Citizenship Policy

Description of Policy Formation and Consultation process

The Acting Principal, Mrs. O'Shea and the school's SPHE coordinator, Ms. Caldwell, in consultation with the Board of Management, have written this policy.

Review and Ratification

This policy was reviewed and ratified in November 2022 by staff and the Board of Management. It will be reviewed again in 2024.

B.O.M: _____

Date: _____

