



Scoil Iósaf National School,
Castlemartyr, Co. Cork.

*"Let the rooms be
full of happiness"*

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RSE Policy

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1. Introductory Statement

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.

This policy, in accordance with the provisions of the Child Care Act (1991), Education Act (1998), Education (Welfare) Act (2000) and the revised 'Primary School Curriculum Guidelines' (1999), details the aims and the content of the agreed programme for the provision and the delivery of '*Relationships & Sexuality Education (RSE)*' in Scoil Íósaf. We trust that by detailing these procedures, it will assist all parties in relation to the content of this important subject area.

2. Ethos

Scoil Íósaf NS, Castlemartyr, is a Catholic School and honours a Catholic School ethos at all times. The patron of the school is Dr William Crean, Bishop of Cloyne.

In Scoil Íósaf 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 strengthening their ability to relate to others in a positive way. The curriculum encourages children to be aware of their rights as individuals 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. 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 is encouraged as much as possible. SPHE and RSE are key components in supporting our school and children to develop into healthy young adults.

3. 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.

4. 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 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 spiral 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.

5. 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
- Weaving Wellbeing
- Adapted resources for SEN from <https://oide.ie/primary/home/wellbeing/sphe/resources/>
- Religious Education

6. 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.

In Scoil Íósaf, 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.

7. Policies Which Support SPHE/RSE

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

8. 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, a Catholic 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.

9. Management of RSE

- RSE is covered at each class level every second year as a part of a two-year SPHE plan.
- The sensitive lessons are covered as part of these broad topics (as outlined below and see appendix 1)
- 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.

10. Parental Involvement

- The RSE programme will be brought to the attention of parents by the school via Aladdin.
- 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; example of letters see Appendices 2 and 3.
- The letter will be issued in advance, giving parents an opportunity to meet with relevant class teachers and/or SPHE Co-Ordinator 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 online and may speak to the class teacher and/or SPHE Co-Ordinator 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. e.g What they may hear on yard.
 - Parents are obliged to relay any specific requests to each class teacher on a yearly basis, as their child progresses through primary school.

11. 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.

Appendix 1

Topics covered up to 2nd include:	Topics from 3rd to 6th include:
• 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).	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 (3rd, 4th class) • Introduction to puberty and changes (3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th class) • Menstruation (4th, 5th and 6th Class) • 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).

12. Timetabling

SPHE is formally timetabled within the school. The date and time is scheduled and communicated with every staff member well in advance. This allows for communication, where necessary with parents in advance of each lesson. Where a teacher is absent, the decision to proceed with the lesson is decided by SPHE Co-ordinator/Principal. The lesson itself may be taught at a suitable, later date.

13. Sensitive Content 4th – 6th

A standard approach to whole school planning for the content in SPHE can help us to develop consistency around the teaching of SPHE. This approach offers a sample guide to what to teach and when.

Within this standard approach all teachers are covering the same strand units at the same time. This supports the work of whole school atmosphere and integration with planned school activities. It also enables the teachers to

anticipate what will be covered and when, therefore increasing the scope for planned integration or thematic planning with other curricular areas.

The Relationships and Sexuality Programme is taught at each class level every second year. Sensitive lessons of RSE will be covered every year; S.I, 2nd class, 4th class, 6th class.

14. Approaches & Methodologies

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
- Role play
- Hosting visitors
- Engaging with R.P
- Viewing and discussing videos

15. Differentiation

Teachers use assessment and professional judgment to differentiate the programme and content to suit the needs of the class. Some examples of the techniques used are:

- 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

- group work and discussion
- higher and lower order questioning

- moderated whole class discussions through use of a ‘Question Box’
- Where there are two or more class teachers teaching a specific level, there must be a degree of collaboration on content and methodology.

16. Pupils with Special Educational Needs

Adaptations to the way in which the content is delivered will be made for children with Special Educational Needs if necessary. 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 School Support Plan in consultation with parents/guardians.
- If a child is deemed not developmentally ready for the content of specific lessons, by both parents and relevant school staff, provision may be accommodated e.g. placement in a younger class during the teaching of specific content.

17. 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. 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 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
- Correct anatomical terms will be used and encouraged in a natural way.
- Where language is understood to be derogatory, then teachers will endeavour to correct pupils.
- Anatomical terms and language introduced is consistent with RSE Materials Books (see Sensitive Language Grid <https://oide.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/RSE-Language-Grid.pdf>)

18. Questions

We use some simple principles when fostering discussion and questioning

- No personal questions of the teacher

- The 'Question Box' will be available to 4th, 5th and 6th class 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 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 (applicable from 4th to 6th)

During the delivery of each section of the sensitive lessons– children will be encouraged to place their questions into a box in the classroom / passed around the class. These questions will then be monitored and screened with the teacher answering the questions later that day or 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

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

19. Assessment

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

The teacher uses:

- Observation and questions to assess the children's engagement and interest
- Use of teacher-designed tasks such as worksheets, quizzes or games

20. Confidentiality

- The school follows Children First Guidelines 2023 and The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2023
- 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 was covered in class

21. 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. Examples of 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 RSE within the context of SPHE <https://oide.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/HSE-Busy-Bodies.pdf>
- Busy Bodies DVD (5th and 6th class) <https://oide.ie/primary/home/wellbeing/sphe/resources/> (Ref: Relationships and Sexuality Education - Teaching Resources – Busy Bodies DVD)
- Tom's Power Flower

22. 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
- Promotion and communication of resources available from www.oide.ie
- All teaching staff are required to ensure that content taught is comprehensively reflected in the Cuntas Miosuil.

23. Review

The policy will be reviewed after every three 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.

Ratified and signed on behalf of the Board of Management:

Signed:  (Chairperson)

 (Principal)

Date: 4th June 2026

Appendix 1

<u>Topics covered up to 2nd include:</u>	<u>Topics from 3rd to 6th include:</u>
• 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).	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 (3rd, 4th class) • Introduction to puberty and changes (3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th class) • Menstruation (4th, 5th and 6th Class) • 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).

Appendix 2- Letter to Parents Jun Infants-3rd Class

Dear Parents/ Guardians,

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.

Topics covered up to 2nd include:	Topics from 3rd to 6th include:
• 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).	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 (3rd, 4th class) • Introduction to puberty and changes (3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th class) • Menstruation (4th, 5th and 6th Class) • 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).

Please see link on **lesson content grid** for Junior Infants to 6th class which outlines the language that will be used at each class level (Sensitive Language Grid <https://oide.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/RSE-Language-Grid.pdf>)

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

Is mise le meas,

Principal

Appendix 3- Letter to Parents 4th-6th

Dear Parents/ Guardians,

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'.

Topics covered up to 2nd include:	Topics from 3rd to 6th include:
• 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).	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 (3rd, 4th class) • Introduction to puberty and changes (3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th class) • Menstruation (4th, 5th and 6th Class) • 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).

Within this content, there are a number of sensitive issues such as conception and reproduction. Our school policy outlines that these issues will primarily be taught in January/February and **we are now advising parents in advance that this will take place in the coming weeks.** We encourage you to talk to your child about what he/she will learn through RSE in a mature and respectful way.

The lessons will deal with the following topics:

4th Class: Menstruation

5th Class: Development of the male and female body, Menstruation, Role of the womb in nurturing new life, Personal hygiene

6th Class: Revise topics covered in 5th class and Conception and Birth

The lessons will be based on the **Busy Bodies Programme** which can be viewed or downloaded from the HSE website: <https://oide.ie/primary/home/wellbeing/sphe/resources/> (Ref: Relationships and Sexuality Education - Teaching Resources – Busy Bodies DVD)

The following guidelines have been put in place with regards to the delivery of the RSE programme.

•The RSE programme is taught within the ethos of the school and contemporary issues/topics are dealt with by the teacher at a level appropriate to the age and stage of development of pupils within a moral and spiritual framework.

•Relationships and Sexuality Education is an on-going process throughout life. A child's first experience of love, of intimacy and of relationships takes place in the family. Parents and the family are acknowledged as the primary educators of their children. We work in a supportive role with the parents, by complementing their role with a school based programme in RSE.

•A parent's right to withdraw a pupil from the sensitive issues process will be honoured on the understanding that the parent(s) is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves.

- Parents are obliged to inform the school **in writing** of their decision to withdraw the child from the sensitive issues classes, prior to lessons being taught (primarily in January) Any parent who wishes to withdraw their child are asked to discuss with the principal how this may be facilitated.

- Teachers do not cover topics such as contraception and same sex relationships. Children who ask questions in class on content outside the designated curriculum are encouraged to discuss the issue with their parents.

- The school has no responsibility for any information which the pupil may receive outside the direct teaching of the RSE lessons

- Questions arising from curriculum content will be addressed by the teacher in a sensible, sensitive and age-appropriate manner. Questions arising outside of the curriculum will be referred back to the parent(s).

Please see link on lesson content grid for Junior Infants to 6th class which outlines the language that will be used at each class level (Sensitive Language Grid <https://oide.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/RSE-Language-Grid.pdf>)

We are very aware of the importance and sensitivity of teaching the RSE programme to our pupils and we thank you for your ongoing support in ensuring your child receives a balanced education in Scoil Íósaf which prepares them not only for secondary school, but for life.

Is mise le meas,

Principal