

## **Relationships & Sexuality Education Policy**

**Updated:** Jan 2019

### **Drimnagh Castle Primary School**

#### **Introduction**

Drimnagh Castle Primary School is an urban school catering for boys from Second Class to Sixth Class.

#### **School Philosophy**

Our School Philosophy is encapsulated in our mission phrase: “To strive to help our pupils develop and learn in a happy, caring and Christian atmosphere”. The school is Catholic in denomination, although children of other denominations, or none, may enrol. Our teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (R.S.E.), therefore, will reflect Catholic moral teaching on sexual matters. However, as our children come from varying home backgrounds with differing family patterns, our teachers will be sensitive to, and non-judgemental of, family situations.

An integral part of RSE is learning to respect others; this includes respect for families and individuals who are different from the norm. In this context, the school is cognisant of The Equal Status Acts 2000 and 2004 which, among other things, provides protection against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

While the school will respond to children who have questions about sexual orientation, this will be done in the context of the school ethos and with an awareness that primary school children are probably too young to engage in any detailed discussion of sexual identity.

#### **Definition of R.S.E.**

R.S.E. helps children learn, at home and at school, about their own development, and about friendships and relationships with others. This work will be based on developing a good self-image, promoting respect for themselves and others, and providing them with appropriate information.

R.S.E. aims to provide opportunities for children to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

#### **Relationship of R.S.E. to S.P.H.E.**

In our school, R.S.E. will be a part of a wider programme of S.P.H.E, which contributes to developing the work of the school in promoting the health and well-being of our children. This happens in the context of their emotional, moral, social and spiritual growth, as well as their intellectual, physical, political, religious and creative development. The content of our school’s S.P.H.E. programme includes a wide range of topics such as healthy eating, alcohol, drugs, environmental issues, safety and social responsibility, as well as R.S.E.

## **Current Provision in School**

- To date, R.S.E. in Drimnagh Castle has been provided as part of a wider programme of S.P.H.E. using the following resources: Stay Safe, Walk Tall, R.S.E., Alive-O, Grow in Love. Also, outside speakers from Accord are invited on an annual basis to speak to the sixth class pupils on the topic of Relationships and Sexuality. In addition, children learn about elements of R.S.E. through Physical Education, Religious Education, Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (S.E.S.E.), and through anti-bullying and positive behaviour programmes. R.S.E. is also offered informally to pupils through a caring and supportive school atmosphere. It is also fostered in positive relationships among home, school and community.
- In the event of a child protection issue arising, staff will follow the guidelines set out in our Child Safe Guarding Statement

## **Aims of R.S.E**

The aims of R.S.E. are:

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being 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 himself and others while growing and developing;
- To enable the child to respect others; this will include respect for families and individuals who are different from the norm.

## **Objectives**

The R.S.E. curriculum should enable the child to:

- acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self;
- develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth;
- develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well-being of others;
- understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and in 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 some coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse;
- acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction;

- acquire and use an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development;
- develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making..

## **Management and Organisation**

Relationships and sexuality education (R.S.E.) is an integral part of Social Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E.) and will be taught in this context. R.S.E. - specific education will be covered in the strand units **Taking Care of my Body** and **Growing and Changing** as follows:

### **Second Class**

Children in second class will be able to:

1. Name parts of the male and female body, using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions.
2. Begin to understand that reproduction, birth, life, growth and death are all part of a life-cycle.
3. Appreciate what is necessary in order to provide the care for new born babies in both the animal and human world.
4. Realise the various roles parents and other family members have in providing for new born babies.

### **Third and fourth class**

At 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> class level the children will:

1. Understand the physical changes taking place in both the male and female body.
2. Realise that these changes do not occur at the same time but nonetheless are predictable and natural and that being different is normal.
3. Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby from conception to birth.
4. Identify the care that needs to be taken while waiting for a baby to be born.
5. Develop an appreciation of the wonder of a new-born baby.

### **Fifth and Sixth Class:**

In 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class the children will:

1. Identify and discuss the physical and other changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty and understand that these take place at different rates for everyone;
2. Understand the reproductive system of both male and female adults;
3. Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed, loving relationship;
4. Discuss and explore the responsibilities involved in being a parent and the emotional and the emotional and physical maturity required to be a parent.

The core of R.S.E. will be delivered in accordance with R.S.E. Guidelines Resource material, and the language contained therein to describe puberty, sexual intercourse and human reproduction will be used. Teaching methods will include group discussion, role play and project work.

While teachers will do their best to create an open classroom atmosphere and to answer as many questions as possible, they also have an obligation to set limits, particularly given the sensitive nature of some of the issues in RSE. Therefore, information provided will be

appropriate to the age and stage of development of the pupils, consistent with the SPHE curriculum, and consistent with school policy and ethos.

In delivering the R.S.E. programme The school will ensure that:

- Parents are acknowledged as primary educators of their children and the school will work in a supportive and complementary role;
- In each year children will study elements from all strand units;
- All content objectives will be covered by the time children leave 6<sup>th</sup> class;
- Teachers will teach only the topics laid down for the class and will answer only those questions on the programme for that year;
- Suitable guest speakers will be invited on an annual basis to speak to the sixth classes on the topic of Relationships and Sexuality. In this context, the school will also ensure that all information delivered will be informed by the content objectives of the S.P.H.E. curriculum and will be imparted in close consultation with the class teacher;
- The class teacher will always be present in the classroom during the visitors' presentation;
- A parent's right to withdraw a pupil from the process will be respected on the understanding that the parent is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves. It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the school in writing of this decision;
- The resource documents will be available in the school for inspection;

### **Ongoing Support for:**

#### (1) Teachers

The advice of the S.P.H.E. Cuiditheoir (Curriculum Advisor) was sought in drawing up the original R.S.E. policy. At regular intervals, staff training needs in this area are audited and support sought from the local Education Centre, if necessary. In-school seminars on R.S.E. will be arranged for teachers, if requested by them. Teachers will also be notified of courses on offer in R.S.E.

#### (2) Parents

While the home is the natural environment in which Relationships and Sexuality Education takes place, most parents look to schools for support in fulfilling their obligations to their children in this area of development. Consequently, courses in R.S.E. will be provided for parents through the auspices of the Board of Management and the Parents' Council if requested.

Parents' representatives were provided with an opportunity to see this policy in draft form. When ratified by the Board of Management, a copy of this revised policy will be available on the school website.

Ancillary school staff will be invited to read the R.S.E. plan.

### **Resources:**

Our main resources for R.S.E. are:

- Stay Safe
- R.S.E.
- Walk Tall
- Be Safe

**Review and Evaluation:**

This revised R.S.E policy and programme will be reviewed at regular intervals and will be updated/modified to take account of feedback and suggestions from all relevant stakeholders.

**Ratification:**

In draft form this revised plan was seen by all the school staff, representatives of the parent body, and by the Board of Management. Having taken into account views/amendments suggested by the above, this plan was ratified by the B.O.M. and is now the current R.S.E. policy for Drimnagh Castle Primary School.

Signed: Matthew Lavelle (Chairperson, Board of Management)

Date: 04/04/19

