

**ST ANDREW'S NS LUCAN**  
**POLICY STATEMENT ON RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION**  
**Part of Social, Personal & Health Education (SPHE)**

**SECTION A - POLICY STATEMENT FOR RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION**

The aim of this statement is to indicate how Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) which is part of Social, Personal & Health Education (SPHE) will be implemented in St Andrew's School Lucan. RSE as part of the SPHE programme was devised in accordance with the guidelines as developed by the National Council for Curriculum Assessment for the Department of Education & Science.

Our RSE programme will be drawn up by the school staff and will be based on this policy statement and the RSE/SPHE curriculum and guidelines.

The RSE policy of our school will be informed by our school's ethos as defined in our School Plan.

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.

**SECTION B - THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE SCHOOL**

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 encouraging their ability to relate to others in a positive way. The curriculum also encourages children to be aware of their rights as an individual 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. Our ethos means that 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 will be encouraged as much as possible.

SPHE and RSE are key components in supporting our school and children to develop into healthy young adults.

In St. Andrew's school we aim to:

- Prepare our pupils for life
- Awaken their interest in their environment: local affairs, national and world issues
- Lay a firm foundation in education
- Teach pupils that all are valued and respected equally and that all staff, teaching and ancillary are equally esteemed and respected
- Promote and nurture Christian moral values
- Encourage respect about religious differences
- Foster a personal and spiritual relationship with God
- Promote education as a process involving home and school
- Educate the social, personal, moral and spiritual as well as the intellectual.

### **Practice**

- Strong links are maintained with the Church of Ireland Parishes of Lucan and Leixlip
- Religious Education is a core subject
- The local Rector visits the school regularly
- Concerns for the less fortunate in society is encouraged and demonstrated where possible.
- Family bereavement and other family problems are dealt with sensitively
- Moral issues are approached in an age appropriate manner
- Parental support is recognised as a vital element in the educational process
- We endeavour to promote a positive secure school atmosphere at all times

### **SECTION C - 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.

## **SECTION D - 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 spiral in nature and 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. 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.

As children progress through a school based SPHE programme they will encounter issues such as substance abuse, sexuality, citizenship, child abuse prevention, prejudice and discrimination. The structure of the curriculum ensures that these issues are not explored in isolation but dealt with through the development of age appropriate skills, attitudes and values.

RSE is an integral part of SPHE and must be taught in that context. It provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality and relationships through processes which enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a spiritual and social framework. In particular it addresses the meaning of human sexuality, relationships, growth and development, relevant personal and social skills and aspects of parenting. Central to RSE is the fostering of self-esteem which enables the child to make responsible choices and decisions in all aspects of their lives, particularly relationships and sexuality.

## **SECTION E - RESOURCES**

- SPHE lessons (provided through discrete curricular time and integration)
- Use of the RSE Manuals and Busy Bodies resources  
[https://www.healthpromotion.ie/index.php/health/inner/busy\\_bodies](https://www.healthpromotion.ie/index.php/health/inner/busy_bodies)
- Stay Safe Programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Friends for Life/ Fun Friends
- Incredible Years
- Webwise resources
- Anatomical dolls
- All Together Now – Homophobic and Transphobic bullying lessons  
[www.pdst.ie](http://www.pdst.ie)
- RESPECT Guidelines (suggested approaches to teaching about different families) [www.pdst.ie](http://www.pdst.ie)
- Adapted resources for Special Educational Needs (SEN) from [www.pdst.ie](http://www.pdst.ie)
- Religious Education

## **SECTION F - THE AIMS OF OUR RSE PROGRAMME**

The aims of our RSE Programme are:

- 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
- To enable the child to make informed decisions and choices about the social, personal and health dimensions of life.
- To encourage the child to develop loving and committed relationships

## **SECTION G - THE BROAD OBJECTIVES OF OUR RSE PROGRAMME**

When due account is taken of abilities and varying circumstances, the RSE education curriculum should enable the child, in conjunction with the SPHE curriculum, to:

- 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.

## **SECTION H - GUIDELINES FOR THE MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATION OF RSE IN ST ANDREW'S NS**

The guidelines as laid down by the Department of Education and Science and as discussed in this document will be followed. It is recognised that during any school year a special teacher pupil relationship develops in the class, a trust and understanding of each other is acquired. Having regard to this, we need to allow the teachers flexibility and discretion as the need arises when dealing with certain areas of the RSE curriculum. We recognise that the parents are the primary educators of their children and we welcome their partnership with staff in the implementation of the programme.

The school intends to cover the sensitive areas of puberty etc. with all 5<sup>th</sup> class pupils. The school intends to cover combined puberty and reproduction with all 6<sup>th</sup> class pupils. Boys and girls will receive instruction together.

A teacher (recently trained in RSE) will deliver the sensitive areas of the RSE curriculum.

We will be using the Busy Bodies Adolescent Development Programme which provides information on the physical and emotional changes that children may experience during puberty, to reassure them that puberty is a normal part of growing up. Busy Bodies is a useful resource to help support both teachers and parents in providing information on puberty to children aged between 10 and 14.

- Busy Bodies was developed to support the teaching of the 5th and 6th class component of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) within the context of Social Personal and Health Education. It was produced by the Health Service Executive South working in partnership with the RSE Support Service, the National Parents Council (Primary) and the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme.

- The programme includes an animated child friendly DVD, booklets in English and Irish and a user guide for teachers.
- It is the responsibility of the parents to inform themselves of the programme's content, to prepare their children for the information they will acquire especially with regard to the sensitive areas, and to discuss with their children the areas that have been covered in RSE/SPHE in school.
- When a visiting speaker is being used they will be fully versed as regards the school's RSE policy.
- Parents will be informed in advance of lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme.
- Children will be encouraged to discuss the material being covered in class with their parents/ guardians. Where possible handouts, worksheets etc. will be provided. These should be completed by the child, signed by the parent/guardian and returned to the school.
- The Busy Bodies programme is to be used to complement the teaching of RSE, parents will be offered the opportunity to view this beforehand.

### **Management of RSE**

The strands Growing and Changing, and Taking Care of my Body are covered in Year One of a Two-Year SPHE plan. The sensitive lessons are covered as part of these broad topics, as outlined below (see also Appendix 1).

### **Approaches and Methodologies**

When implementing the programme, staff at St. Andrew's National School will endeavour 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)

### **Differentiation**

The very nature of RSE education and the differing maturity and growth levels of children means that some children will need more support to understand the concepts and content. Teachers use their assessment techniques to determine how to manage this. Usually some simple approaches can aid the teacher and children. Often differentiation can include the teaching strategies used to teach the same content.

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 in groups
- moderated whole class discussions through use of a Question Box

### **Pupils with Special Educational Needs**

Adaptions 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 should be detailed in their Individual Profile and Learning Programme 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**

- Language 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 2)

### **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
- Some questions relating to areas not covered in the RSE programme or of a very sensitive nature will be referred home to parents for discussion.

### **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

### **Confidentiality**

It is our experience that, during RSE lessons, children connect their learning through the discussion of personal stories or other information relating to the topics covered. We actively encourage discretion however we cannot guarantee that children will not discuss the content covered with their peers outside of the formal lessons, this

may include children whose parents have chosen not to have them included in the sensitive lessons.

While we acknowledge that it is important to protect the privacy of children and their families, confidentiality in this regard cannot be guaranteed.

It is important to note that disclosures must be dealt with in line with Child Protection Procedures (2017). The school follows Children First Guidelines 2017 and The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017.

## **SECTION I - POLICIES WHICH SUPPORT OUR RSE PROGRAMME**

Policies which support our RSE Programme are:

- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Substance Use Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Data Protection Policy

These policies are available on the [Policies Page](#) of our school website

## **SECTION J – POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS**

The nature of RSE means that the needs of children can change from year to year. Flexibility within the RSE policy can allow for this. However on-going review and evaluation of the policy and programmes in place are necessary to ensure it is meeting the needs of the children in St. Andrew's school. While every effort is made to delivered this programme as in the planned timeframe, in exceptional circumstances, such as an unplanned school closure, lessons may need to be rescheduled. .

The policy will be reviewed after every two years but 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.

**Signed**

**Date**

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## Appendix 1 – Parental Letter

Dear Parents,

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is an integral part of the S.P.H.E programme. All schools are required to have an RSE policy to detail how RSE is taught in the school, including 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. RSE as part of the SPHE programme was devised in accordance with the guidelines as developed by the National Council for Curriculum Assessment for the Department of Education & Science.

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 in the forthcoming weeks.

Please find attached the home/school links pages of the Relationships and Sexuality manual which outline the material that will be covered in class and encourage further discussion on the topics at home.

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

Yours Sincerely,

## Appendix 2 – Language for RSE Curriculum

The language that is promoted in the school must be one that nurtures both children and adults as unique and valuable human beings. It should respect cultural and other differences between people and be used in a way that encourages inclusiveness. Language can significantly contribute to building positive self-esteem, whereas if used in a negative manner it can cause frustration and hurt.

Class	Strand /strand Unit	Content Objectives Consult curriculum for complete objectives in Growing and changing and Taking care of my body	Language
Junior Infants/ Senior Infants	Myself ▪ Growing and changing ▪ Taking care of my body	<b>Growing and changing</b> ▪ Become aware of new life and birth in the world ▪ Develop an awareness of human birth  <b>Taking care of my body</b> ▪ Name parts of the male and female body using anatomical terms	womb vulva breast breastfeeding penis
First/ Second	Class Myself ▪ Growing and changing ▪ Taking care of my body	<b>Growing and changing</b> ▪ Begin to understand that reproduction, birth, growth and death are all part of new life cycles ▪ Appreciate what is necessary in order to provide and care for new born babies in both the animal and the human world  <b>Taking care of my body</b> ▪ Name the parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify <u>some of their functions</u>	penis vulva vagina womb breast breastfeeding urethra
Third/ Fourth	Myself ▪ Growing and changing ▪ Taking care of my body	<b>Class Growing and changing</b> ▪ Discuss the stages and sequence of development of human baby from conception to birth  <b>Taking care of my body</b> ▪ 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	Revise above words Umbilical Cord Pregnant



<p>Fifth/ Sixth Class</p>	<p>Myself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Growing and changing</li> <li>▪ Taking care of my body</li> </ul>	<p><b>Growing and changing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a loving committed relationship (6<sup>th</sup> Only)</li> <li>▪ Identify and discuss the changes that are experienced in growing from child to adult</li> <li>▪ Discuss and explore the responsibilities involved in being a parent and the emotional and physical maturity required to be a parent</li> </ul> <p><b>Taking care of My Body</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 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</li> <li>▪ Understand the reproductive system of both male and female adults</li> </ul> <p><b>NB</b>  <b>Please note that sexual intercourse is not covered until 6<sup>th</sup> Class</b></p> <p><b>Useful links and additional resources may be found on pages 15, 16 and 17 of the booklet 'Talking to Your Child about Relationships, Sexuality and Growing Up'</b></p>	<p>Revise above words  <u>Busy Body Language 5<sup>th</sup></u>      Puberty      Sex Hormones      Testosterone      Oestrogen      Progesterone      Pubic Hair      Clitoris      Labia      Fallopian Tubes      Cervix      Ovary      Period      Menstruation      Sanitary Towels      Tampons      Sexual organs      Foreskin      Wet dreams      Circumcision      Erection      Ejaculation      Sperm      Semen</p> <p><u>Busy Body Language 6<sup>th</sup></u>      (Revise above)      Sexual Intercourse</p>
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