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## **R.S.E. Policy– Scoil Mhuire/Scoil Bhríde/Scoil Eoin Phóil**

Scoil Mhuire, Scoil Bhríde and Scoil Eoin Phóil are three co-educational primary schools on the one campus. A Total of 790 pupils attend the schools and there are a total of 43 teachers. Classes range from Infants to Sixth. The schools are run by three Boards of Management and their ethos is Catholic. This Catholic ethos will inform the Relationships and Sexuality Education (R.S.E.) Policy.

### **School Philosophy**

The school ethos is one which values and respects the contribution of the entire school community. It set out to promote close working relations between teachers, Management and parents all of whom work together for the benefit of the children. The schools provide a curriculum and a working atmosphere to help each child develop his/her potential to the full. The school community believes in the holistic development of the child – academic, social, spiritual, psychological and emotional, recognising that each child is unique with a history and background that is also unique and that it is the pupil's right to have access to the entire range of education which the school provides.

The school recognises that the parents are the primary educators of their children and supports them in that role. In the area of R.S.E., above all, the schools' role is subsidiary to that of parents and it supports and complements their work. In formulating an R.S.E. policy there was collaboration between teachers, parents and Management.

### **Appendix 1:**

Provision will be made for the rights of parents who hold conscientious or moral objections to the inclusion of R.S.E. in the curriculum.

### **Appendix 2.**

Provision will also be made for those teachers who hold conscientious or moral objections to delivering the core aspect of this Programme while recognising the rights of the pupils to have access to the R.S.E. Programme.

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

R.S.E. is the process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, intimacy and sexual identity.

In the school context, structured opportunities will be provided for pupils to acquire a knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviour within a moral, spiritual and social framework.

Guidance to teachers and information for parents on when correct biological terms for body parts will be introduced is outlined in the R.S.E., programme.

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

At primary level R.S.E. aims to help children learn at home and in school about their own development and about their friendships and relationships with others. This work will be based on developing a good self image, promoting respect for themselves and for others and providing them with appropriate information. Central to R.S.E., is the fostering of self esteem through which the pupil becomes more responsible in making choices and decisions in all aspects of life and particularly in those relating to sexuality and relationships.

### **Broad Objectives of R.S.E.**

- Enable the child to acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self.
- Develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well being of others.
- Understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendship and in wider contexts.
- Develop an awareness and understanding 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 some coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse and 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.

### **R.S.E. in the context of S.P.H.E.**

Social, Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E.) provides opportunities for pupils to learn personal and social skills and to foster integrity, self confidence and self esteem while nurturing sensitivity to the feelings and rights of others. The school will follow the S.P.H.E. programme as outlined in the Primary School Curriculum. R.S.E. is an integral part of S.P.H.E. and will be taught for 9 half hour slots per annum within the S.P.H.E. Programme.

### **Current Provision in S.P.H.E.**

#### **Policies which support S.P.H.E./R.S.E.**

A Code of Discipline and Behaviour and a Policy on Bullying have been drawn up for the school with the co-operation of Teachers, parents and Management. In keeping with the sentiment and spirit of these policies the school supports many of the aims on which S.P.H.E./R.S.E. are modeled. It encourages good behaviour, open communication, understanding and tolerance of differences and respect for self and for others. A sense of responsibility is fostered and attention is paid to the well-being of all members of the school community.

### **Alive-O**

The religious instruction programme, “Alive –O”, is used in all classes. This programme extensively covers many of the topics of the S.P.H.E. and R.S.E. Programmes. The topics, particularly as they relate to self esteem and inter-personal relationships, are dealt with as they arise in the programme.

### **Health Education.**

Topics related to hygiene, care of the body, diet, adequate sleep, etc., are all dealt with in the context of Physical Education and on an informal basis at appropriate levels in the classroom.

### **Stay Safe Programme**

Since 1989 this programme has been taught in the schools. Children in the school are taught the programme at appropriate levels three or four times during their primary school years.

### **Relationships and Sexuality.**

For many years children in 6<sup>th</sup> classes have been offered the opportunity of participating in a one day programme on R.S.E., at a level suited to their age and in conformity with the ethos of the school.

These programmes have been conducted by visiting teachers or nurses with special training in conducting such courses. The content of these programmes will be very similar to what is outlined in the R.S.E. curriculum.

Prior to this programme taking place each year, parents of children in 6<sup>th</sup> class are invited to a meeting at which the visiting teacher or nurse seeks their co-operation. She/he explains the content of the programme, shows the visual materials he/she intends using and answers any questions that may arise.

Parents have the right to withdraw children from this programme.

### **Parent-Teacher Association**

The Parent-Teacher Association has also in the past organised meetings for parents to help them in the task of communicating with their children on these aspects of their development.

### **Management and Organisation R.S.E.**

- The Principal in consultation with the staff will make provision for the delivery of the R.S.E. Programme. Lesson plans are assessed and where necessary amended by the school staff. Pupil maturity and readiness for the different stages of the Programme are criteria on which this assessment is based.
- Nine half hourly class periods per year are required for R.S.E. – three lessons in each of the school terms.
- Parents will have the content of this Programme available to them in advance and may withdraw their child if they so wish (see Appendix 1). It may be possible to structure the time for R.S.E. close to the end of the school day or around lunch time in order that a pupil may absent himself/herself discreetly.

- Where a teacher has a conscientious objection to delivery of the core lessons provision will be made for that part of the Programme to be delivered by a colleague/visiting speaker (see Appendix 2).
- The child's right to privacy will be respected at all times.

**Classroom Strategy re., questions which may arise in class-**

- Teachers will explain that the amount of information given will be part of this years Programme and further information will be given at a later stage.
- If the question is factual and within the agreed Programme for that age group the teacher will answer it.
- If the question is a moral one Catholic Church teaching will be adhered to.
- If it is felt that the question is genuine the teacher may advise the child to ask at home or may consult the parents to get their permission to answer the question.
- Teachers will not answer personal questions.

**Ongoing Support, Development and Review:**

Where opportunities arise in-career development will be sought for teachers.  
 Parents' Association may be able to access training for parents.  
 There will be ongoing review of the R.S.E. programme within the school.

**(This policy has been prepared by the R.S.E. Policy Committees. It has been approved by the Board of Management)**

Revised 2006.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Withdrawal of Pupils:**

- ◆ The lesson plans and accompanying visual materials will be available in the school for inspection by parents beforehand.
- ◆ Parents will be notified of this in a standard letter in the month of September. It will be stated that it is proposed to teach this material to the class during the year – three lessons per term. The right of parents to withdraw their children from this class will be acknowledged. Parents will be given a deadline by which they have to notify the Principal that they do not wish their child to take part in some or all of the R.S.E. Programme.
- ◆ R.S.E lessons will only begin when this deadline has passed.
- ◆ In classes where no parent has asked for their child to be withdrawn the R.S.E. programme can proceed at a time which suits the class teacher.
- ◆ In classes where parent(s) have asked for their child(ren) to be withdrawn a timetable for teaching the nine lessons will be drawn up and sent to each parent who had asked for their child to be withdrawn. Teaching of R.S.E lessons in these classes will be timetabled to take place just before lunch or towards the end of the school day to facilitate the discrete withdrawal of children whose parents have a conscientious objection to their children taking part in some or all of the R.S.E. Programme.

## **Appendix: 2**

### **Provision for teachers who have conscientious objections to delivering sections of the R.S.E. programme.**

- ◆ The school plan will contain an outline of the R.S.E. Programme for each class. Lesson plans and accompanying visual materials will be available in the school.
- ◆ In September each year teachers will be made aware of the deadline by which parents can exercise their right to withdraw. Any teacher who has a conscientious objection to teaching parts of the R.S.E Programme will inform the Principal of this fact before the deadline has passed.
- ◆ The Principal will make arrangements for another member of the teaching staff to teach those lessons on behalf of a teacher who has a conscientious objection to being involved in delivering parts of the R.S.E. Programme.
- ◆ The teacher with a conscientious objection to teaching parts of the R.S.E. Programme will co-operate with arrangements necessary for another member of the teaching staff to deliver these sections of the Programme.

### **Appendix 3:**

#### **Introduction of correct biological terms for body parts.**

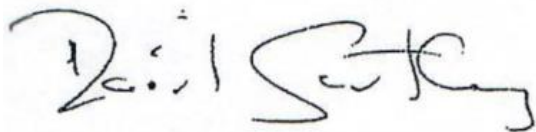
As stated in the Broad Objectives of R.S.E. the acquisition and use of an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development is a central objective of the Relationships and Sexuality Education programme. Correct biological terms for body parts are an essential part of such a vocabulary.

Correct biological terms for body parts will therefore be introduced progressively from Senior Infants onwards in line with the programme being followed in each school. These terms will facilitate the communication and discussion which takes place in the R.S.E. programme as it is implemented throughout the school. In many cases the use of correct biological terms for body parts and functions will be a clarification of words and phrases already in use.

A considerable amount of such clarification can take place informally at appropriate times in daily class interaction.

In classes where some parents have indicated that they wish their children to be withdrawn from certain parts of the R.S.E. programme the clarification of existing language and introduction of correct biological terms for body parts and functions will take place when these children are not present.

Signed:



Board of Management