



## RSE Policy

Kildare Town Educate Together National School promotes a philosophy of education in which no child is considered an outsider. We are a child-centred, co-educational, equality based and democratic primary school under the patronage of Educate Together. We aim to provide a learning environment that encourages and promotes the holistic development of each and every child attending our school, allowing them to give their best and be their best. We aspire to create an inclusive atmosphere which values each member of the school community for the contribution they make to school life, combining the partners with the professional role of the teachers.

### Introductory Statement

This policy is set out in accordance with the Department of Education and Science requirement for National Schools to provide a broad Social, Personal & Health Education (SPHE) programme, of which Relationships & Sexuality Education (RSE) is an integral part.

### School Philosophy

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.

### Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

RSE is the part of the SPHE curriculum that provides children with structured opportunities to develop the knowledge, attitudes, values, beliefs and practical skills necessary to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships as children and, subsequently, as adults.

RSE is a spiral programme from Junior Infants to Sixth Class, building-on and returning to similar topics each year to suit the age of the children.

It is school policy to teach the nine RSE themes each year, as detailed in *Resource Materials for RSE* (inspection copy available from the school office and the school's Parent-Teacher Association secretary.)

The teaching approaches used will include: classroom discussion, group-work, games, art activities, using stories and poems, class round/circle time, quiet time, a visitor to the classroom, video, educational drama and debate.



For more detail see 'Resource Materials for RSE' (inspection copy available from the school office and the PTA secretary) or visit [www.ecdrumcondra.ie/programmes](http://www.ecdrumcondra.ie/programmes) to view the 'Going Forward Together' information booklet.

#### 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.

*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.*



## 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. 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.

In an ever changing world, RSE encourages children through consistent messages that are taught in line with SPHE. 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.



### **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
- All Together Now
- RESPECT Guidelines (suggested approaches to teaching about different families)
- Adapted resources for SEN from [www.pdst.ie](http://www.pdst.ie)
- Learn Together Curriculum

### **Policies which support SPHE/RSE**

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

### **Parents/Guardians as the Primary Educators of their Children**

Informal education for RSE begins from the moment the child is born. Everything a parent does as they interact with the child gives messages about human relationships in the broadest sense. For example, how the parent smiles at, talks to, cuddles and bathes the baby; how they dress and toilet-train the toddler; how they talk to the child about his or her body and how it works; how they encourage and answer questions; how family members get on with one another - all these colour children's attitudes towards themselves, towards others and towards the wider world.

Kildare Town Educate Together NS supports and complements the rights and responsibilities of parents in its approach to the teaching of RSE:

- Parents/guardians will be informed that the school fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE programme including sensitive aspects of the programme at enrollment.
- Parents/guardians 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
- The letter will be issued in advance, giving parents an opportunity to meet with relevant class teachers 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/guardians are invited/welcome to view the curriculum and may speak to the class teacher 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. eg. What they may hear on yard.

### 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:

<b>Myself</b>
Growing & 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**:

<p><u>Topics covered up to 2nd include:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Keeping safe</li> <li>- <b>Bodily changes from birth (birth-9)</b></li> <li>- Making age-appropriate choices</li> <li>- Appreciating the variety of family types and the variety of family life that exists in our school and community</li> <li>- Recognising and expressing feelings</li> <li>- Self-care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep</li> <li>- Expressing opinions and listening to others</li> <li>- <b>Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms (Junior/ Senior Infants)</b></li> <li>- <b>Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions (1st/2nd).</b></li> </ul>	<p><u>Topics from 3rd to 6th include:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Bodily changes</b></li> <li>- Healthy eating, personal hygiene and exercise</li> <li>- Keeping safe</li> <li>- Expressing feelings</li> <li>- Appreciating the variety of family types within our school and community and how these family relationships shape us</li> <li>- Making healthy and responsible decisions</li> <li>- Forming friendships</li> <li>- <b>Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (4th class)</b></li> <li>- <b>Introduction to puberty and changes ( 4th, 5th and 6th class)</b></li> <li>- <b>Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty ( 5th and 6th Class)</b></li> <li>- <b>Reproductive system of male/female adults (6th class)</b></li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <b>Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth (6th class)</b></li></ul>
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### Sensitive Content

Many aspects of RSE are common to other school programmes. For example, 'the family' might be central to oral language work in English or Gaeilge, or a life-story project in history.

The RSE programme also includes a number of possible sensitive issues (listed on the next page). It is school policy to deal with these issues through structured lessons, as naturally as possible and without undue emphasis. Listing the issues here, along with the classes in which they are first taught, enables parents to prepare their children in advance for a particular topic, if they so wish (see section on parents/guardians as primary educators.)

Class	Strand/Strand Unit	Sensitive Content Objectives	Language	Pages in RSE	Pages in Walk Tall	Supplementary Resources
Junior/Senior Infants	Myself -Growing & Changing -Taking Care of my Body	Growing & Changing -Becoming aware of new life and birth in the word -Develop an awareness of human birth Taking Care of my Body -Name Parts of the male & female body using anatomical terms	Womb; Breast-feeding; Penis; Vagina	-New Life p.68 -My Body p.147 -Caring for New Life p.137	<u>Senior Infants</u> Our Amazing Bodies p.94	-Anatomically correct dolls -Picture books of new baby <i>Visit of baby to class</i>
First/Second Class	Myself -Growing & Changing -Taking Care of my Body	<b>Growing &amp; Changing</b> -Begin to understand that reproduction, birth, growth and death are all part of the new life cycle <b>Taking Care of my Body</b> -Name the parts of the female and male body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions	Penis; Vagina; Vulva; Womb; Breast-Feeding; Urethra	-The Wonder of New Life p.59/p.151 -How My Body Works p.67/p.161 -Growing Means Changing p.77/171	<u>Second Class</u> Our Amazing Bodies p.37	-Picture Books of going to the doctor - Books/Activities on life cycles <i>Birth and New Life in Nature</i>
Third/Fourth Class	Myself -Growing & Changing -Taking Care of my Body	<b>Growing &amp; Changing</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 <b>Taking Care of my Body</b> -Recognise how feelings and emotions are effected by the physical changes that take place during puberty -Discuss the changes and sequence of	Revise above. Umbilical cord; Changes in Puberty: Semen, Ejaculation, Wet-Dream, Erection, Pubic Hair, Menstruation, Periods (4 <sup>th</sup> Class)	-Preparing for New Life p.69 -The Wonder of New Life p.169 -As I Grow and Change p.93 -Growing and Changing p.195	<u>Third Class</u> As I Grow I Change p.175  <u>Fourth Class</u> Unit 7 – Changing & Growing p.140	-Body Systems -Picture Books on Growing & Changing -Body Systems -Question Box



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		development of human baby from conception to birth				
<b>Fifth/Sixth Class</b>	<b>Myself</b> -Growing & Changing -Taking Care of my Body	<b>Growing &amp; Changing</b> -Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth (6 <sup>th</sup> Class) <b>Taking Care of my Body</b> -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 -Understand the reproductive system of both male and female adults (6 <sup>th</sup> Class)	Revise above. <u>Busy Body Language</u> ; Sexual Intercourse (6 <sup>th</sup> Class)	-My Body Grows and Changes p.81 -The Wonder of New Life p.92 -Caring for New Life p.103 -Different Kinds of Love p.141	<u>Fifth Class</u> My Amazing Body p.345  <u>Sixth Class</u> Creation p121	-PowerPoints <sup>1</sup> Recap -Puberty Quizzes -Busy Bodies DVD -PowerPoints Recap -Question Box

Topics such as sexually transmitted diseases, contraception, masturbation and abortion are not covered in the primary school RSE programme.

### Approaches & Methodologies

When implementing the programme, staff at KTETNS will endeavor 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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 22/2010).

*This School's RSE Policy Acknowledges Different Relationship Types, as follows:*

When preparing for and delivering the RSE Themes *This is My Family* (Junior and Senior Infants,) *My Family* (First-Fifth Classes) and *Families* (Sixth Class) the teachers will take the different family patterns represented within the classroom into account. The family situations that particular



children *may* choose to share with their class (such as: father, mother and child; foster parents and child; father, grandparents and child; mother and child; father, father and child; mother, boyfriend and child; etc.) will be included in the lesson activities as naturally as possible and without undue emphasis.

Some children use the word '*gay*' from a young age. The use of the word '*gay*' in school will be addressed by staff in the following way. The staff member may offer a brief interpretation of the term, as follows: 'Sometimes two men or two women make a life together. They love and care for one another.' This interpretation would be presented as naturally as possible and without undue emphasis. The vocabulary '*gay*,' '*lesbian*,' '*heterosexual*,' and '*homosexual*,' may also be used. Refer the child with further questions regarding homosexuality to his/her parents. Use of the term '*gay*' as a slur (or in any inappropriate context) will be challenged by staff. We promote a school environment that is safe, effective, positive and respectful - Ref: *Code of Behaviour*.

### Co-Education

This is a coeducational school. We will teach boys and girls together, except for the following lessons:

- Fourth class girls and boys will be taught the lesson on physical changes during puberty separately, giving each group the same information and lesson.
- Sixth Class boys and girls will be taught the lessons on puberty and reproduction separately, giving each group exactly the same information and lesson.

### Differentiation

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

- 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 task
- 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 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 IEP or IPLP 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
- 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.

## Answering Questions

This policy document guides the school staff on how to respond to children's questions regarding RSE lessons:

- For some topics, an age appropriate 'contract' between teacher and class should be devised, where it is agreed that personal questions would not be asked or answered.
- Where a child seeks information that is beyond the content of this school's RSE programme and/or not considered to be age appropriate for the general body of pupils, the teacher should not answer the question, but refer the child to his/her parents.
- Staff should not invalidate questions, but use limits. Examples: 'I will do my best to answer your questions, but I may not be able to answer all of them.' 'Would you be able to ask your mum or dad about that?' 'That's something you'll learn about as you get older/you'll learn about in fifth class.'
- 'We agreed in our contract for this lesson that we wouldn't ask anyone personal questions.'
- Teachers can inform parents what questions are arising in class and how they were answered/not answered, as necessary.
- For older children a 'question box'\* can 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:*

During the delivery of each section of the sensitive lessons– children will be encouraged to place their questions into a box in the classroom. These questions will then be monitored and screened with the teacher answering the questions 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 – but can share with the teacher after the lessons.

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

#### 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
- Use of reflection or learning log.

#### Confidentiality

The school follows Children First Guidelines 2011 and The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2011

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 happened.

#### 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. Other resources that support the broader aims of RSE include:

- Stay Safe programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Anatomical Dolls and Story books



- Busy Bodies DVD and Booklet. This DVD and booklet were developed to support the teaching of the 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th class component of RSE within the context of SPHE.
- Picture books across the 9 grounds of equality
- INTO Different Families, Same Love Poster
- RESPECT guidelines.

### Further information on RSE

*Resource Materials for RSE* (Four books: Infants, 1st/2nd classes, 3rd/4th and 5th/6th) Inspection copies are available from the school office or the PTA secretary.

Website: [www.ecdramcondra.ie/programmes](http://www.ecdramcondra.ie/programmes) (A range of resources available, including the booklet 'Going Forward Together: An introduction to RSE for parents.')

Education Centre, Milehouse Road, Enniscorthy: The centre runs courses and information sessions for parents and teachers on an annual basis.

### Resources for Parents

Parents may find the following books useful. They are available on short-term loan from the school office. (Please review the material carefully and ensure it would be useful in your home situation.)

- *What's happening to me?* (boys) Usborne Books.
- *What's happening to me?* (girls) Usborne Books.
- *Let's Talk About Sex*, Walker Books.
- *Where Willy Went: The Big Story of a Little Sperm*, Red Fox Publishing.
- *Mummy Laid an Egg*, Red Fox Publishing.
- *Hair in Funny Places*, Red Fox Publishing.
- *What's Inside Your Tummy Mummy?* Red Fox Publishing.
- *Busy Bodies: A book about puberty for you and your parents*, Health Service Executive.

### Some frequently asked questions (see [www.ecdramcondra.ie/programmes](http://www.ecdramcondra.ie/programmes) for the 'Going Forward Together' booklet)

#### Why do we need RSE?

Many children get information and misinformation about relationships and sexuality from television "soaps", in the playground, from older friends- in many settings and in many ways that parents cannot control and may not be too happy about. Furthermore, children may be picking up messages from television, videos and films such as "aggression works", "it's okay to be dishonest if you're not caught", "I can do exactly what I want, now!"

There is a need to help children and young people to listen, to distinguish between differing points of view and to express themselves in an appropriate way. An Advisory Group established by the Minister for Education in 1994 to advise on the introduction of RSE into schools quoted the following examples from research and common observation:

- children receive informal and unsupervised information about relationships and sexuality
- such information may be inadequate and inappropriate



- young people are already exposed to a variety of sexual practices and attitudes through the media, particularly television, film and magazines
- children are maturing physically at even earlier ages
- the roles of women and men in society are changing
- the nature of family life is changing in a way that places many pressures on children and young people.

For these reasons, and because education is about developing skills for life as well as skills for learning, the Advisory Group concluded that there was a need for a soundly based programme of RSE in schools.

**Will RSE help children to make responsible choices?**

Yes. The choices and decisions we make in our lives are influenced by the values we hold. We receive these values from our religious and cultural traditions but also from our family, school and community. The methods used to teach RSE create opportunities for children and young people to discuss attitudes, beliefs and values about many issues and to develop the skills to make informed and responsible choices and decisions.

**Will RSE lead to a loss of innocence in children?**

No. However, we should distinguish between innocence and ignorance. Lack of correct and appropriate information can leave your child vulnerable, confused and anxious. On the other hand, providing information, combined with opportunities for discussion and decision-making within a moral framework, can be very helpful and valuable.

**Implementation/Ratification and Review**

Date Created	November 2018
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