

# RSE Policy

This policy statement is an approved approach to the teaching of RSE in Scoil Mhuire Naofa Rathfeigh. It was developed in 2015 with input from teachers, Board of Management and the Parents' Association. It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to the material covered in the RSE programme within the SPHE curriculum.

## School Philosophy

Scoil Mhuire Naofa, Rathfeigh is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Bishop of Meath. It is managed by a Board of Management, elected according to the procedures agreed by the Partners in Education. The school has a Catholic ethos and this ethos is a guiding principle in the formulation and implementation of this RSE Policy. This ethos recognises the value and dignity of each pupil and all those working in the school community, and aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person, including:

- a) relationship with God
- b) relationship with family
- c) relationship with teachers
- d) relationship with self
- e) relationship with others
- f) relationship with the environment.

This ethos also acknowledges the cultural and religious values of all the pupils attending the school. The school recognises that the parents are the primary educators of their children and we support them in that role.

In the area of RSE, above all, the schools' role is subsidiary to that of the parents. We support and compliment their work.

## Definition of RSE

RSE is an integral part of Social, Personal and Health Education 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. (p. 5 NCCA curriculum and guidelines for RSE). RSE is the formal approach to educating children in:

- Relationships with others – parents, siblings, friends and the community in general
- Respect for themselves and others
- Physical development – bodily functions and changes, and personal hygiene
- Emotional development – maturing in society
- Parenting, personal and social skills and relationships
- Sexuality in context – part of a loving relationship.

## Relationship of RSE to SPHE and Religion

Social, Personal and Health Education contributes to developing the work of the school in promoting the health and well-being of children and young people. This happens in the context of their emotional, moral, social and spiritual growth, as well as their intellectual, physical, political, religious and creative development. (p.5 Going Forward Together Parents Information Booklet).

The key characteristics of this programme are that SPHE is a lifelong process and is a shared responsibility between family, school, health professionals and the community. The main strands of the SPHE programme are:

- Myself

- Myself and Others
- Myself and the Wider World

It is clear that the Relationships and Sexuality Programme is correctly defined as being an integral part of the programme outlined above. Sexually sensitive issues will be covered within the strand units:

- Taking care of my body
- Growing and changing
- Safety and protection.

As stated previously, the content of all lessons will be governed by the schools' Catholic ethos as taught in the Alive-O Religion programme.

### **Current Provision**

Traditionally we have been a child-centred school. The educational and emotional needs of the children in our care are central to our planning and policy making processes. We have always, and will always continue to put the welfare of the children first.

Included in the school curriculum in Scoil Mhuire Naofa, Rathfeigh is:

- Religious Education (Alive-O)
- SPHE
- Stay Safe Programme

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 well being of all of the members of the school community.

### **Aims of our RSE programme**

When due account is taken of intrinsic abilities and varying circumstances, the Relationships and Sexuality Education curriculum should enable the child to:

- 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, change and understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity
- Develop personal skills, which will help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships
- Develop some coping strategies to protect themselves 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.

### **Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School**

#### **Curriculum Matters**

The curriculum as published by the NCCA will be followed. All content objectives will be covered by the time each pupil leaves 6<sup>th</sup> class. The curriculum will be taught from Infants to 6<sup>th</sup> class. It will ideally be taught by the teaching staff. ACCORD Facilitators, if available, are invited to the school

each year for sixth class pupils (preferably at the start of sixth class). They offer a Relationship and Sexuality Programme which complements the Social, Personal and Health Education on the curriculum. The aims of the modules given by the **ACCORD** Facilitators are:

- To give clear correct information about the changes that take place at time of transition at a spiritual, intellectual, emotional and physical level.
- To assist the children in building healthy relationships.
- To help the pupils develop a healthy, positive attitude towards their emerging sexuality and that of their fellow human beings.
- To help them to question what they see around them and to discuss between good and bad choices.

### **Written parental consent will be sought before the ACCORD facilitators visit the school**

In the event that ACCORD facilitators aren't available the 'Busy Bodies' DVD will be shown to the sixth class pupils by the class teacher. Written parental consent will be sought before the 'Busy Bodies' DVD is shown.

#### Fourth +Fifth Class Girls

In September each year, a female teacher will explain the procedures for dealing with the occurrence of menstruation during a school day( with fourth and fifth class girls ). There will be a brief explanation in accordance with our RSE Policy as well as an outline of best practice within our school to support the pupils. Written parental consent will be sought from parents/guardians at the start of the school year.

### **Organisational Matters**

- Prior to the teaching of lessons involving "sensitive issues", parents will be informed by letter with an accompanying outline of the lesson (including vocabulary to be used
- It is a parents/guardians right to withdraw a pupil from these lessons. This request for withdrawal must be made in writing.
- If parents/guardians request the withdrawal of a child from RSE lessons, provision will be made for them to leave the classroom at that time if possible – otherwise the child will be withdrawn, but it will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian. With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom. Should a child who is withdrawn from the sexually sensitive classes receive inappropriate information from others outside of these classes, it will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian to address the issues.
- Any teacher has the right to opt-out from teaching the sexually sensitive issues in RSE. It is responsibility of Board of Management to ensure that the curriculum will be delivered to the children, by another teacher, or an outside speaker.
- Parents are welcome to view the curriculum and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns.
- The RSE Programme will be taught in alternate years with the Stay Safe Programme i.e .2015/16, 2017/18 etc.

### ***At all times the child's and teacher's right to privacy will be maintained***

#### **Parental Involvement**

Parents/Guardians are the primary educators of their children and as such the school supports them in this role. **As stated parents/guardians will be given the option of withdrawing their child from a particular lesson if they so wish.** Parents/Guardians may access copies of the policy from the school office, or school website.

**Provision for Ongoing Support**

- Parents are welcome to view curriculum if they so wish.
- Funding will be sought for the provision of suitable materials when deemed necessary.

**Review**

This policy will also be reviewed on a yearly basis.

**Ratification and Communication**

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire Naofa, Rathfeigh School ratified this policy on 19<sup>th</sup> October, 2020.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Maire Kennedy.  
(Chairperson, Board of Management)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Seamus Tansley.  
(Principal)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

