



ST. COLUMBA'S GIRLS NATIONAL SCHOOL WITH FACILITY FOR DEAF CHILDREN

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUAL EDUCATION POLICY

This policy, in accordance with the provisions of the Child Care Act (1991), Education Act (1998), Education (Welfare) Act (2000) and the revised 'Primary School Curriculum Guidelines' (1999), details the aims and the content of the agreed programme for the provision and the delivery of '*Relationships & Sexuality Education (RSE)*' in St. Columba's Girls' School with Facility for Deaf Children. We trust that by detailing these procedures, it will assist all parties in relation to the content of this important subject area. The Chairperson / Principal will be happy to clarify any matters arising from this policy, should it be required.

School Ethos

St. Columba's School with Facility for Deaf Children, as an inclusive primary school, under the Patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Cork and Ross, is committed to the education and development of each pupil.

We welcome pupils of all denominations and from every culture and social background. We strive to foster each child's physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual development. We recognise that every child has a right to equal opportunity in education and have special concern for children in difficult circumstances and with special needs. We promote self-worth, love of learning, personal responsibility and the belief that we can make our world a better place.

As a staff, we relate in a Christian caring way to each other, thus providing an example to our pupils. In valuing the importance of partnership between staff, parents, management and community, we strive to be open, welcoming and accepting to all. Our school plays an active part in developing a sense of community in St. Columba's school with Facility for Deaf Children.

Our school prides itself on being an environment that is warm, friendly, safe, supportive, inclusive and inviting. We strive to maintain this positive climate for the entire school community. In this space the child is encouraged to reach his/her full potential on a holistic level.

Definition of RSE

RSE 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 others and providing them with

appropriate information. RSE also aims to provide opportunities for children and young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

Relationship of RSE to SPHE

RSE is an integral part of the 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.

Current Provision

- SPHE curriculum followed as per DES recommendations.
- Use of RSE Manuals, Busy Bodies DVD and Busy Bodies booklets, Tom's Flower Power.
- Religious Education taught through the Grow in Love programme.
- Currently, the teachers cover all aspects of RSE with their classes over a two year cycle.

Aims of our RSE programme

- To help young people develop healthy friendships and relationships
- To foster an understanding of and healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework
- To promote knowledge of and respect for human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction
- To understand the physical changes taking place with the onset of puberty
- To promote a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life
- To enable the child to feel comfortable with his/her sexuality and that of others

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School

[1] Organisational Matters

- Guidelines as laid down by the Department of Education and Skills and as discussed in this document will be followed.
- It is envisaged that the programme will be taught in an integrated manner where possible.

Parents

- All parents are to be informed in advance of the programme content. (*See Appendix 2 for sample letter*) Parents of 4th and 6th class pupils will be informed in advance of the formal lessons on the sensitive areas of the programme eg. puberty, sexual intercourse.
- The Busy Bodies Programme, used in 6th Class for the teaching of RSE and is available to parents online.
- The HSE resource, Tom's Flower Power and Parent Booklet is also available to parents online and is a useful resource for talking to younger children about relationships, sexuality and growing up
- Parents have the responsibility to become involved, to inform themselves of the programme content, to prepare children for the information they will acquire

around the sensitive areas and to discuss areas covered in school in RSE/ SPHE with their children.

- If a parent has a particular concern/ issue in relation to the teachings of the RSE programme, they are encouraged to discuss same with the teacher or the principal.
- As always, parents are requested to inform teachers of special family situations. These will be dealt with in confidence. It is the experience of the teachers that it is to everyone's benefit if they are kept informed.

[2] Curriculum Matters

- The Curriculum by NCCA will be followed as published and will be taught in Infants to 6th class. All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school and the policy. Each class teacher will teach the content for their class level.
- Children will be encouraged to discuss material being covered in class with their parents or guardians. Where possible, handouts, worksheets etc. will be provided to facilitate this; eg. Home-School Links pages of the RSE manuals.
- In a class situation, children will be encouraged to recognise that certain information is for them only i.e. that it is inappropriate for them to discuss information received about puberty, intercourse and birth with younger siblings, friends from outside school etc. It will be explained that other children will be given this information by their own parents and teachers when it is developmentally appropriate for them to receive it. However, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed outside of the school or on the yard.
- A respect for personal privacy and information will be emphasised. Teachers will neither give nor request personal information. Children will also be taught to recognise that certain personal disclosures are inappropriate within a group setting.

Topics covered up to 2nd class include:

- Keeping Safe
- Bodily changes during growth and birth
- Making age appropriate choices
- Appreciating family life
- Recognising and expressing feelings
- Self-care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep
- Expressing opinions and listening to others
- *Naming the parts of the male/female body using appropriate anatomical terms (Junior/ Senior Infants) *See Appendix 1 for details*
- *Naming the parts of the male/female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions (1./ 2nd) *See Appendix 1 for details*

Topics covered up to 6th class include:

- Bodily changes
- Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise
- Keeping Safe
- Expressing feelings

- Family relationships
- Making healthy and responsible decisions
- Forming friendships
- *Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (4th class)*
- *Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (Fourth class)*
- *Reproductive system of male/female adults (5th & 6th Class) *See Appendix 1 for details*
- *Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a loving, committed relationship. (6th Class) *See Appendix 1 for details*

Within the Deaf Facility, the boys and girls from 4th to 6th class, may have separate lessons when covering the sensitive issues (in italics above).

[3] Dealing with Questions

- A question box may be used throughout lessons where appropriate.
- Teachers will previously decide upon specific language and concepts for each class level in line with the SPHE curriculum and school ethos. **See Appendix 1 for details*
- Children's questions will be dealt with, taking into account the following criteria when relevant
 - By being aware of circumstances in which the question has arisen
 - By clarifying what information is required
- By deciding, if the issue is relevant, who is it relevant to
 - By giving a developmentally or age- appropriate answer
- By deferring the question as one which will be answered in the next lesson, one which should be answered at home or one which will be answered more fully in the future.

[4] Students with SEN

- Taking into account student's cognitive, social and emotional development and their class level (4-, 5- & 6- Class), instruction on the sensitive aspects of RSE, will be based on individual needs. The support and resource teachers will aid the mainstream teacher with the facilitation of appropriate and agreed RSE provision for the child with SEN if necessary. Careful consideration will be given to the NCCA Guidelines for Moderate and Severe and Profound General Learning Disabilities for RSE provision.
- There will be ongoing assessment of the programme through observation and feedback from parents, teachers and pupils.

Provision of Ongoing Support

- Parents are welcome to view the curriculum and resource materials if they so wish.

- Contact with parents will be made prior to the teaching of lessons involving “sensitive issues”. Parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children in sexual matters. The school RSE programme acts as a support only to parents, and parents retain the right to withdraw their children from classes. Should a parent decide to withdraw their child from RSE lessons in school, they will be asked to put this in writing with reasons for doing so. They will also be asked to include a sentence stipulating that they will take full responsibility to teach RSE to their child instead.

Links to other Policy Areas

- Child Protection Policy
- SPHE Policy

Child Protection: The school follows the DES child protection guidelines and has a child protection policy with the Principal as Designated Liaison Person. In cases of disclosure, the DLP will follow the procedures as set out in Child First.

Review

- This policy was ratified by the Board of Management in January 2025. This policy will be reviewed should a need arise.

Appendix 1

Lesson Content – Sensitive Issues					
Class	Lesson	Strand Unit	Language	Date	Home/School
J.I. S.I.	Theme 6 Caring for new life p.137 Theme 7 My Body p.147	Growing and changing Taking care of my body	Penis/Vagina or Vulva Naming parts of male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms	Term 2 every second year	S.I. RSE Manual p. 145 S.I. RSE Manual p. 156
1 st 2 nd	Theme 6 The wonder of new life p.59/p.151 Theme 7 How my body works p67 When my body needs special care p.161 Theme 8 Growing means changing p. 77/p.171	Growing and changing Taking care of my body	As above: introduce womb, breast, breast feeding, urethra. Naming as above and identify some of the functions.	Term 2 every second year	RSE Manual p. 65, 160, 169
3 rd 4 th	Theme 6 Preparing for new life p.69 Theme 6 from 4th class The wonder of new life p.169 Theme 8 As I grow I change p.93 Theme 8 (girls only in 4th class) Growing and changing p.195	Growing and changing	Discuss the stages and sequence of development of human baby in the womb. Umbilical cord. Any questions as to how the baby got there cannot be answered by the teacher.	Term 2 or 3 at the discretion of the teacher 4 th class will cover content every year	RSE Manual p. 181
5 th 6 th	Theme 6 My body grows and changes p.81 Theme 7 The wonder of new life p.93 Theme 8 Caring for new life p.103 Theme 2	Growing and changing Taking care of my body	Changes that occur in boys and girls at the onset of puberty. Reproductive system of male/female adults. Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within context of a loving, committed relationship.	Term 2 or 3 at the discretion of the teacher 6 th class will cover content every year	RSE Manual p. 92,101,112,149 Busy Body Booklets and DVD

	Different kinds of love p.141				
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Appendix 2

Dear parents,

Relationships and Sexuality education is an integral part of the S.P.H.E. programme. 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 the Strand Units with all class levels in the forthcoming weeks. During the lessons the anatomically correct names for body parts will be used.

Topics covered up to 2 nd include:	Topics from 3 rd to 6 th include:
• Keeping safe • Bodily Changes from birth (birth-9) • Making age appropriate choices • Appreciating the variety of family types and variety of family life that exists in our school community. • Recognising and expressing feelings. • Self care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep. • Expressing opinions and listening to others. • Naming the parts of the male/female body using appropriate anatomical terms.(junior /Senior infants) • Naming the parts of the male/female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions.(1st / 2nd)	• Bodily changes • Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise. • Keeping safe • Expressing feelings • Appreciating the variety of family types and variety of family life that exists in our school community and how these family relationships shape us. • Making healthy and responsible decisions. • Forming friendships. • Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (3rd , 4th class) • Introduction to puberty and changes (3rd,4th,5th and 6th class) • Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty. (5th and 6th class) • Reproductive system of male/female adults (5th and 6th class) • Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship.(5th and 6th class)

The class teacher will send home appropriate home school links pages from the Relationships and Sexuality manual which outline the material that will be covered in class and encourage further discussions on the topic at home.

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