

# Kildangan National School

## RSE Policy

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### **Introduction:**

This whole school policy for Relationships and Sexuality Education was formulated following a review of current practice in Kildangan NS and a consultation process involving the teaching staff, Board of Management and the school's Parents Association. This updated policy was drafted and circulated to teachers, Board Members and parents in May 2016. It was ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> June, 2016.

### **Rationale:**

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is one of six key areas of learning in the Primary School Curriculum 1999. An integral part of the SPHE curriculum is the provision of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). RSE provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding of relationships which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework.

A whole school policy is required in order to give guidance to teachers on how to approach the teaching of RSE, in particular the teaching of sensitive issues and with regard to a more inclusive curriculum which recognises the diversity and equality of family relationships in modern society.

### **Relationship to School Ethos:**

It is important that the RSE policy of our school reflects our school ethos. As a Catholic school, we are fundamentally concerned with fostering the development of relationships – the love of God and the love of every human being.

In Kildangan NS, everyone involved in the task of Relationships and Sexuality Education is guided by the following basic principles:

1. Our school seeks to communicate the Christian vision of human life and human relationships.
2. Our school recognises that in the teaching of RSE, its role is subsidiary to that of parents.
3. Our school, in the formulation of its policy on RSE, should reflect Catholic moral teaching on sexual matters.
4. The dignity, privacy and modesty of each individual child must always be respected.

### **Aims of our RSE Programme:**

The aims of the RSE Curriculum 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 human 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.

### **A Whole School Plan for RSE**

- 1. Time**
- 2. RSE Curriculum Content**
- 3. Teaching about different types of family relationships**
- 4. Teaching sensitive issues**
- 5. Teaching of appropriate RSE language**
- 6. Guest Speakers**
- 7. Supporting Parents**
- 8. RSE & Child Protection**
- 9. Integration with other programmes**
- 10. Staff Training and Development**

#### **1. Time**

The RSE Curriculum is scheduled to be taught between March – June each year. A 6-8 week block of lessons will be assigned for each class; teachers will plan appropriate lessons from the resources available to them. Lessons will be 30 minutes approx. in duration and before each lesson is taught, the teacher will send home the home/school links letter from the RSE Guidelines, so that parents are fully aware of the theme and content of the lesson, which will be covered in school.

<b>Strand</b>	<b>Infant Classes</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Classes</b>
	<b>Strand Units</b>	Strand Units
<b>Myself</b>	I am unique My Body As I grow I change New Life Feeling Safe Feelings and emotions Making decisions	I am unique My Body As I grow I change New Life Feeling Safe Feelings and emotions Making decisions
<b>Myself and others</b>	Myself and my family Myself and my friends Special people in my life Relating to others	Myself and my family Myself and my friends Other people Relating to others

## 2. RSE Curriculum Content Overview

<b>Strand</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> &amp; 4<sup>th</sup> Classes</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup> &amp; 6<sup>th</sup> Classes</b>
	<b>Strand Units</b>	<b>Strand Units</b>
<b>Myself</b>	Accepting myself Physical development Growing and changing Birth and new life Feelings and emotions Personal Hygiene Personal Safety Making decisions	Accepting myself Physical development Becoming an adult Parenthood Feelings and emotions Personal Hygiene Personal Safety Making decisions
<b>Myself and others</b>	Roles and responsibilities in families Portrayal of sexuality and relationships Roles of males and females in society Relating to others	Changing relationships in families and friendships Group affiliation and loyalty Portrayal of sexuality and relationships Sexual stereotypes Relating to others

## 3. Teaching about different types of family relationships

‘Myself and My Family’ is a core strand of the SPHE Curriculum, as outlined by the Department of Education and Skills. Families are central to the formation of children’s identity and it is important that all children see their families represented in the course of SPHE lessons.

Families in the Ireland of today are much more diverse than the traditional mother & father headed families. There are single parent families, step-parent families, Grandparent led families, adoptive and foster families, families headed by cohabiting couples, bereaved families, adult-only families, families from different cultures, and lesbian and gay headed families. Many children also have close

relatives belonging to the LGBT community. It is appropriate and much more inclusive that schools address the concept of different types of families through age-appropriate discussions and activities that can help to promote a more respectful environment for everyone.

Teaching about different types of families can be done through specific storybooks at Junior Level. Please see the Appendix for Teachers attached to this policy, for a list of resources for this topic.

#### **4. Teaching Sensitive Issues**

Sensitive issues include lessons on naming the body parts (Senior Infants) and their functions (2<sup>nd</sup> Class); changes in their bodies as they grow and develop and lessons on conception and birth (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Class).

Teachers will teach only the topics laid down for the class and will only answer those questions which are relevant to the programme for that year. Questions arising from curriculum content will be addressed in a sensible, sensitive and age-appropriate manner. Teachers are advised not to field answers straight from the floor. A question box should be provided and referred to at the beginning of lessons. Pupils should be invited to write down any questions they may have. They can do this anonymously. This will give the teacher sufficient time to formulate an appropriate answer. Should a pupil require information that is not in line with the curriculum content and not considered to be age-appropriate, the school will not give such information and will refer the question back to the parents. Teachers will not answer personal questions about themselves nor require the child to give information of a personal nature which he or she does not wish to share.

An outline of how to structure the teaching of sensitive issues in the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> Curriculum, over the course of 1 day is provided in the Appendix for Teachers, accompanying this policy.

Guidelines on how to answer difficult questions about puberty are included in the Appendix for Teachers.

#### **Busy Bodies DVD & Booklet**

Teachers in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Class will use the Busy Bodies Adolescent Development Programme to teach the more sensitive topics in the RSE Curriculum. Busy Bodies was developed by the HSE Health Promotion Unit, to support the teaching of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class component of RSE within the context of Social, Personal and Health Education. The programme includes an animated child friendly DVD, a booklet and a Guide for Teachers.

#### **Teaching about Sexual Orientation**

An integral part of RSE is learning to respect others; this includes respect for families or individuals who are different from the norm.

The Equal Status Acts 2000 and 2004 provide protection against discrimination on 9 grounds, one of which is sexual orientation. Homophobic insults should be treated in exactly the same way as racist or other insults. Teachers will not ignore the negative use of the word 'gay' or 'lesbian'. Please see an appropriate response for teachers to use when dealing with this issue in the Appendix for Teachers.

With the introduction of the Marriage Equality Act 2015, schools have a responsibility to ensure that teachers influence attitudes in a positive way by teaching about diversity and equality in all types of families.

Please see Glossary of Terms relating to Sexual Orientation in the Appendix for Teachers.

## **5. The teaching of appropriate language**

It is important that children learn the appropriate vocabulary for discussing aspects of life related to sexuality, growing up and their bodies' physical changes so that they can communicate confidently and correctly about their bodies.

Therefore we will give children the correct and appropriate language as outlined in RSE resource materials. Please see the Appendix for Teachers for a list of appropriate terms.

## **6. Guest Speakers**

The approach to the teaching of RSE will be kept as routine as possible and will mostly be delivered by the class teacher. However it might be deemed appropriate and beneficial, to invite a guest speaker, who is trained and experienced in the delivery of the RSE programme, into a senior class, to deliver particular aspects of the curriculum, which are deemed to be particularly sensitive. The teachers of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class will consult with the Principal in relation to the suitability of guest speakers before they are invited to the school. Guest speakers will be made aware of, and requested to comply with the school RSE Policy. The classroom teacher will remain in the room while visitors are there, in line with school practice. Parents will be notified if a guest speaker is scheduled to visit the school.

## **7. Supporting Parents**

Kildangan NS recognises that parents are the primary educators of their children and that it is the role of the school to support parents in the teaching of RSE. A copy of this policy will be given to every family on enrolment and will be available on our school website (<http://www.kildanganschool.com>). Parents will be asked to confirm in writing that they have read and agree to adhere to the school policy.

Parents will also be given a copy of 'RSE – Going Forward Together – An Introduction for Parents'. This is a document designed by the Department of Education which aims to answer the concerns of parents regarding RSE.

Before the RSE lessons begin, parents will be notified through the school newsletter that lessons are about to begin. Teachers will send home the home/school links letters so that parents are guided as to how to follow up on the lesson taught.

Parents of children in 5<sup>th</sup> class will be given a copy of the Busy Bodies Booklet at the Parent Teacher Meeting in the first term (November), so that they have a chance to familiarise themselves with the content before the lessons commence in the 2<sup>nd</sup> term.

If a guest speaker is arranged to facilitate a workshop with the children, the school will organise for the speaker to host an information evening for parents prior to working with the children in 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> class. This is to ensure that parents are given an outline of the 1 day workshop and allow for sensitive elements of the programme to be discussed.

Kildangan NS recognises that some parents might prefer to deliver the sensitive elements of the RSE curriculum themselves to their children at home. The school's RSE programme is designed to be taught with care and consideration and therefore it strongly discourages withdrawing a child. A parent's right to withdraw a child from the sensitive lessons in the RSE curriculum will be honoured on the understanding that the parent is taking full responsibility for this aspect of their child's education. A parental request to withdraw a child from such lessons must be made to the school in writing. Once written confirmation is received by the school, teachers will be notified so that supervision can be arranged for any child not attending particular RSE lessons.

The school must point out however that the lessons taught to the children in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class may be discussed by the children outside of class time and teachers cannot control what information is passed on. Informal sources of sensitive RSE information, whether from other children or through social media, tv or computer games are proven to influence children's attitudes to relationships and sexuality. It is therefore preferable that such important information is given to children in an accurate and sensitive way by a trained professional.

## **8. Child Protection**

Teachers must be very clear about Child Protection Policy & Procedures in the school. Sometimes an RSE lesson can raise questions which may indicate a child protection concern. Kildangan NS follows the 'Children First Child Protection Guidelines' and has a Child Protection Policy, with the Principal as Designated Liaison Person. In cases of disclosure; the D.L.P. will follow the procedures as set out in Children First.

## **9. Integration with other programmes**

RSE is a core element of the Social, Personal and Health Education Curriculum. RSE shares common themes with the Stay Safe Programme and the Walk Tall Programme. Teachers are encouraged to avail of the 'Making the Links' resource to plan for the teaching of key content objectives in discrete SPHE time.

## **10. Staff Training & Development**

It is important that Kildangan NS develops supports and opportunities for teaching staff to avail of relevant training in the teaching of the RSE curriculum. Teachers in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class will be offered training annually from the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). This whole school policy aims to guide teachers in the delivery of the programme. Staff will participate in its ongoing review and monitoring.

**Monitoring, Review of Policy and Timeframe**

In our school, the monitoring of the implementation of the Whole School Policy on Relationships and Sexuality Education will be conducted by the Principal. At the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> term, every 2<sup>nd</sup> school year, the policy will be evaluated and reviewed at a meeting of the teaching staff.

**This policy will come into effect in September 2016 and is due for review in January 2018.**

