

Relationships and Sexuality (RSE) Policy

Kilbonane National School
Knocknahilan
Aherla
Co. Cork

Roll No: 173381
Tel: 021-7331730

Email: office@kilbonaneschool.com



Introductory Statement

This policy was drawn up in consultation with the staff and parents of Kilbonane National School on ??????. This policy is an agreed approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). It was developed to inform teachers and parents/guardians about the provision of RSE in Kilbonane National School.

School Philosophy

We recognise that SPHE is intrinsic to the teaching and learning that occurs both formally and informally in school. Through our SPHE/RSE programme 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 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 wider community.

Our school values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. Our ethos values respect, inclusion and diversity of all members of our school community. Our school acknowledges that parents/guardians have the primary role in the social, personal and health education of their children and as such, their involvement will be encouraged.

SPHE/RSE is a key component in supporting our pupils to develop into healthy young adults. The following definition of RSE is referenced from the Interim curriculum and guidelines for primary schools (DE 1996, p.5).

Definition of RSE

“Relationships and Sexuality Education is an integral part of SPHE 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. In particular, it addresses the meaning of human sexuality, relationships, growth and development, relevant to personal and social skills.”

SPHE/RSE Curriculum

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.

RSE is part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).

Through SPHE and RSE, pupils are 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

SPHE/RSE is

- ❑ **a lifelong and continual process** throughout primary school and should not be confined to once off inputs or solitary lessons
- ❑ **a shared responsibility** and collaboration between family, school, health professionals and the community
- ❑ a subject which develops a child's **skills, attitudes, values and understanding** relevant to a range of social, personal and health issues
- ❑ **child-centred**. RSE education should prioritise the needs of the child and his/her environment, with appropriate adaptations made to suit individual requirements and individual school situations
- ❑ **spiral in nature**. SPHE/RSE formally begins in Junior Infants and is developed throughout the child's time in school. This will provide opportunities to consolidate and build on previous learning in developmentally appropriate manner
- ❑ taught through **active learning methodologies**. RSE provides a range of learning opportunities that requires children to actively participate in their learning in a wide variety of ways e.g. discussion, circle time, role play.
- ❑ **free of bias**. Lessons, language and resources selected by the school should reflect this. SPHE/RSE encourages children to be inclusive with each other, challenge prejudice and learn how to live together in an intercultural society

Aims of RSE

- 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

Aims taken from the Interim curriculum and guidelines for primary schools (DE 1996, p.9)

Broad Objectives of RSE

When due account is taken of abilities and varying circumstances, the RSE education curriculum should enable the child (in conjunction with the SPHE curriculum) to:

- 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

Objectives are taken from the Interim curriculum and guidelines for primary schools (DE 1996, p.9)

Policies that support SPHE/RSE

- ❑ Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- ❑ Substance Use Policy
- ❑ Code of Behaviour
- ❑ Anti-Bullying Policy
- ❑ Admissions Policy
- ❑ Acceptable Use Policy
- ❑ Healthy Eating Policy

Curriculum Planning for SPHE/RSE

Kilbonane NS will deliver a comprehensive SPHE programme over a two-year period. Kilbonane NS have created this timetable to reflect this approach.

SPHE Outline:

Month (<i>suggested strand</i>)	Year 1 (2024/25 and 2026/27) (Stay Safe)	Year 2 (2023/24 and 2025/26) (RSE)
September/October	Self-identity (Myself) Wellbeing Programme Year 1 (The book for younger class)	Myself and my family (Myself and others) Wellbeing Programme Year 2 (The book for older class)
November/December	My friends and other people (Myself and others)	Relating to others (Myself and others)
January/February	Safety and Protection (Myself) STAY SAFE*	Growing and changing (Myself) RSE*
March/April	Making Decisions (Myself)*	Taking care of my body (Myself)
May/June	Media education (Myself and the wider world)	Developing citizenship (Myself and the wider world)

***Stay Safe** lessons **MUST** be covered in **YEAR 1**

***RSE** lessons **MUST** be covered in **YEAR 2**

***Making Decisions** is from 3rd – 6th Class

The **Well-Being programme** 'Weaving Wellbeing'/'Welcome to Wellbeing' will be covered in Term 1 each year (10 lessons).

Staff have created a suggested lesson outline for each class level. The class teacher may select the most appropriate lessons to cover each strand and strand unit. Lesson suggestions from Walk Tall may be from either of the books for your class level.

Resources:

Walk Tall

RSE

Stay Safe

Wellbeing programme – Weaving Well-being & Welcome to Well-being

The more sensitive aspects of RSE will be covered under the strand 'Myself' and strand units 'Growing and changing' and 'Taking care of my body'.

Guidelines for the Implementation of RSE

The SPHE curriculum will underpin all teaching and learning of RSE in Kilbonane National School. The SPHE curriculum 1999 is allocated 30 minutes of discrete teaching time by the Department of Education. Teachers can use their professional discernment if extra time is required, this can be taken discretionary time. Teachers are encouraged to use an integrated approach for the delivery of SPHE. All resources used will be in keeping with this RSE policy and will take into consideration the sample criteria for choosing resources, as outlined in the SPHE Teacher Guidelines p.103.

Approaches & Methodologies

Active learning is the principal learning and teaching approach recommended for SPHE. It requires children to actively participate in their learning in a wide variety of ways, thereby increasing the possibility of internalising what they have explored and of being able to use this learning in their everyday lives. Active learning contributes significantly to fostering self-confidence, self-discipline and self-control in the learner.

Active learning methodologies are an integral part of teaching and learning in SPHE and RSE.

Any or all of the following techniques will allow the child to play an active part in the learning process:

- Discussion
- Use of Circles/Circle Time
- Role play
- Interviewing friends, or other school pupils, family members
- Surveys of attitudes
- Analysing and evaluating media
- Hosting visitors
- Engagement with Restorative Practices
- Modelling
- Designing advertisements
- Writing captions
- Ranking statements
- Describing photographs
- Viewing and discussing videos
- Projects

The curriculum will be taught in a developmentally-appropriate manner at all times. The teaching materials and methodologies used will reflect the needs of the children.

In Kilbonane National School, we will use the following approaches and methodologies to teach RSE:

- stories and poems
- classroom discussion
- ICT Activities
- group work
- games
- art activities
- reflection
- circle time
- external facilitator (Circular 0042/2018)

Resources

In Kilbonane National School, our staff may consult any of the following teaching resources when teaching RSE in addition to the DE Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme:

- PDST Health and Wellbeing RSE
- NCCA SPHE/RSE Toolkit
- DE Walk Tall Manuals
- Making the Links and Beyond
- Stay Safe programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Anatomical Dolls
- HSE publications (www.healthpromotion.ie)
- Busy Bodies Booklet/ Videos/ Workbook (PDST)
- Inclusive picture and story books
- INTO Different Families, Same Love Poster
- INTO Different Families, Same Love Lesson Ideas
- INTO Different Families Same Love Online Presentation JI – 2nd
- INTO Different Families Same Love Online Presentation 3rd – 6th
- RESPECT guidelines
- Gender Equality Matters (GEM)
- All Together Now
- We All Belong
- RSE related educational websites

Parental Involvement

Going Forward Together (Parents Booklet) states – “As a parent, you are the first teacher of your child. You hand on values and attitudes to each new generation of children”.

As RSE is an integral component of SPHE, parental consent is not required in advance of lesson delivery. However, the Education Act 1998, section 30 subsection 2 (e) *shall not require any student to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parent of the student or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years.*

Therefore, parents have the right to withdraw their child out of aspects of the SPHE curriculum, if they so wish.

In Kilbonane National School, parents/guardians will be informed at enrolment that the school fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE curriculum. Parents/guardians will be informed in advance of the teaching of the formal RSE lessons. (A sample letter is provided in Appendix 1).

This will offer parents/guardians an opportunity to make contact with relevant teachers to discuss/view the material that will be covered and share any personal details they feel the teacher should be aware of prior to their child engaging in RSE lessons.

If they wish to withdraw their child from specific formal RSE lessons, this should be provided in writing to the school and kept on file. Alternative arrangements will be considered and agreed upon by the relevant parties. The school cannot accept responsibility for indirect RSE-related information delivered to the child outside of formal RSE lessons i.e. on yard, etc.

Parents may be signposted to developmentally–appropriate resources to support them in speaking with their child about relationships, sexuality and growing up.

Differentiation

The age and stage of development in a class can vary widely and strategies for differentiation can support gradual and appropriate learning. In Kilbonane National School, teachers use assessment and professional judgment to differentiate the curricular objectives and content to best suit the needs of all pupils. Adaptations to the way in which the content is delivered will be made for children with special and additional educational needs.

Language

Language reflects values, attitudes, beliefs, prejudices and principles and can inform behaviour. It not only helps to express a culture, but influences and shapes that culture as well. It is essential that children are enabled to use language in a precise and appropriate manner.

Language is a powerful tool and should be used with respect and integrity for the dignity of each person. 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 it can hurt, diminish and demean.

Questions

In Kilbonane National School, teachers may use a variety of methodologies to create a safe, open space where pupils feel comfortable to ask RSE related questions.

Question Box

For older pupils a 'question box' is one methodology that may be used as part of the formal RSE lessons. Teachers can follow up on the written questions at a later date, thus allowing time to prepare suitable answers, consult with colleagues/RSE policy to formulate an appropriate response.

During the delivery of each RSE lesson, pupils can be encouraged to place their questions into a box. These questions can be reviewed and the following may be taken into account:

- All pupils are encouraged to write on the question sheet. If they don't have a question ask them to write something interesting they learned in the lesson
- Questions arising from lesson content will be answered in an age-appropriate manner
- The 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 curriculum and they will be advised to talk with their parents/guardians
- Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents if a need arises
- No personal questions will be answered and children will be reminded not to share inappropriate personal information about their families or others

Open Forum Questions

Teachers give pupils an opportunity to ask questions at various times throughout the RSE lesson. Questions will be answered in an age and developmentally appropriate way. Children will be made aware that the class teacher may not be able to answer their question and they will be signposted to ask an adult they trust at home.

Possible responses:

- I'll do my best to answer your questions but I may not be able to answer all of them
- That's something you'll learn about as you get older
- Is that something you could talk to your parents/guardians/family about?
- We agreed that we wouldn't ask anyone personal questions...
- Somebody asked a question and the language that was used was slang language. I think what they meant to ask was....

Online Audience Engagement Platform

Teachers may use an online audience engagement platform where children can submit their questions digitally.

If a perceived child protection matter arises throughout RSE lessons or indeed otherwise, the teacher, as a mandated person, will refer to the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023).

Assessment

Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process.

Assessment is a central part of the everyday learning and teaching process in SPHE. Kilbonane NS uses the following recommended informal tools for assessment in SPHE:

Teacher observation:

- The ability of the child to co-operate and work in groups or to work independently
- The informal interactions between the child and adults and between the child and other children
- Physical and emotional maturity
- The quality of presentation of work
- The participation and interest of the child in a variety of activities

Teacher-designed tests and tasks:

SPHE includes areas of knowledge and understanding that need assessment at regular intervals. Specific tasks may be used to ascertain a child's ability to apply particular skills in different situations: for example the strategies in the Well-Being Programme lessons.

Portfolios and Projects:

Teachers may decide that children will keep personal folders of their work.

Self-Assessment:

Children are encouraged to engage in assessing their own progress in SPHE and to reflect on their learning.

Confidentiality

Kilbonane NS follows the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (revised 2023). If a child is withdrawn from specific RSE lessons, the school cannot guarantee that the withdrawn child will not hear the information from another source. Parents are invited to share any changes in circumstances with the school as necessary e.g. changes in family structures etc. For the welfare of some children, this information may be important for a teacher to know prior to engaging in specific topics on family/relationships, etc.

Provision of Ongoing Support

Kilbonane National School ensures the provision of ongoing support by the following:

- encouraging teachers to attend RSE CPD
- utilising staff meetings as a platform for discussion and development of RSE
- seeking the support from an OIDE Advisor, where appropriate
- reviewing RSE policy on a regular basis
- ensure special education teachers have adequate training opportunities
- staff will reflect on information gathered from pupil questionnaires and focus groups. This will be used to inform future developments regarding RSE
- signposting staff to resources available from OIDE and other sources

Review

Kilbonane NS will review this policy every three years. The policy may also be reviewed at an earlier time should a need arise. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made.

This plan was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting on 19 June 2024. It will be reviewed in 2027.

Appendix 1

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is an integral part of the Social, Personal and Health Education curriculum. We will be commencing formal RSE lessons in Term 2, January 2024.

RSE predominantly lies within the strand units 'Taking care of my body' and 'Growing and changing' which can be viewed at https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/462570f8-27cc-4f5b-a13e-d1e2de8c18d2/PSEC06_SPHE_curriculum.pdf and is summarised in the table below.

INFANTS – 2 ND CLASS	3 RD – 6 TH CLASS
Strand Unit – Growing and Changing <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ As I grow I change▪ New life▪ Feelings and emotions	Strand Unit – Growing and Changing <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ As I grow I change▪ Birth and new life▪ Feelings and emotions
Strand Unit – Taking care of my body <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Knowing about my body▪ Food and nutrition▪ Making decisions	Strand Unit – Growing and Changing <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Knowing about my body▪ Food and nutrition▪ Health and wellbeing

Our school's RSE policy is available to view on our school website (<https://www.kilbonaneschool.com/>). It outlines our agreed approach to achieve the objectives of the aforementioned strand units.

If you wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to arrange an appointment to meet with your child's class teacher.

Yours sincerely,

School Principal