



# Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

## Policy Details

Name of Policy: Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy

Date Developed: n/a

Signed by

Date Reviewed: June 2021

Chairperson: *Ceraldine Kelly*

Ref Code:

Principal: *Donna Kirby*

Edition: v1

Date commenced: 28/9/2021

## **1. Policy Statement**

1.1 Scoil Mhuire gan Smál is committed to encouraging and supporting each child within the school to develop healthy relationships and friendships within the context of a Christian ethos and the requirements of Department of Education and Skills.

## **2. Policy Scope**

2.1 This policy applies to all pupils, parents and staff of Scoil Mhuire gan Smál.

## **3. The Aims of our RSE programme:**

- 3.1 To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of each child.
- 3.2 To help children develop healthy friendships and relationships.
- 3.3 To foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- 3.4 To enable the child to acquire an understanding of, and respect for, human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction.
- 3.5 To develop and promote in the child a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life.
- 3.6 To enable the child to be comfortable with the sexuality of oneself and others while growing and developing

## **4. Our School Philosophy**

4.1 As a Catholic school, Scoil Mhuire gan Smál promotes the development of the whole person within the Christian context in partnership with the parents and in an atmosphere of inclusivity, respect and acceptance.

## **5. Definition of RSE**

- 5.1 Relationships and Sexuality Education seeks to provide children with opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of relationships and human sexuality, through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- 5.2 RSE aims to help children learn, at home and in school, about their own development and about their friendships and relationships with others.
- 5.3 This work will be based on developing a good self-image, promoting respect for themselves and others and providing them with appropriate information.

## **6. Relationship of RSE to SPHE**

6.1 RSE will be taught in the context of Social, Personal and Health Education.

- 6.2 SPHE is a subject in the primary school curriculum.
- 6.3 SPHE contributes to developing the work of the school in promoting the health and well-being of children and young people.
- 6.4 This happens in the context of their emotional, moral, social and spiritual growth, as well as their intellectual, physical, political, religious and creative development.
- 6.5 SPHE is taught from Junior Infants to Sixth class and is formally timetabled.
- 6.6 RSE will be facilitated in the following ways within our school:
  - 6.6.1 In the context of a positive school climate and atmosphere, grounded in the school ethos of inclusivity, respect and acceptance.
  - 6.6.2 As part of timetabled S.P.H.E.
  - 6.6.3 On an integrated, cross-curricular basis
- 6.7 The RSE Curriculum is a spiral curriculum. This involves revisiting key topics in a developmental manner at regular intervals. As it is a progressive programme it is taught bi-annually over the 8-year primary cycle.

## **7. Guidelines for the management and organisation of RSE in our school**

### **7.1 Parental Involvement:**

Relationships and Sexuality Education is an on-going process throughout life. Parents and the family are acknowledged as the primary educators of their children. We work in a supportive role with the parents of our school, by complementing their role with a school based programme in R.S.E. The curriculum books and resource materials are available in the school and parents are welcome to borrow them if desired.

### **7.2 Withdrawal from RSE:**

- 7.2.1 Since RSE is an obligatory requirement of the Department of Education and Skills, it should be inclusive.
- 7.2.2 Scoil Mhuire gan Smál actively promotes the implementation of RSE and strongly discourages withdrawal.
- 7.2.3 The school will, however, take account of parental concerns and a parent's right to withdraw a pupil from themes pertaining to sensitive issues will be honoured on the understanding that the parent(s) take full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves.
- 7.2.4 Parents are obliged to inform the school in writing of their decision to withdraw the child from the sensitive issues classes.
- 7.2.5 Any parent who wishes to withdraw their child should make arrangements for the supervision of the child while the RSE class is in progress.

- 7.2.6 The school can take no responsibility for any information which the pupil may receive outside the direct teaching of the RSE lessons.

### **7.3 Family Status:**

- 7.3.1 Pupils will be encouraged to appreciate the value of a stable family life and the importance of a committed relationship as the ideal context for rearing children.  
We acknowledge the different family units and circumstances that are represented in school and will endeavour to treat all situations sensitively.

### **7.4 Teachers' Opt Out Right:**

- 7.4.1 If a particular teacher is not comfortable teaching the 'sensitive issues' then the teachers' right to opt out will be honoured which will not affect the teaching of the subject. In such circumstances the Principal will make arrangements to have this section of the programme taught. Where possible arrangements will be made for team teaching for the entire SPHE curriculum for that class so that the RSE themes will be taught within the context of SPHE with a teacher with whom they are familiar.

### **7.5 Content:**

- 7.5.1 All the content objectives of the RSE Programme will be covered by the time children leave sixth class.
- 7.5.2 It is school policy that the content objectives are covered with each class level as outlined in the SPHE curriculum, within the context of the school's Catholic ethos and without personal slants from the class teacher.
- 7.5.3 One half hour period per week is timetabled in each class for SPHE and RSE will be included in the programme taught during this time.
- 7.5.4 The approach to the teaching of RSE will be kept as normal as possible and will usually be delivered within the child's class by the class teacher.
- 7.5.5 Teachers will be encouraged and supported to teach the sensitive issues to their own class.
- 7.5.6 Accord may visit the school to deliver the sensitive issues to 6<sup>th</sup> class but the class teacher will remain present at all times.

### **7.6 Terminology:**

In teaching issues related to RSE, teachers will use the correct biological terms for parts of the body as stated in the S.P.H.E. curriculum:

Junior/Senior Infants:	Womb, Breastfeeding, Penis, Vagina.
First/ Second Class:	Womb, Breastfeeding, Penis, Vagina, Vulva, Urethra.
Third/ Fourth Class:	Womb, Breastfeeding, Penis, Vagina, Vulva, Urethra, Umbilical cord. Changes in Puberty (4 <sup>th</sup> Class)
Fifth/ Sixth Class:	Womb, Breastfeeding, Penis, Vagina, Vulva, Urethra, Umbilical cord. Changes in Puberty, Wet dreams.  <b>Busy Bodies Language:</b> Semen, Sexual intercourse, Periods.

A comprehensive list of *sensitive content objectives* for each year group, the relevant pages in the Walk Tall or RSE books and the language pertaining to each topic is included in **Appendix A**.

A glossary of terms and class-appropriate explanations for language pertaining to LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) issues, as per the school anti-bullying policy, is provided in **Appendix B**.

### **7.7 Confidentiality and Child Protection:**

Where there is disclosure by a child of abuse, the school will follow the Department of Education and Skills *Child Protection Procedures 2017* and guidelines as set out in 'Children First' (2017) under the guidance of Department of Education circular 65/2011 *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post – Primary Schools*.

### **7.8 Questions:**

Questions arising from curriculum content will be addressed by the teacher or by the visitor in a sensible, sensitive and age-appropriate manner. Pupils are advised against asking personal questions and a question box or "Ask it basket" will be provided should children wish to ask sensitive questions anonymously. The class teacher cannot answer questions which do not relate to the particular curriculum objectives for a class. Pupils will be informed that that question/issue is not on the programme and they will be referred back to the parent(s). Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents themselves if they feel that a question is very inappropriate.

A list of appropriate responses to sensitive questions is included in **Appendix C**.

Age – appropriate wording for sexual intercourse is included in **Appendix D**.

## 7.9 Sources and Resources:

The RSE and the Stay Safe Programmes and other resources that are deemed suitable by the Principal/SPHE co-ordinator will primarily be used for the delivery of the RSE themes.

In the guidelines obtained by the Department of Education there are as many as three different options offered to the class teacher as a means of covering each topic. Suggestions range from the use of stories or guessing games to writing and art activity. The teacher may use any one of these or a combination of all to achieve the objectives. The agreed school policy will always determine what is contained in the lessons.

### List of Programmes to support the teaching of RSE

Junior and Senior Infants	1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> class	3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> Class	5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> Class
Flourish	Flourish	Flourish	Flourish
Walk Tall	Walk Tall	Walk Tall	Walk Tall
RSE Resource	RSE Resource	We All Belong	RSE Resource
We all Belong	Equal Measures	RSE Resource	Busy Bodies
The Right Start	We All Belong	Busy Bodies	Me You Everyone
Different Families Same Love	The Right Start	The PDST Health and Wellbeing	We All Belong
		HTML Heroes	GEM – Gender Equality Matters
			Different Families Same love
			All Together Now
			Myselfie and the Wider World

## **8. Modules currently taught in the school include:**

### **8.1 Religious Instruction:**

The Grow in Love programme is taught in all classes. This programme deals with many of the topics of S.P.H.E. and R.S.E., particularly in the area of self esteem and personal relationships.

### **8.2 Stay Safe Programme:**

This programme is taught to Junior Infants, 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> classes each year and revised in Senior Infants, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> classes. Our local Gardaí from Hackballscross deliver a programme to 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class. This programme includes the following topics:

- The Role of the Garda
- Road & Cycle Safety
- Personal Safety
- Crime Prevention
- Vandalism
- Bullying & Cyberbullying
- Drugs/Alcohol

We also avail of Fire Safety and Care Safety (see SPHE Policy for more details)

### **8.3 Physical/Health Education:**

Topics of exercise, hygiene, diet, sleep etc. are dealt with informally in class in the context of Physical Education and other Strand Units of S.P.H.E. We are a Health Promoting School and regularly take part in Food Dudes.

### **8.4 Relationships and Sexuality**

This programme has been offered to Sixth Class for many years. The programme is usually conducted by a qualified facilitator from Accord, but may be provided for by the class teacher. The programme is age appropriate and in keeping with the ethos of the school. The content of this programme is quite similar to what is contained in the R.S.E programme.

### **8.5 Information on Drugs and Alcohol:**

The Walk Tall Programme is used in our school to provide education on drugs and alcohol use at an appropriate level.

### **8.6 Code of Discipline:**

The school has a code of discipline, an anti-bullying policy and a care programme which promotes and encourages good behaviour and respect for self and others. The underlying philosophy of these codes supports many of the aims of S.P.H.E. and R.S.E.

### **8.7 Child Protection:**

The school at all times will follow child protection guidelines as laid out in the school “Child Protection Policy”.

### **1. Ongoing support, development and review:**

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire gan Smál supports and fosters the continued development of an R.S.E school policy. The programme of work will be reviewed at regular intervals by teachers. Scoil Mhuire gan Smál will ensure access to in-career development opportunities for teachers in R.S.E. The policy and programme will be reviewed by the staff every three years or sooner if deemed necessary. Any amendments necessary as a result of reviews will be undertaken by the RSE Co-ordinator.



## APPENDIX A – Sensitive content objectives, lessons and language

Class	Strand /Strand Unit	Sensitive Content Objectives <i>consult curriculum – for complete objectives in Growing/ Changing and Taking Care of my Body</i>	Language	Pages in RSE Manuals for sensitive objectives	Pages in Walk Tall for sensitive objectives	Supplementary resources
Junior /Senior Infants	Myself • Growing and changing • Taking care of my body	Growing and changing • Become 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 and female body using anatomical terms	Womb, Breast-feeding Penis Vagina	New Life p88 My Body p147 Caring for New Life p137	Senior Infants Our Amazing Bodies p94	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anatomically correct dolls</li> <li>Picture books of new baby</li> <li>Visit of baby to class</li> </ul>
First/ Second Class	Myself • Growing and changing • Taking care of my body	Growing and changing • Begin to understand that reproduction, birth, growth and death are all part of new life cycles Taking care of my body • Name the parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions	Penis, Vagina, vulva, womb, breast - feeding, Urethra	The Wonder of new Life p59 /151 How my Body Works p67/ 161 Growing Means Changing p77/171	Second Class Our Amazing Bodies p37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Picture books of going to the doctors</li> <li>Books / activities on Life cycles</li> <li>Birth and new life in nature</li> </ul>
Third/ Fourth Class	Myself • Growing and changing • Taking care of my body	Growing and changing • 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 Taking care of my body • Recognize and discuss how feelings and emotions are affected by the physical changes that take place during puberty • Discuss the stages and sequence of development of human baby from conception to birth	Revise above, Umbilical cord Changes in Puberty (4 <sup>th</sup> class)	Preparing for New Life p69 The wonder of new life p169 As I Grow and Change p93 Growing and Changing p195	Third Class as I Grow I Change p175 Fourth Class Seven Changing and Growing p140	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Body Systems</li> <li>Picture books on Growing and Changing</li> <li>Body Systems</li> <li>Picture books on Growing and Changing</li> </ul>
Fifth/ Sixth Class	Myself • Growing and changing • Taking care of my body	Growing and changing • Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a loving committed relationship Taking care of my body • 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	Revise above Wet dreams Busy Bodies language Semens Sexual intercourse Periods	My Body Grows and Changes p81 The Wonder of New Life p92 Caring for New Life p103 Different Kinds of Love p141	Fifth Class My Amazing Body p345 Sixth Class Creation p121	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Busy Bodies</li> <li>PowerPoint recap</li> <li>Question Box</li> <li>Puberty Quizzes</li> <li>Busy Bodies</li> <li>DVDs</li> <li>Power points recap</li> <li>Question Box</li> <li>Puberty Quizzes</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX B – Terms and age appropriate explanations for language pertaining to LGBT issues

<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND CLASS-APPROPRIATE EXPLANATIONS</b>		
	<b>JUNIOR INFANTS TO 2ND CLASS</b>	<b>3RD CLASS TO 6TH CLASS</b>
<b>LESBIAN</b>	A woman who loves another woman and they can be a family together.	A woman who has or wants to have a loving relationship with another woman.
<b>GAY</b>	A man who loves another man and they can be a family together.	A man who has or wants to have a loving relationship with another man. Sometimes this term is also used to refer to lesbians.
<b>BISEXUAL</b>	A person who can love a man or a woman and form a family with a person of either gender.	A person who can have or wants to have a loving relationship with either a man or a woman.
<b>TRANSGENDER (OR TRANS* FOR SHORT)</b>	A girl who feels like they are a boy/A woman who feels like they are a man. A boy who feels like they are a girl/A man who feels like they are a woman.	A person who was born with the physical characteristics of a boy/girl but deep inside they feel like they are a different gender and want to live their life as that gender.
<b>HETEROSEXUAL (OR STRAIGHT)</b>	A man who loves a woman or a woman who loves a man and they can be a family together.	A man who has or wants to have a loving relationship with a woman or a woman who has or wants to have a loving relationship with a man.
<b>HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING</b>	When people are hurtful to others because they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender or because people think they are.	When people hurt others (verbally, psychologically, physically, cyber bullying etc.) because they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender or because people think they are.
<b>TRANSPHOBIC BULLYING</b>	When people are hurtful to others because they are transgender or because people think they are.	When people hurt others (verbally, psychologically, physically, cyber bullying etc.) because they are transgender or because people think they are.
<b>LGBT</b>	A short way to say lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender.	An acronym used to refer to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities.
<b>HOMOSEXUAL</b>	This is another term for gay or lesbian, sometimes used by scientists or doctors. LGB people generally prefer the terms lesbian, gay or bisexual to be used.	This is another term for gay or lesbian, usually used in scientific or medical references. LGB people generally prefer the terms lesbian, gay or bisexual to be used.



## **APPENDIX C – Appropriate responses to sensitive questions**

***Know what you can answer. No personal questions.***

### **What is a girl's period?**

A period is a regular monthly bleeding. It happens when the uterus (womb) needs to discharge (let go of) its extra lining and blood. The womb has been getting ready for the egg which travels from an ovary through the fallopian tube into the womb. If the egg is not fertilised the womb doesn't need the extra lining and blood to nourish and 'mind' it. In the beginning periods may be irregular. There may be some slight cramp or discomfort. It is important to be extra careful of personal hygiene during periods.

### **At what age do periods begin?**

Some girls start as early as 9 years. Others don't start until they are 15-16 years old. Development takes place at a different rate and time for everyone.

### **How long do periods last?**

Every girl is different but a period usually lasts from 2/3 days to a week. For some the flow of blood is heavy and for others it is light – just a trickle. Both are normal. Very little blood is lost overall – about 3 tablespoons during the entire period.

### **What kind of sanitary protection should a girl use?**

A girl can use a sanitary towel or a tampon. A press-on pad sticks to your pants. It fits close to your body and does not show. A tampon is a cylinder of tightly- pressed cotton. It is pushed into the vagina and has a cord hanging from it which you pull to remove the tampon. Sanitary towels are easier for a young girl to use when she starts her periods. Tampons are more difficult at first and are more suitable for older girls. It is something you should discuss with your mother.

### **At what age should a girl buy a bra?**

This is usually decided by the girl and her mother, as they chat about her growing body, especially her developing breasts. A young girl usually needs a bra before her periods begin. It makes her feel more physically secure and comfortable and also makes her aware of her growing body and the changes she can expect. Every girl develops at different times.

### **When do boys begin to shave?**

Boys usually start to shave between 14 and 18 years. Growth of facial hair is one of the last changes that happen for the developing boy. Shaving is something you may want to discuss with your dad or older brother.

### **What is meant by a wet dream?**

A wet dream is when a boy / young man has an erection during the night in his sleep and semen is ejaculated. Semen is made up of fluid and sperm. Growing boys produce millions of sperm in the testicles. Wet dreams are a normal part of growing up. There is no need to be embarrassed.

### **What is an erection?**

An erection is when a boy's / young man's penis gets hard and erect. It is a sign that he is developing into a man. The penis is usually soft and flabby. When it wants to release sperm it fills with blood. This makes it hard and firm. Having an erection is a normal part of growing into a man.

### **What is the normal size of the penis?**

Growth and size is individual to each person. In the same way the size of the penis varies. This is quite normal. Boys who wonder / worry about having a small penis should understand that it might not be fully grown yet. Size does not affect having an erection or ejaculation.

### **At what age do boys begin puberty?**

Boys vary in the age at which they enter puberty. Some begin to change at 12 years, others may be older. Changes go on over a number of years.

### **What is a condom?**

That's a very good question. Unfortunately it is something I can't answer but you may wish to ask your parents about it.

### **Do all boys have wet dreams?**

No, not all boys have them but it is perfectly normal to have them.

### **What is masturbation?**

That is something that happens in private. You may wish to speak to your parents about that.

### **Can urine come out of a man's penis during sex?**

No, urine and semen cannot be released at the same time.

### **Does sex hurt?**

Why do you ask? It may for some people. *(It may flag a child protection issue)*

### **What is oral sex?**

That is something we won't be talking about this year. You may wish to speak to your parents about it.

**At what age should people have sex?**

It is against the law for anyone under the age of 17 to have sex. Even then you should wait until you are ready and in a committed, loving relationship.

**Do periods hurt?**

As we saw in the Busy Bodies DVD you may get some cramps. But there are ways to reduce this such as a hot water bottle and a warm bath. Over time your body will get used to it.

**If a boy does not have a wet dream can he still have a baby?**

Yes, not all boys have wet dreams. A baby can only be made during sexual intercourse.

**What do gay couples do together?**

They are just like heterosexual couples.

**If a boy ejaculates and a girl comes into contact with the semen can she get pregnant?**

There is a chance of pregnancy anytime the vagina comes into contact with semen.

**My mam/sister/aunt had a baby when she was 15, was that against the law?**

It is not against the law to have a baby under 17

## **APPENDIX D – Wording for sexual intercourse**

Conception happens when:

- The penis is placed inside the vagina.
- After a certain amount of time -- this varies from time to time, person to person, circumstance to circumstance the man will ejaculate.
- Ejaculation is when the man releases his sperm.
- The sperm travel up through the vagina, through the womb and down the fallopian tubes.
- There are approximately 200/300 million sperm in each ejaculation.
- If an egg is present in the fallopian tube one of the sperm and only one of the sperm will penetrate the egg.
- Once the head of the sperm has penetrated the outer shell of the egg the tail of the sperm will fall off.
- Only one sperm ever penetrates the egg.
- The head of the sperm now becomes a part of the egg.
- This is called a zygote.
- The zygote then implants in the lining of the womb.
- This remains there for forty weeks until it is a fully formed baby.
- That is why the first sign of pregnancy is usually that the woman misses a period
- After that she will do a pregnancy test to confirm if she is pregnant or not.