



## **Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy**

St. Aidan's National School,

Smithstown,

Shannon,

Co. Clare

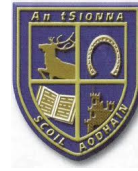
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# RSE Policy



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. Aidan's N.S. 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.

## Introductory Statement

This policy is an agreed approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). It was developed to inform teachers and parents/guardians/carers about the provision of RSE in St. Aidan's N.S.

## School Philosophy

St. Aidan's N.S. as an inclusive primary school, under Patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Killaloe, 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. We foster a culture of respect, where each and every member of our school is valued.

Our mission statement states;

*St. Aidan's N.S. seeks to provide an opportunity for each student to realize his/ her potential in all areas: academic, moral, personal, physical, social, spiritual and sporting.*

*We seek to promote and sustain a happy, secure and efficient environment in which positive relationships are highly valued and development and growth take place with the co-operation of all members of the school community.*

*We seek to instil a sense of mutual respect and care for all members of the school community. We seek to foster honesty, integrity, self-discipline, respect, concern for others, self-esteem, inclusiveness, social awareness and charity.*

*We seek to nurture an appreciation of our cultural heritage.*

*In short, we seek to develop educated, thinking and caring individuals*

In valuing the importance of partnership between staff, parents, management and community, we strive to be open welcoming and accepting to all. St. Aidan's N.S prides itself on being an environment that is warm, friendly, safe, supportive, inclusive and inviting – a place where everyone wants to be, a place where everyone matters and a place that is a close-knit family unit. 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.

We recognise that SPHE is intrinsic to the teaching and learning that occurs both formally and informally in our 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 our caring school community. Our ethos values respect, inclusion and diversity of all members of our school community. As a school we acknowledge that parents/guardians/carers have the primary role in the social, personal and health education of their children and as such, their involvement will be encouraged. We recognise that SPHE/RSE is a key component in supporting our pupils to develop into healthy young adult.

*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 the 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

Through the implementation of the Stay Safe Programme, RSE Programme, SPHE curriculum and various initiatives like Active School and other curricular areas St. Aidan's will endeavour to enhance the self-identify and wellbeing of all our pupils.

## 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

## 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

## Policies that support SPHE/RSE

- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Substance Use Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Arrival and Dismissal Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- GDPR Policy
- Intimate Care Needs Policy

## Curriculum Planning for SPHE/RSE

There are 3 strands in the SPHE curriculum. There are nine strand units for Junior Infants to Second Class and ten strand units for Third Class onwards. \*Making Decisions strand unit only applies to 3rd - 6th Class.

The Department of Education (DE) advises us to follow a 2-year plan when planning for SPHE. We teach from each of the three main SPHE strands. Sharing the strand units over a two-year period ensures pupils will have covered the entire content relevant to their class grouping with a balanced offering from the three strands. It also ensures adequate time is allocated to each strand unit.

St. Aidan's follows a two-year plan for SPHE (see appendix 1)

RSE, which largely looks at the development of relationships, is interwoven through all strands and strand units of the SPHE curriculum. 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'. Teachers will refer to the resource Making the Links to support their planning for the delivery of these strand units. Suggested resources are listed under the Resources Section of this policy

## Guidelines for the Implementation of RSE

The SPHE curriculum will underpin all teaching and learning of RSE in St. Aidan's N.S. 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 as 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.

- The strands units 'Growing and changing' and 'Taking care of my body' are covered in one year of a 2-year plan
- Lessons containing sensitive material are covered as part of these strand units

***The teachers will cover all aspects of RSE with their classes every second year. The Mandatory Stay Safe programme is taught in the year that RSE is not being taught.***

## Pupil Voice

In our school the voice of our pupils is acknowledged, valued and respected. Children are given opportunities to reflect and feedback on SPHE/RSE provision via focus groups and questionnaires. This information will be used to inform school improvement in relation to future RSE provision. As part of our focus on Wellbeing and as we turn our attention to the development of our Wellbeing Policy and Statement we will be encouraging and working to enhance the voice of the children in all aspects of school life.

## Approaches & Methodologies

In St. Aidan's N.S. we recognise that 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 their 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. St. Aidan's use the PDS's suite of resources to support school to implement active learning methodologies in SPHE. <https://www.pdst.ie/SPHE-Approaches-and-Methodologies>

In St. Aidan's we recognise that 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
- ❖ 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 St. Aidan's N.S, 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

When choosing RSE resources here in St. Aidan's we will consider if the resources are

- ❖ In line with the principles of the SPHE curriculum
- ❖ Free of bias
- ❖ Demonstrate equality
- ❖ Are up-to- date
- ❖ Devoid of racial or sexual stereotyping

In St. Aidan's N.S. our staff may consult any of the following teaching resources when teaching RSE in addition to the DE Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme. All teaching staff have access to all these materials on a shared drive which is added to periodically.

- ❖ 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](http://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
- ❖ PDST Education and Transgender Information
- ❖ PDST Identity Based Bullying Information
- ❖ RSE related educational websites



## Parental Involvement

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, staff of St. Aidan's recognise that parents have the right to withdraw their child out of aspects of the SPHE curriculum, if they so wish. Staff of St. Aidan's will enter into dialogue with the parents to find a way forward.

In St. Aidan's N.S. parents/guardians/carers will be informed at enrolment that the school fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE curriculum. Parents/guardians/carers 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/carers an opportunity to meet 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, school bus etc. Parents will be signposted to developmentally –appropriate resources to support them in speaking with their child about relationships, sexuality and growing up. Each teacher has access to parent advice sheets on a shared drive.

## Differentiation

The age and stage of development in a class can vary widely and strategies for differentiation can support gradual and appropriate learning. In St. Aidan's N.S, 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. Both consultation with parents/guardians/carers in advance of lessons and the anticipation of the pupil's needs will be central to ensuring learning is meaningful. This may be reflected in the student's support file.

In differentiating for pupils' teachers will

- ❖ set objectives that are realistic for the students
- ❖ ensure that the learning task builds upon prior learning
- ❖ provide opportunities for interacting and working with other students in small groups or 1:1
- ❖ organise the learning task into small stages: outlining the steps to be learned/completed in any given task, posing key questions to guide pupils through the different stages/processes, and assisting in self-direction and correction

- ❖ ensure that the language used is pitched at the pupil's level of understanding. Some children may be pre-taught language or concepts in preparation of whole class work
- ❖ create a learning environment through the use of concrete, and where possible everyday materials, and by displaying word lists and laminated charts with pictures thereby employing active learning methodologies

## Language

In St. Aidan's we recognise that language is a powerful tool and should be used with respect and integrity for the dignity of each person. When used positively we know 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.

The language that is promoted in St. Aidan's N.S. is one that nurtures both children and adults as unique and valuable human beings. In St. Aidan's language is used in such a way as to respect cultural and other differences and is used in a way that encourages inclusiveness.

## Questions

### Question Box

In St. Aidan's N.S. teachers may use a variety of methodologies to create a safe, open space where pupils feel comfortable to ask RSE related questions.

During the delivery of each RSE lesson, pupils can be encouraged to place their questions into a question box. This is particularly applicable at the Senior End.

Pupils are encouraged

- ❖ to write a question.
- ❖ If they don't have a question, they will be asked 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/carers. 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

## Assessment

St. Aidan's N.S will employ the following methods for assessment in SPHE/RSE:

- Observation and questions to assess the pupils' engagement and interest
- Use of teacher-designed tasks such as worksheets, quizzes or games
- Use of reflection or learning log
- Pupil Portfolio

## Confidentiality

St. Aidan's N.S. follows the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017.

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

St. Aidan's N.S. 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 a PDST Advisor
- ❖ creating a mentor system amongst to support the teaching RSE
- ❖ budgeting for the updating and development of RSE materials
- ❖ reviewing RSE policy on a regular basis
- ❖ ensuring 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 PDST and other sources (resources sourced are stored on a shared drive)

## Review

St. Aidan's N.S. 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 ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting on

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Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Secretary, Board of Management



*Dear Parents/Guardians/Carers,*

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

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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-a13ed1e2de8c18d2/PSEC06\\_SPHE\\_curriculum.pdf](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/462570f8-27cc-4f5b-a13ed1e2de8c18d2/PSEC06_SPHE_curriculum.pdf) and is summarised in the table below.

<b>INFANTS - 2nd CLASS</b>	<b>3rd CLASS - 6th CLASS</b>
<p><b>Strand Unit - Growing and Changing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ As I grow I change</li><li>❖ New life</li><li>❖ Feelings and emotions</li></ul>	<p><b>Strand Unit - Growing and Changing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ As I grow I change</li><li>❖ Birth and new life</li><li>❖ Feelings and emotions</li></ul>
<p><b>Strand Unit - Taking care of my body</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Knowing about my body</li><li>❖ Food and nutrition</li><li>❖ Making decisions</li></ul>	<p><b>Strand Unit - Taking care of my body</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Knowing about my body</li><li>❖ Food and nutrition</li><li>❖ Health and wellbeing</li></ul>

Our school's RSE policy is available to view on our school website [www.staidansshannon.ie](http://www.staidansshannon.ie). 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,*

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*Patrice Hayes*

*Principal*