

RSE Policy

Contents

Section	Page
1 Introduction and Rationale	2
2 Vision Statement	2
3 Definition of RSE, Context,	3
4 Aims	3
5 Objectives	5
6. Policies which support SPHE/RSE	6
7 Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of the Programme	6
8 Parental Involvement	6
9 Organisation and Curriculum Planning	7
10 Content for RSE Programme	8
11 Child Safeguarding	9
12 Guidelines for Teachers	9
13 Ongoing support, development and review	10

Introduction and Rationale:

Phoenix Park Specialist School provides for children with severe emotional and/or behavioural difficulties (Severe EBD) who have the potential to return to mainstream school. The school has a responsibility to put in place an RSE policy as part of the wider SPHE curriculum. The RSE programme will take account of the particular needs of the pupils and respond appropriately to sensitive and emotive issues. The plan is based on an awareness of the need to develop positive self-esteem, appropriate social and communication skills, appropriate expression of feelings and safety and protection skills. These are particularly important skills to us as many pupils attending our school can find these areas challenging. Our pupils need an opportunity to develop these skills in a nurturing, safe and structured environment.

Vision Statement:

The school aims to provide a quality learning environment that maximises educational opportunities for children. We aspire to develop high standards of behaviour in a caring, nurturing and safe environment where all pupils are provided with experiences to make them feel valued and respected. We believe in nurturing emotional literacy in our school community and in helping children to recognise, understand, cope with and appropriately express emotions. The dignity, privacy, modesty and individuality of each pupil must always be respected.

To maximise the potential for progress, the school expects the child's primary carers and external agencies to work together with us in a collaborative and co-operative manner and to actively participate in supporting the child during their time in the school.

RSE is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge in relation to self and others. This education seeks to promote the overall development of the pupils, providing them with clear information, building up their self-esteem, teaching them to respect others, to make decisions and apply them to everyday life.

Ultimately, R.S.E. seeks to enable the pupil to understand and gradually develop attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships and sexuality and to establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework.

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.

This policy has been drawn up with reference to:

- Department of Education Circulars 42/2018, 43/2018 on Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) & Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) – Best Practice Guidelines for Primary and Post Primary Schools
- Circular Number 0018/2021 which details the SPHE/RSE toolkit and resource portal at <http://www.curriculumonline.ie/Primary/Curriculum-Areas/Social,-Personal-and-Health-Education/SPHE-RSE-Toolkit>.

Context

RSE will be delivered within the context of the SPHE curriculum and other curricular areas where relevant. Sensitive issues will be covered within the Strand Units of 'Taking Care of My Body', 'Growing and Changing' and 'Safety and Protection'. Current provision included in the school curriculum is

- Discrete SPHE lessons
- Use of RSE manuals and Busy Body resources
- Stay Safe Programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Science
- Home Economics
- Emotional Coaching (NEPS initiative)
- Nurture Room activities.

Aims

In setting these aims, the ethos of our school, the ages, needs and development of the pupils are the primary influences. We must also acknowledge that we are a placement school, so pupils will attend lessons which are appropriate to them during their time with us. Keeping in mind that our pupils vary in their level of understanding and in their availability to attend to the curriculum the aims of our R.S.E. Policy are:

1. To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of each pupil.
2. To enable each pupil to develop an understanding of the importance of family life whilst becoming aware of different family patterns.
3. To enable each pupil to be comfortable with themselves, their sexuality, physical development and growth.
4. To enable each pupil to develop healthy friendships and relationships.
5. To enable each pupil to understand the physical changes taking place with the onset of puberty. (senior end)
6. To develop in each pupil an understanding of and a healthy attitude to relationships and sexuality within a moral, spiritual and social framework.
7. To assist each pupil to acquire and use appropriate and respectful language and terminology to discuss feelings, emotions, growth and development.

8. To enable each pupil to respect birth, new life and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework.
9. To enable each pupil to value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood.
10. To enable each pupil to develop and sustain relationships based on mutual respect, responsibility and commitment and to understand the importance of trust and honesty in human interaction.
11. To help each pupil to develop strategies, protecting themselves and others from various forms of exploitation and abusive behaviours.

Objectives:

Our broad objectives should enable each pupil 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

We support the aims on which RSE is modelled. We encourage good behaviour, open communication, understanding and tolerance of differences, and respect for self and others. We recognise that both pupils and staff have rights and responsibilities in our school. A sense of responsibility is fostered and attention is paid to the wellbeing of all members of our school community. The school ethos affirms and supports close links between school, home and outside agencies.

Policies which support SPHE/RSE

While much of our planning for RSE will be described in this document some of it will also be contained in other related policy documents. The following policies/documents/programmes are relevant and will support our teaching:

- Code of Behaviour document
- Stay Safe Statement
- Nurture Group Policy
- Safety Statement
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Antibullying Policy

- Admissions Policy
- Policy on acceptable use of the Internet

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of the RSE Programme

- The teaching methods of RSE will be based on the principles as used in other areas of the curriculum. The methods are child-centred and appropriate to the age/stage of development of the pupil and are within a moral and spiritual framework. At all times the teacher will create an atmosphere in the class, which respects the privacy of each pupil, and all will be treated with sensitivity and care.
- All content objectives appropriate to the child during their time here will be covered.
- It is school policy that most of the RSE programme is best discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by the pupils. However, specialist speaker/team can enhance the quality of the provision as long as they are used in addition to, not instead of, a planned programme of RSE.
- Some lessons may be delivered by a specialist speaker(s)/team. It is, however, essential that the programme is organised by the school and that the school should be satisfied that contributions from informed guest speakers are an integral part of the whole programme and in harmony with its aims.
- The Principal will provide the visiting speaker with a copy of the RSE policy well in advance of the visit. The organiser will make the specialist speaker(s)/team aware of the ethos of the school and the manner of delivery of the RSE programme.
- It is intended that parents will be invited to an Information meeting with the specialist speaker/team prior to their work with the pupils.
- An outline of the content objectives will be made available to parents before the commencement of the programme each year.

Parental Involvement

- Parents are the primary educators of their children and their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality is seen by the school as very important. Parents will be involved in, and fully informed about the school's programme of RSE and its approach to particularly sensitive issues. The teaching offered by the school will always reinforce and strengthen positive family relationships and the role of parents. A copy of the policy statement will be made available to any parent/guardian on request to the school office and is available on the school website. We will endeavour to make parents aware of publications which will support them in this role.

- An outline of the content of the R.S.E. Programme to be taught in each class will be sent to parents at the beginning of the school year. (Appendix 1)
- Parents will be informed in advance of lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme, and will receive an outline of what will be taught at their child's class level. The letter will be issued in advance, giving parents an opportunity to become involved, to inform themselves of the programme content and to prepare children for the information they will acquire. (Appendix 2, 3)
- Following discussion with Principal and Class Teacher if a parent wishes to withdraw their child from the sensitive lessons it should be given in writing stating their reasons for doing so and centrally filed.

Organisation and Curriculum Planning

RSE forms part of the national Curriculum for SPHE and will be taught at every class level.

Strand Units of the SPHE/RSE Primary Curriculum:

Myself : Self identity, Taking care of my body, Growing and changing, Safety and protection

Myself and others: Myself and my family, Friends and relating to other people

Class groupings

Junior: Group 1 (5-7 years)

Middle: Group 2 (8-10 years)

Senior: Group 3 (10-12 Years)

Content for RSE Programme

Topics covered in RSE are based on the content of the RSE Primary School Curriculum. When due consideration has been taken of age/stage of development for Junior Classes, topics may include:

- Keeping safe
- Naming bodily parts using correct terminology
- Bodily changes during growth and development
- Appreciating family life/family relationships
- Recognizing feelings

- Expressing feelings
- Self-care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep
- Making healthy and responsible decisions
- Forming friendships
- Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship

The table below indicates the 2-year plan for SPHE and indicates where the RSE programme will be delivered.

From the year 2021 – 2022 onwards the Strands will be addressed over a two year cycle as follows in keeping with the revised Making the Links and Beyond document.

Month	Year 1 (2021 -2022)	Year 2 (2022 – 2023)
September/October	Self Identity (Myself)	Myself and my family (Myself and others)
November/December	My friends and other people (Myself and others)	Relating to others (Myself and others)
January/February	Safety and protection (Myself) (Stay Safe Programme)	*Growing and changing (Myself)
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**

***Sensitive lessons in RSE**

*Making Decisions is only a strand unit from 3rd- 6th. Classes using Juniors-2nd may complete the Safety issues section of Safety and Protection at this time. Due to the increased amount of lessons in the Stay Safe programme from 3rd to 6th class, placing the strand unit Making Decisions after the Safety and Protection in a two year plan will enable the teacher to achieve some of the content objectives of Making Decisions through the Stay Safe programme.

Child Safeguarding

This policy is cognisant of all aspects of our current Child Safeguarding Policy. The school follows the DES Child Protection Procedures and has both DLP and DDLP in place. Where a child protection concern is raised the procedures outlined in the schools Child Safeguarding Policy will be followed.

Guidelines for Teachers

1. Familiarise yourself with the school's RSE policy.
2. If there are areas that you are still unsure about, discuss these with the Principal/Deputy Principal.
3. Teach within the guidelines agreed by the school community, as expressed in the Policy document.
4. Use the Department of Education and Skills resource materials.
5. Additional information can be obtained, if needed, from the Principal/Deputy Principal.
6. Anticipate difficult questions in advance and plan how to answer them.
7. Try to answer as many questions as you can, but don't be afraid to set boundaries: it may not be appropriate to answer all questions in class because of the age or maturity level of the students.
8. While teaching the sensitive issues around RSE be aware if pupils from another class have been dispersed to your class.
9. It is possible to say that you can't answer a question in a pleasant and affirming way by saying, for example "that's something that we might discuss when you're a bit older", or "I won't be able to answer all your questions in class, but maybe you could talk to your parents about that".
10. If you don't know the answer to a question say that you might take some time to think about it
11. Keep a sense of humour.
12. Where distance learning is taking place the sensitive lessons and the teaching of the Stay Safe programme will be deferred until in class teaching begins again.

Additional suggestions for teachers may be found at:

- <https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Primary/Curriculum-Areas/Social,-Personal-and-Health-Education/SPHE-RSE-Toolkit>
- <https://www.sess.ie/about-cat-gld-and-guidelines-use>

It is natural that pupils should wish to ask questions in the area of RSE.

All questions answered will reflect the parameter of the curriculum. Certain topics are not in the RSE/SPHE primary curriculum and will not be discussed at this level (e.g. abortion or contraception)

Should a pupil require information that is not in line with the curriculum content and considered not to be age appropriate for the general body of pupils the school will refer the question home to parents and parents can decide if the question should be answered and who would be the best person to answer the question. This is done on an individual basis.

Teachers can state that this information may be available at a later stage of the curriculum or when they transition to secondary school.

On-going Support, Development and Review

All teachers involved in this work do not necessarily have to be “experts” on the issues concerned. The School will facilitate teachers to obtain training in this field, bearing in mind the overall budgetary framework and the need for the ongoing teaching and learning programme of the school to continue with as little disturbance as possible.

School staff have availed of training and are encouraged to attend in-service training in:-

- The Child Abuse Prevention Programme (Stay Safe)
- Relationships and Sexuality Programme (RSE)
- Walk Tall Programme

The School will purchase appropriate RSE teaching materials which have been identified by staff as useful and which have been approved by the Principal, within the normal budgetary framework and as general school resources allow.

We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this programme. Specifically important to the RSE programme are;

- Pupil feedback,
- Staff review and feedback,
- Parental feedback.

This process of evaluation will be undertaken by informal meetings as well as formal meetings between teachers and other relevant personnel. Such evaluations should take place at appropriate times during the implementation of the programme.

Date Created	2021
Date Ratified	2021
Date for Review	2023



Chairperson's Signature: _____

Date: 15.12.21

Principal's Signature: _____

Date: 15.12.21