Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy

Clonaghadoo National School

School Philosophy

Clonaghadoo School is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. It is managed by a Board of Management, elected according to the procedures agreed by the Partners in Education. The school has a Catholic ethos and this ethos is a guiding principle in the formulation and implementation of this R.S.E. Policy. This ethos recognises the value and dignity of each pupil and all those working in the school community, and aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person, including:

* Relationship with God
* Relationship with family
* Relationship with teachers
* Relationship with self
* Relationship with others
* Relationship with the environment

This ethos also acknowledges the cultural and religious values of all the pupils attending the school. The school recognises that the parents are the primary educators of their children and we support them in that role.

In the area of R.S.E., above all, the schools’ role is subsidiary to that of the parents. We support and compliment their work. Provision will be made for the rights of parents wo hold conscientious or moral objections to their children’s participation in the R.S.E. programme. Provision will also be made for teachers who hold conscientious or moral objections to delivering particular areas of the programme while recognising their rights of the pupils to have access to the R.S.E. programme.

Mission Statement

The mission of Clonaghadoo N.S. is to ensure the provision of a comprehensive education while sharing and celebrating the Christian way of life. We will undertake this with full understanding and appreciation of the individual needs, talents and learning styles of both students and teachers, in participation with and in the best interests of all partners in education – students, teachers, parents and the wider community.

Definition of R.S.E

R.S.E is an integral part of Social, Personal and Health Education 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 (pg. 5 NCCA Curriculum and Guidelines for R.S.E). R.S.E is the formal approach to educating children in:

* Relationships with others – parents, siblings, friends and the community in general
* Respect for themselves and others
* Physical development – bodily functions and changes and personal hygiene
* Emotional development – maturing in society
* Parenting personal and social skills and relationships
* Sexuality in context – part of a loving relationship

Definition of S.P.H.E

Social, Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E) contributes to developing the work of the school in promoting the health and well-being of children. It explores issues such as relationships both at home and in school, building self-esteem, communication skills, decision making and appropriate expression of feelings. It includes information on healthy eating, alcohol, drugs, personal development, safety and social responsibility and environmental issues.

Relationship of RSE to SPHE, Religion and the overall curriculum

SPHE contributes to developing the work of the school in promoting the health and well-being of children and young people. This happens in the context of their emotional, moral, social and spiritual growth, as well as their intellectual, physical, political, religious and creative development (pg.5 Going Forward Together – Parents Information Booklet)

The key characteristics of this programme are that SPHE is a lifelong process and is a shared responsibility between family, school, health professionals and the community. The main strands of the SPHE programme are:

* Myself
* Myself and Others
* Myself and the Wider World

It is clear that the Relationships and Sexuality Programme is correctly defined as being an integral part of the programme outlined above. Sexually sensitive issues will be covered within the strand units:

* Taking care of my body
* Growing and changing
* Safety and protection

As stated previously, the content of all lessons will be governed by the schools’ Catholic ethos as taught in the Grow in Love programme.

Aims of our R.S.E programme

* When due account is taken of intrinsic abilities and varying circumstances, the Relationships and Sexuality Education curriculum should enable the child to:
* Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth
* Develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well-being of others
* Understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and in 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, change and understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity
* Develop personal skills, which will help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships
* Develop some coping strategies to protect themselves and others from various forms of abuse
* Acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction
* Acquire and use an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development
* Develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making

The Management and Organisation of R.S.E.

* The R.S.E. programme will be taught in harmony with and in support of the school ethos.
* Parents/Guardians will be informed beforehand of lessons dealing with sensitive issues and will be encouraged to discuss the content of such lessons with the class teacher where queries arise and with their own children in support of the lesson. Parents will be informed by letter with an accompanying outline of the lesson, including vocabulary to be used (See Appendix A)
* Certain sensitive areas will be gender specific and will be dealt with in a single gender setting before being dealt with in a whole class setting.
* The teacher will only teach the specified curriculum content for each class. If children raise issues not covered in the curriculum, teachers will defer/postpone discussion on such issues to allow for consultation with the Principal Teacher and/or the teacher with curriculum responsibility for R.S.E. The school will use its discretion as to when the issue will be dealt with or not at all. In all instances, the child will be encouraged to talk to his/her parents/ guardians.
* It is a parents/guardians right to withdraw a pupil from these lessons. This request for withdrawal must be made in writing.
* If parents/guardians request the withdrawal of a child from R.S.E. lessons, provision will be made for them to leave the classroom at that time. Supervision will be provided. With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom. Should a child who is withdrawn from the sexually sensitive classes receive inappropriate information from others outside of these classes, it will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian to address the issues.
* Any teacher has the right to opt-out from teaching the sexually sensitive issues in R.S.E. It is the responsibility of the BOM to ensure that the curriculum will be delivered to the children, by another teacher, or an outside speaker.
* Parents are welcome to view the curriculum and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns.

Classroom Strategy r.e: Sensitive issues which may arise

* Teachers will explain that the amount of information given will be part of this year’s programme and further information will be given at a later stage.
* If the question is factual and within the agreed programme for that age group, the teacher will answer it.
* If it is felt that the question is genuine, the teacher may advise the child to ask at home, or may consult the parents to get their permission to answer the question.
* Teachers will not answer personal questions.
* All teaching aids and resources will be viewed by teachers prior to classroom use. All such resources will be available to parents/guardians to view.
* Any visitors/speakers/presenters from outside the school will be approved by the BOM. They will be made aware of the school R.S.E. policy and will only speak within its parameters. A teacher will be present at all times during such talks/presentations.

Dealing with Questions

It is natural that children should wish to ask questions in the area of R.S.E. However, this area is treated somewhat differently from other subjects due to its sensitive nature.

All questions answered will reflect the parameters of the curriculum. Certain topics will not be discussed i.e. abortion, masturbation, homosexuality, contraception. Questions to the teacher may be written or oral within the group setting and answered within the boundaries of the curriculum and school policy. If any questions asked by the children are judged to be inappropriate, the teacher will refer the child to their parents, or state that this information may be available at a later stage of the curriculum. The school cannot guarantee confidentiality if a child asks a question of a personal nature or discloses personal information.

***At all times the child’s and teacher’s right to privacy will be maintained.***

Parental Involvement

Parents/guardians are the primary educators of their children and as such the school supports them in this role. As stated, parents/guardians will be given the option of withdrawing their child from a particular lesson if they so wish. The Parent’s Association may on occasion arrange for speakers/meeting to help them in the task of communicating with their children on aspects of their development. Parents/guardians may access copies of the policy from the school office or school website.

Resources

* Going Forward Together (Juniors-2nd pg.8/ 3rd-6th pg. 9)
* Relationships and Sexuality Education – Core Resource Materials Book
* Tom Power’s Flower (gentle explanation of how babies are born)
* Busy Bodies – great resource for tricky questions
* Talking To Your Young Child about Relationships, Sexuality and Growing Up – Parent Booklet
* [www.healthpromotions.ie](http://www.healthpromotions.ie)
* [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)
* [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

**Specific Content Details – Relationship & Sexuality Education**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Class | Description | Language |
| Juniors  Seniors | Name parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms.  Awareness of human birth – a baby grows inside the mother’s womb until ready to be born. | * ***Penis*** in context of passing urine * ***Urethra*** in context of passing urine |
| 1st Class  2nd Class | Name parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identifying some of their functions. | * **Penis** – passing urine * **Urethra** – passing urine * **Vagina** – Opening where a baby leaves a mother’s womb. * **Breasts** – for feeding a baby. * **Navel/ belly** button – where a baby was joined to its mother before birth. |
| 3rd Class  4th Class | Understand the physical changes taking place in both the male and female body. Realising that these changes do not occur at the same time but nonetheless are predictable and natural and that being different is normal. | * Growing in height, weight and strength. * Growing from boy to man and girl to woman. * Accepting own body shape/ size/ rate of development. * Onset of menstruation (periods) for fourth class girls only. |
|  | The stages and sequence of foetal development from conception to birth. | Identifying objects which coincide with the size of the foetus at different stages.  Changes in foetus - development of limbs, more recognisable shape.  Baby emerges from womb through vagina when ready after **9 months**. |
| 5th Class  6th Class | Identify and discuss the physical and other changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty and understand that these changes take place at different rates for everyone. | * **Female – hormonal changes**. * Changing body shape. * Development of breasts. * Appearance of underarm and pubic hair. * **Male – Hormonal Changes.** * Oily Skin * Spots * Physical growth * Enlargement of testicles and penis * Breaking of voice * Beginning of sperm production * Involuntary erections * Nocturnal emissions (wet dreams) |
| **The reproductive system of male and female adults**   * Male reproductive organs – penis, scrotum, sperm, sperm tube, testis * Female reproductive organs – vagina, cervix, uterus, ovary, fallopian tubes, ovum (egg) | | |
| **Sexual intercourse, conception and birth**  The penis **penetrates** the vagina when **erect**. Sperm is **ejaculated**. A sperm penetrates an egg inside the female and so **fertilises** the egg. The egg splits in 2 and then in 4 and so on. Foetal development begins as covered previously. After 9 months, when the baby is ready, the womb muscles begin to **contract** and start pushing the baby out. when the baby is born the **umbilical cord** is cut and it is not needed. The baby begins life outside the womb. | | |

Ongoing Support, Development and Review

Where opportunities arise, in-career development will be sought for teachers.

The Parent’s Association may be able to access training for parents.

Once the R.S.E. programme has been taught for one school year, this policy will be reviewed annually.

Review:

This policy was ratified on the 09/03/20 and will be reviewed annually.

Chairperson: Bernadette Clear

Principal: Grainne Finnerty

Appendix A

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|  |  | St. Marys N.S  Clonaghadoo,  Geashill,  Co. Offaly  R35 W427 Phone: (057) 8628757  Email: clonaghadoons@eircom.net |

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is a very important element of the school curriculum. SPHE covers a wide range of topics such as self-identity, making decisions, citizenship and relationships, which equip children with many of the skills and knowledge needed in today’s world.

The Relationship and Sexuality element of the programme (RSE) includes the learning, understanding and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, sexual identity and intimacy.

The main aims of the RSE programme are:

* To enhance the personal development, well-being and self-esteem of each child
* To enable each child to gain an understanding of and respect for human love, reproduction and sexual activity in a sensitive and measured way
* To enable the child develop healthy friendships and relationships
* To develop and promote a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life.

The content of the programme falls under the following headings:

* **Myself** – Self-identity, taking care of my body, growing and changing, safety.
* **Myself and Others** - Myself and family, friends and relating to other people.
* **Taking Care of My Body -** Naming parts of the male and female body using appropriate terminology (Lower and Middle classes). Identifying physical changes. Understanding puberty and the Reproductive System (Senior Classes)
* **Growing and Changing** - The stages of development of a baby from conception to birth (Middle Classes). Understanding sexual relations within the context of a committed loving relationship (Senior Classes).

Within this content, there are a number of sensitive issues such as conception and reproduction. Our school policy outlines that these issues will primarily be taught in May and June and we are now advising parents in advance that this will take place in the coming weeks. We encourage you to talk to your child about what s/he will learn through RSE in a mature and respectful way.

The following guidelines have been put in place to ensure everyone is happy with the delivery of the RSE programme. These are taken from our RSE policy, which, along with all other school policies, is available to parents on request from the office. Please read through the guidelines and do not hesitate to contact me should you have any queries or comments.

* The sections within the RSE programme which have been identified as sensitive issues will be taught in May and June in each class.
* The programme is taught within the ethos of the school and contemporary issues/topics are dealt with by the teacher at a level appropriate to the age and stage of development of pupils within a moral and spiritual framework.
* Relationships and Sexuality Education is an on-going process throughout life. A child's first experience of love, of intimacy and of relationships takes place in the family. Parents and the family are acknowledged as the primary educators of their children. We work in a supportive role with the parents, by complementing their role with a school based programme in RSE
* All the content objectives of the RSE Programme will be covered by the time children leave sixth class.
* The teachers' right to opt out will be honoured which will not affect the teaching of the subject.
* Parents will be informed by letter at least two weeks prior to the teaching of sensitive issues. This will allow time for parents to discuss topics with the child. It is in your child’s best interest to have a conversation with your child about the RSE programme prior to the lessons which will take place in May/June and meet the teacher if required and/or follow the appropriate procedure for opting out of the RSE programme.
* If a visitor or guest speaker is invited to a class to enhance the delivery of the RSE programme, the class teacher will remain present in the class. Parents will be informed of such a visit and the content being addressed in advance of the visit. Parents are encouraged to use this opportunity to discuss these topics with their children beforehand. Parents are advised to inform childminders etc. that the sensitive topics are going to be discussed.
* A parent's right to withdraw a pupil from the sensitive issues process will be honoured on the understanding that the parent(s) is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves.
* Parents are obliged to inform the school in writing of their decision to withdraw the child from the sensitive issues classes. Any parent who wishes to withdraw their child are asked to discuss with the principal how this may be facilitated.
* Teachers do not cover topics such as contraception and same sex friendships. Children who ask questions in class on content outside the designated curriculum are encouraged to discuss the issue with their parents. Parents are informed and asked to talk to their child. Support is offered to the parent in the form of information and support agencies to assist a parent to inform their child in an accurate and suitable way.
* Curriculum books and resource materials are available in the school and parents are welcome to borrow them if desired.
* The school has no responsibility for any information which the pupil may receive outside the direct teaching of the RSE lessons
* Questions arising from curriculum content will be addressed by the teacher or by the visitor in a sensible, sensitive and age-appropriate manner.
* Questions arising outside of the curriculum will be referred back to the parent(s).
* As part of the RSE programme worksheets will be sent home for parents to sign and return to the school, as this will confirm that parents have had discussions with their children in relation to the programme.

We are very aware of the importance and sensitivity of teaching the RSE programme to our pupils and we thank you for your ongoing support in ensuring your child will have received a balanced education in Clonaghadoo N.S., which will prepare them not only for secondary school, but for life.

Please find enclosed a copy of the “specific content details for Relationship and Sexuality Education” and a list of some websites you may find helpful. I am also sending home relevant booklets for your child/ren. “ Busy Bodies” booklet is aimed for Fifth and Sixth Class children only. Please retain these books as these books will be used each year. Busy Bodies will only be sent to new fifth Class Children and Tom’s Flower Power Pack will be available to new Junior Infants from next year.

Thank you for your co-operation,

Clonaghadoo Staff

**Specific Content Details – Relationship and Sexuality Education**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Class** | **Description** | **Language** |
| Junior Infants  Senior Infants | Name parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms.  Awareness of human birth – a baby grows inside the mother’s womb until ready to be born. | * **Penis** in context of passing urine * **Urethra** in context of passing urine |
| 1st Class  2nd Class | Name parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identifying some of their functions. | * **Penis** – passing urine * **Urethra** – passing urine * **Vagina** – Opening where a baby leaves a mother’s womb. * **Breasts** – for feeding a baby. * **Navel/ belly button** – where a baby was joined to its mother before birth. |
| Third and Fourth Class. | Understand the physical changes taking place in both the male and female body. Realising that these changes do not occur at the same time but nonetheless are predictable and natural and that being different is normal.  The stages and sequence of foetal development from conception to birth | * Growing in height, weight and strength. * Growing from boy to man and girl to woman. * Accepting own body shape/size/rate of development. * Onset of menstruation (periods) for Fourth Class girls only. * Identifying objects which coincide with the size of the **foetus** at different stages. * Changes in foetus – development of limbs, more recognisable shape. * Baby emerges from womb through vagina when ready after **9 months** |
| 5th Class  6th Class | Identify and discuss the physical and other changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty and understand that these changes take place at different rates for everyone. | * **Female - hormonal changes** Changing body shape. Development of breasts.   Appearance of underarm and pubic hair.   * **Male - hormonal changes**   Oily skin  Spots  Physical growth  Enlargement of testicles and penis  Breaking of voice  Beginning of sperm production.  Involuntary erections  Nocturnal emissions (wet dreams) |
| **The reproductive system of male and female adults**   * Male reproductive organs – **penis, scrotum, sperm, sperm tube, testis** * Female reproductive organs – **vagina, cervix, uterus, ovary, fallopian tubes, ovum (egg)** | | |
| **Sexual intercourse, conception and birth**  The penis **penetrates** the vagina when **erect**. Sperm is **ejaculated**. A sperm penetrates an egg inside the female and so **fertilises** the egg. The egg splits in 2 and then in 4 and so on. Foetal development begins as covered previously. After 9 months when the baby is ready, the womb muscles begin to **contract** and start pushing the baby out. When the baby is born the **umbilical cord** is cut and it is not needed. The baby begins life outside the womb. | | |

**Useful websites**

[www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)

[www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

[www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.heathpromotion.ie)