



Scoil Chaitríona Naíonáin

Relationships and Sexuality Policy

School Details:

Scoil Chaitríona Infants is a co-educational infant Catholic primary school. We have a dedicated staff who aim to provide a happy, safe and secure learning environment for all of our pupils so children can learn, reach their full potential and grow to be kind, responsible young people who can think for themselves. Scoil Chaitríona Infants is an inclusive school where all children are welcome and treated equally. We strive to support each individual child in achieving his/her potential and to foster their individual talents. Our school is run by a hardworking and supportive Board of Management. It is an eleven-classroom school with an office, 4 learning support rooms and a sensory room.

Introductory Statement:

All schools are required to have an RSE policy to detail how RSE is taught in the school, including the sensitive aspects. This policy is an approved approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in Scoil Chaitríona Naíonáin. It was developed in 2022 to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE both formally and informally.

School Philosophy:

In Scoil Chaitríona Naíonáin we strive to provide a fully inclusive, welcoming, stimulating and secure environment wherein we cherish all children and celebrate their uniqueness, as expressed in their personality, intelligence, and potential for development. We aim to nurture each pupil in all dimensions of life; spiritual, moral, cognitive, emotional, imaginative, aesthetic, social, and physical.

We aim to provide high-quality education through our commitment to and implementation of a child-centred curriculum that provides meaningful learning experiences and addresses a wide range of learning styles. We focus on maximising each child's sense of wellbeing and empowering our students to embrace and enjoy learning.

Our vision is to ensure that all students acquire, value and demonstrate skills and knowledge that will support them as lifelong learners and assist them to fulfil their potential as they become compassionate, innovative, productive and responsible members of society

We recognise that Parents/Guardians are the children's primary educators and we strive to empower and encourage them to be actively involved in their child's education and the life of the school by providing support and fostering positive and effective working relationships. We value our relationship with our local community and actively promote our pupils' and their families' involvement in the community. We also encourage positive and effective links to wider and global communities.

Scoil Chaitríona Naíonáin recognises that SPHE is intrinsic to the teaching and learning that occurs both formally and informally in school and in the classroom. Through our SPHE programme and subsequently, through RSE, 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 also 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 the wider community. Our school values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. Our ethos means that we value respect, tolerance and openness through the lived experience of the children and school community. Parents have the primary role in the social, personal and health education of their children so their involvement will be encouraged as much as possible. SPHE and RSE are key components in supporting our school and children to develop into healthy young adults.

Definition of RSE:

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is an integral part of social, personal and health education (S.P.H.E) 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 work will be based on providing them with appropriate information in relation to:

- Relationship 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

Relationship of RSE to SPHE:

RSE is an integral part of SPHE. SPHE is taught through school atmosphere and culture, integration and discrete teaching time. Formal RSE lessons and informal RSE messages must be consistent with the whole school approach to SPHE.

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.

SPHE:

- Is a lifelong process and consequently RSE is a continual process throughout primary school and is not confined to once-off inputs or lessons
- Is a shared responsibility between family, school, health professionals and the community RSE education should include an input from all, and collaboration can be fostered through the teaching and delivery of materials
- Is a generic approach. It is not so much about the specific content of RSE but rather the relationship with a child's skills, attitudes, values and understanding relevant to a range of social, personal and health issues
- Is based on the needs of the child, therefore RSE education should prioritise the needs of the child and his/her environment, with appropriate adaptations made within the curriculum to suit individual requirements and individual school situations
- Is spiral in nature. RSE is revisited at different stages throughout the child's time in school, this will provide opportunities to consolidate and build on previous learning. This allows for issues and topics to be explored and treated in a manner appropriate to the children's needs, abilities and levels of maturity
- Engages children to be involved in activity-based learning. RSE should provide a range of learning opportunities that include working together, learning about one's own feelings and those of others, developing a sense of empathy and experiencing and supporting healthy relationships.

Through SPHE and RSE, members of the school community should be 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.

The main strands of the SPHE programme are:

- Myself
- Myself and Others
- Myself and the Wider World

In an ever-changing world, RSE encourages children through consistent messages that are taught in line with SPHE. The school has a responsibility to ensure that its curriculum is free of bias and that issues of inequality in any form are addressed and dealt with (SPHE Teacher guidelines, p25). In learning about the cultures and traditions of others, children can develop a sense of respect for difference and appreciate the contribution that such has to offer. It will encourage children to be inclusive with each other, challenge prejudice and learn how to live in an intercultural society.

The content of all lessons will be governed by the schools' Catholic ethos as taught in the Grow in Love Religion Programme.

Current Provision Included in the School Curriculum Is:

We are a child-centred school. The educational and emotional needs of the children in our care are central to our planning and policy formation process. We have always and will continue to, put the welfare of the children entrusted to us first.

- The S.P.H.E programme will be used to teach this topic under three specific strands; Myself, Myself and my Family and Myself and the Wider World.
- Stay Safe: Senior Infants & First Class
- Fun Friends: First Class
- Roots of Empathy: Senior Infants
- Incredible Years Programme
- Amber Flag Initiative
- Physical Education
- Social, Environmental & Scientific Education (SESE)
- Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE)
- Be Safe Junior Infants to First Class
- Home School Liaison Co-ordinator
- The School Completion Programme
- Religious Education

R.S.E is delivered informally through the ethos of the school, the manner in which respect for others is practised and encouraged and in which conflicts are resolved and problems dealt with.

Aims of RSE Programme:

- 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

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

- Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self
- Develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well-being 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 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 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 well-being of all of the members of the school community.

Policies which Support SPHE/RSE:

- Child Protection Policy
- Substance Use Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School:

Curriculum Content –The curriculum by NCCA will be followed as published, and will be taught from infants to first class. All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school, the whole school plan for SPHE and the RSE policy. Each class teacher will teach the content for their class level each year as laid out in the curriculum and utilise the RSE manuals to complement their teaching.

Much of the content of RSE will be taught in a cross-curricular manner as many of the topics fall naturally into other subject areas. This integrated approach ensures that the child will encounter RSE in a holistic manner rather than in isolation. It should be noted that the areas of the RSE programme that are sensitive will always be scheduled to be taught at a specific time.

Parental Involvement:

Parents will be informed that the school fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE programme including sensitive aspects of the programme at enrollment.

- Parents will be informed in advance of lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme, with a letter relevant to what will be taught at their child's class level, an example of the letter can be found in Appendix 2.
- The letter will be issued in advance, giving parents an opportunity to meet with relevant class teachers if they so wish, to discuss or clarify what is covered and to prepare their children, it also gives parents an opportunity to become involved, to inform themselves of the programme content and to prepare children for the information they will acquire around the sensitive areas and discuss areas covered in RSE/SPHE.
- Parents are invited/welcome to view the curriculum and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns at any time during the year. The school acknowledges that parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children about growing and changing.

- Following discussion with the 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 this will be centrally filed.
- If a child has been withdrawn from the sensitive RSE lessons, the school takes no responsibility for what the child may hear following the teaching of the lessons. e.g. What they may hear on the yard.

Organisation and Curriculum Planning:

RSE forms part of the national curriculum for SPHE by NCCA and will be taught from infants to first class. RSE will be covered under the following strands and strand units of the SPHE curriculum:

- Myself
- Growing and Changing
- Taking Care of My Body

1. The general programme which contains content covered through SPHE strands and strand units and compliments the aims and objectives of RSE

- Friendship
- Self-identity
- Family
- Self-esteem
- Growing up

2. The second section will deal with any sensitive/specific content covered through RSE strands and strand units. The sensitive aspects are in bold.

Topics Covered up to First Class Include:

- Keeping safe
- **Bodily changes from birth (birth-9)**
- Making age-appropriate choices
- Appreciating the variety of family types and the variety of family life that exists in our school and community
- Recognising and expressing feelings
- Self-care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep
- Expressing opinions and listening to others
- **Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms (Junior/ Senior Infants)**

→ **Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identifying some of their functions (1st Class).**

Sensitive Content is Taught as per 2 Year SPHE Plan

Month	Year 1	Year 2
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)	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)

Approaches & Methodologies:

Active Learning Methodologies are an integral part of teaching of SPHE and RSE

The following techniques will allow the child to play an active part in the learning process:

- Discussion
- Role play
- Interviewing friends, or other school pupils, family members'
- Surveys of attitudes
- Analysing and evaluating newspapers and magazines, agony columns, television schedules
- Hosting visitors
- Projects
- Modelling
- Designing advertisements
- Writing captions
- Ranking statements

- Describing photographs
- Viewing and discussing videos.

When implementing the programme, staff at Scoil Chaitríona Naíonáin will endeavour to display respect for and sensitivity towards the different cultural and family backgrounds experienced by the children. The curriculum will be taught in an age-appropriate manner at all times. The curriculum will be taught from Junior Infants to first class. It will be taught through a spiral curriculum (key topics will be revisited in a developmental manner at regular intervals). The materials taught will reflect the needs of the children.

The RSE curriculum will be taught through:

- Stories and poems
- Classroom discussion
- Group work
- Games
- Art activities
- Reflection
- Circle time
- Guest speaker (The class teacher will stay in the room at all times in accordance with Circular 22/2010).

Differentiation:

The very nature of RSE education, and the differing maturity and growth levels of children mean that some children will need more support to understand the concepts and content. The teacher will use their assessment techniques to determine how to manage this. Usually, simple approaches can aid the teacher and children.

Teachers use assessment and professional judgment to differentiate the programme and content to suit the needs of the class. Some techniques used:

- Ensuring that objectives are realistic for the students
- Ensuring that the learning task is compatible with prior learning
- Providing opportunities for interacting and working with other students in small groups and spending more time on tasks

- Organising the learning task into small stages and ensuring that the language used is pitched at the student's level of understanding.
- Understanding of the activity using task analysis, outlining the steps to be learned/completed in any given task, posing key questions to guide students through the different stages/processes, and assisting in self-direction and correction
- Having short and varied tasks creating a learning environment through the use of concrete, and where possible everyday materials, and by displaying word lists and laminated charts with pictures.

Sometimes the stage of development in a class can vary widely and strategies to differentiate in class can support gradual and appropriate teaching

- Group work and discussion
- Higher and lower-order questioning in groups
- Moderated whole class discussions through the use of a Question Box.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs:

Adaptions to the way in which the content is delivered will be made for children with Special Educational Needs. Consultation with parents/ guardians in advance and anticipation of the children's needs will be central to ensuring learning is meaningful.

- Children may be pre-taught language or concepts in anticipation of whole class work
- Children may work in smaller groups or 1:1 on adapted and suitable material
- Any different or specific objectives related to the pupil's own learning needs should be detailed in their PPP in consultation with parents/guardians.

Language:

SPHE curriculum provides a context in which children are given opportunities to develop and enhance their language skills and to increase their vocabulary related to SPHE. 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 can hurt, diminish and demean. Children need to recognise and become sensitive to the ways in which they themselves use language in their relationships and their everyday interactions. Language is a powerful tool and should be used with respect and integrity for the dignity of each person. There are two areas where the use of language is applied in RSE lessons;

- The formal use and teaching of language generally throughout the school
- The use of language in a discussion through your formal RSE lessons

- Appropriate vocabulary in formal teaching
- Relating to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, parts of the body and feelings will be used, the use of slang will be discouraged
- Anatomical terms and language introduced is consistent with RSE Materials Books.

Questions:

Staff should not invalidate questions but use limits.

The main aim of talk and discussion is to create an atmosphere where children feel comfortable asking important questions and that the relationship fostered in these sessions is open, controlled and safe for all pupils. While you may not be able to answer all questions, your hope is that children will not be put off seeking answers in the school setting but will talk to their parents and ask the questions again at different stages of schooling or education, and are not put off because they perceived the topics or questions be embarrassing.

We use some simple principles when fostering discussion and questioning

- No personal questions of the teacher
- The Question Box will be availed of by the children
- The teacher will be mindful of their reaction to any questions
- Questions do not have to be answered straight away

Sample 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 in our contract that we wouldn't ask anyone personal questions
- Somebody asked a question and the language they used was slang language, what they meant to ask was....
- A question was asked, and we cannot talk about that particular topic but I think that question was about.

For older children, a 'question box' will be used as part of a structured RSE lesson. Teachers can follow up on the written questions at a later date, thus allowing time to prepare suitable answers, consult with colleagues, etc.

Question Box

During the delivery of each section of the sensitive lessons– children will be encouraged to place their questions into a box in the classroom. These questions will then be monitored and screened with the teacher answering the questions the following week taking into account the following;

- Questions arising from lesson content will be answered in an age-appropriate manner
- The class 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 programme and they will be advised to talk with their parents
- Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents themselves if they feel that a question is very inappropriate or needs to be communicated with home because of other reasons
- No personal questions will be answered and children will be reminded not to share personal information about their families or others – but can share it with teacher after the lessons.

If issues arise which might be seen to contravene Children First Guidelines, the teacher will notify the Designated Liaison Person in the school.

Assessment:

Assessment in RSE is important to enable the teacher to pitch the lessons correctly to their respective class group

The teacher uses;

- Observation and questions to assess the children’s engagement and interest
- Use of teacher-designed tasks such as worksheets, quizzes or games
- Use of reflection or learning log.

Confidentiality:

- The school follows Children First Guidelines 2011 and The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2011
- If a child is withdrawn from the teaching of sensitive issues, we cannot guarantee that the other children will not tell or inform him/her about what happened.

Resources:

Relationships and Sexuality Education Resource Materials (DES) - Each class teacher has a copy of the appropriate manual or access to it in online / pdf format. Other resources that support the broader aims of RSE include:

- Stay Safe programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Anatomical Dolls and Story books
- Picture books across the 9 grounds of equality

Provision of Ongoing Support:

- Opportunities provided by our Education Centre will be brought to the attention of staff members.
- Teachers will be encouraged to attend CPD in RSE
- Staff meetings are utilised as a platform for discussion and development of RSE materials
- Support from a PDST Advisor
- Promotion and communication of resources available from www.pdst.ie.

Review:

- The policy will be reviewed after every two 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.

This policy was reviewed in November 2022. An appointed review committee will review the policy in two years. Ongoing review and evaluation will take cognisance of changing information, legislation, developments in the school-based programme and feedback from parents and teachers.

Signed: Mrs. Maria O'Neill

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: Ms. Marie Dineen

(Principal)

Date: 29/11/2022

Date: 29/11/2022

Date of next review: November 2024

Appendix 1

Topics and Vocabulary Covered Infants to First Class

Topics Covered up to First Class Include:

- Keeping safe
- **Bodily changes from birth (birth-9)**
- Making age-appropriate choices
- Appreciating the variety of family types and the variety of family life that exists in our school and community
- Recognising and expressing feelings
- Self-care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep
- Expressing opinions and listening to others
- **Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms (Junior/ Senior Infants)**
- **Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identifying some of their functions (1st Class).**

Vocabulary Covered in RSE		
Junior Infants	Senior Infants	First Class
→ Womb	→ Womb	→ Womb
→ 9 months	→ 9 months	→ 9 months
→ Feeding bottle	→ Feeding bottle	→ Feeding bottle
→ Breast milk	→ Breast milk	→ Breast milk
→ Seed growing in the womb, grows hands, feet etc.	→ Seed growing in the womb, grows hands, feet etc.	→ Seed growing in the womb, grows hands, feet etc.
→ Penis	→ Penis	→ Urethra
→ Vulva/Vagina	→ Vulva/Vagina	→ Penis
		→ Vulva/Vagina

Appendix 2

Letter to Parents

Dear Parents/Guardians

Relationships and Sexuality education is an integral part of the S.P.H.E programme. The sensitive elements of the Relationships and Sexuality education programme are covered under the Strand Units, 'Growing and Changing' and 'Taking Care of my Body'. We will be completing these Strand Units with all class levels in the forthcoming weeks.

Topics Covered up to First Class Include:

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→ Penis	→ Penis	→ Urethra
→ Vulva/Vagina	→ Vulva/Vagina	→ Penis
		→ Vulva/Vagina

The class teacher will send home appropriate home school links pages from the Relationships and Sexuality manual which outline the material that will be covered in class and encourage further discussion on the topics at home.

If you have any questions please make an appointment to see the class teacher.

Yours sincerely,

Appendix 3

RSE Opt-Out Consent Form

I parent/guardian of _____ wish that my child does not take part in the teaching of the RSE programme in Scoil Chaitríona Naíonáin.

I understand that it is my duty to discuss this with my child when I feel the time is appropriate.

I understand that although my child is withdrawn from the teaching of sensitive issues, Scoil Chaitríona Naíonáin cannot guarantee that other children will not tell or inform him/her about what happened during S.P.H.E lessons.

Signed: _____

Date: ____/____/____

(Parent/Guardian)