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# Relationships and Sexual Education (RSE) Policy

## SCOIL MHUIRE, CLONDRA

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**School Ethos/Philosophy:** Our school is a mixed school with 4 mainstream teachers and two special education teachers (1 shared), under the patronage of the Bishop of Ardagh & Clonmacnoise, Paul Connell and this policy reflects the Catholic ethos of our school.

### **Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE):**

RSE is a developmental process through experiential learning in which pupils participate to help cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships.

### **Rationale**

This policy originated in 2000. It was reviewed with Cuiditheor in 2004; further reviewed following a School Development Planning Day in June 2008 with the assistance of a Cuiditheor; reviewed following a School Development Planning Day in February 2010 and further reviewed in May 2014 and 2018 and February 2022. Current review takes place in March 2025.

### **Aims:**

The aims of RSE are:

- To help pupils understand and develop friendships and relationships.
- To promote an understanding of sexuality.
- To promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's own relationship with others.
- To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction.
- To enable pupils to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework, in keeping with the policy of the school.
- To provide opportunities for pupils to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

**Context:** RSE will be delivered within the context of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). Puberty, Feelings/Emotions and Relationships will be taught annually. Sensitive issues will be covered within the strand units 'Taking care of my body' and 'Growing and changing' and will be taught every two years between February and May. The content is available at the link below

[www.curriculumonline.ie/Primary/Curriculum-Areas/Social-Personal-and-Health-Education-Curriculum](http://www.curriculumonline.ie/Primary/Curriculum-Areas/Social-Personal-and-Health-Education-Curriculum) and on our website on the Parents Association/Parents' Information page:

**What the school provides:** The content outlined above will be taught in keeping with the overall SPHE curriculum. It will be taught using lessons taken from the RSE documents as supplied by the

Department of Education and Science and may also use 'Busy Bodies' booklet as well as other resources, e.g. story books. It will be left to the discretion of the principal and class teachers to modify the content to meet the needs of pupils (a) in multiclass situations (b) with special educational requirements (c) from various ethnic, cultural or religious backgrounds. All pupils will be given equal access to this education.

### **Management and Organisation of RSE in our School**

- Guidelines as laid down by the Department of Education and Science and as discussed in this document will be followed. It is recognised that during any year a special teacher/pupil relationship develops within a class. A trust and understanding of each other is acquired and having regard to this special relationship we recognise the need to allow the teachers flexibility/discretion as the need may arise when dealing with certain areas of the curriculum. All content objectives will be covered by the time the children leave 6<sup>th</sup> class.
- It is envisaged that the programme will be taught in an integrated manner where possible. Topics can come up in other lessons, e.g., science.
- Parents are acknowledged as primary educators of their children and we work in a supportive role:-
- Parents have the responsibility to become involved, to inform themselves of the programme content, to prepare children for the information they will acquire around the sensitive areas and to discuss areas covered in the school in RSE/SPHE with their children.
- Parents are to be informed in advance of the programme contents. For 5th and 6th class the Busy Bodies booklet will be sent home prior to the commencement of lessons with a note informing parents that the subject will be covered in between February and May (see Appendix 3 and Appendix 5).
- Books and video clips may be used to complement the teaching of RSE. Parents can view these on [pdst.ie/node/811](http://pdst.ie/node/811). Appendix 4 contains a list of useful books, internet links and resources which may be of use to parents.
- If a parent wishes their child to be withdrawn from a formal RSE class they must first discuss this with the teacher involved and the principal and then inform the principal in writing (see Appendix 1). Every effort will be made to withdraw the child with the minimum of fuss. The school has no responsibility for any information which the pupils may receive outside of the direct teaching of these lessons.
- Children will be encouraged to discuss the material being covered in class with their parents/guardians. Where possible handouts, worksheets, etc., will be provided to facilitate this.
- In a class situation, children will be encouraged to recognise that certain information is for them only, i.e., that it is inappropriate for them to discuss information received about puberty, intercourse and birth with younger siblings, friends from outside school, etc. It will be explained that other children will be given this information by their own parents and teacher when they reach the appropriate age.
  - Children will also be taught to recognise that certain personal disclosures are inappropriate. Teachers will neither give nor request personal information. A respect for personal information and personal privacy will be emphasised.
  - Parents will be informed if a teacher feels a particular child would benefit from more in-depth discussion, at home, of a topic covered.
  - If a parent has a particular concern/issue which has arisen as a result of an RSE discussion in school they will be encouraged to discuss the same with the teacher or the principal.

- As always, parents are requested to inform teachers of special family situations. These will be dealt with in confidence. It is the experience of the teachers that it is to everyone's benefit if they are kept informed.
- Students with General Learning Disability: Taking into account a student's social and emotional development, instruction will be based on individual needs. They may also need more help in learning what sorts of behaviour are and are not acceptable. Parents will be consulted around sensitive issues before they are included in the student's Learning Support Plan.
- Sensitive issues will be taught as per Appendix 2.
- There will be ongoing assessment of the programme through observation by and feedback from parents, teachers and pupils.
- This policy will be reviewed after two years. The parents, Board of Management and staff will be given an opportunity to make comments and suggest amendments as appropriate. It is intended that the senior pupils' opinions will be included in this review.

### **Specific/Explicit Questions**

Children's questions will be dealt with, taking into account the following criteria when relevant:

- By being aware of circumstances in which the question has arisen.
- By clarifying what information is required.
- By deciding if the issue is relevant and who it is relevant to.
- By giving an age-appropriate answer.
- By deferring the question as one which will be answered in the next lesson, one which should be answered at home or one which will be answered more fully in the future.

It may not be appropriate to deal with some explicit questions in class. Teachers may choose to say that it is not appropriate to deal with that question at this time. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised he/she should seek advice from the Principal. Should a pupil seek information that is not in line with the curriculum content (e.g., abortion, contraception), or considered not to be age appropriate for the general body of pupils, the school may refer the pupil back to their own parents to answer these questions. Questions may be asked anonymously by way of a question box. Children can write their question and submit it to the box with no name attached.

RSE resources will be kept up to date. Relevant information will be provided for all members of the school community.

**Review:**

Policy and programme will be reviewed as necessary, but at the very latest **February 2028**. All partners will be informed of any amendments necessary after such a review.

This RSE policy was ratified on \_\_\_\_\_

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

Ms Mary Duignan, Chairperson, Board of Management, Scoil Mhuire, Clondra.

**Acronyms**

HSE	Health Service Executive
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers
RSE	Relationship and Sexual Education
SPHE	Social, Personal and Health Education

## Appendix 1

If a request for withdrawal from the RSE programme is made by a parent.

- We discuss the nature of the concerns with the child's parents and, if appropriate, attempt to reassure them (initially such discussion takes place with the class teacher and SPHE Co-ordinator; the Principal may become involved if necessary).
- We consider whether the programme can be amended or improved in a way that will reassure parents – care is taken not to undermine the integrity of the RSE programme and the entitlement of the other pupils. E.g., it may be appropriate and desirable to have single-sex classes for some sections of the RSE programme.
- We attempt to ensure that where a pupil is withdrawn there is no disruption to other parts of their education.
- We point out that pupils who have been withdrawn are vulnerable to teasing. We therefore attempt to cause minimal embarrassment to the pupil and minimal disruption to the programme.
- We point out that a pupil who has been withdrawn may receive inaccurate information from their peers.
- We offer the parents access to appropriate information and resources.
- The Principal must be informed in writing of a parent's intention to withdraw their child from RSE.

## Appendix 2

<p>Topics covered up to 2<sup>nd</sup> class include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping Safe</li> <li>• Bodily changes from birth (birth-9)</li> <li>• Making age appropriate choices</li> <li>• Appreciating the variety of family types and the variety of family life that exists in our school and community</li> <li>• Recognising and expressing feelings</li> <li>• Self-care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep</li> <li>• Expressing opinions and listening to others</li> <li>• Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms (Junior/ Senior Infants). The language taught at this level will be: Penis, vulva</li> <li>• Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions (1st/2nd). The language taught at this level will be: Penis, vulva, vagina, womb, breastfeeding, urethra,</li> </ul>	<p>Topics from 3rd to 6th classes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bodily changes</li> <li>• Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise</li> <li>• Keeping Safe</li> <li>• Expressing Feelings</li> <li>• Appreciating the variety of family types within our school and community and how these family relationships shape us</li> <li>• Making healthy and responsible decisions</li> <li>• Forming Friendships</li> <li>• Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb(3rd, 4th class)</li> <li>• Introduction to puberty and changes (3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th class)</li> <li>• Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (5th/6th Class) The language taught at this level will be</li> </ul> <p><i>3<sup>rd</sup> &amp; 4<sup>th</sup> Classes</i> Spots/acne, underarm hair, voice matures/deepens, moods, body shape changes, boys not as tall as girls until older, puppy fat, Thin hips, broad shoulders (boys), Waist develops, hips widen (girls)</p> <p><i>Birth and New Life</i> 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> Classes: Growing and Changing; Size of foetus</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 60%;">Week 2</td> <td>full stop</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Week 6</td> <td>baked bean</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Week 8</td> <td>adult thumbnail</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Week 14</td> <td>Grapefruit, etc.</td> </tr> </table> <p><i>End of 4<sup>th</sup> Class (girls only)</i> Periods, menstruation</p> <p><i>5<sup>th</sup> &amp; 6<sup>th</sup> Classes</i> <i>Puberty/changes in the body</i> Testosterone, Oestrogen/progesterone Adam's apple (voicebox), hair, underarm hair, pubic hair, penis, scrotum (penis and scrotum enlarge), testicles, foreskin, circumcision, urethra, semen, sperm, erection, ejaculation, wet dreams, breast and nipple development, periods/menstruation, clitoris, labia, vagina, vulva, cervix, fallopian tube, ovary, ovulation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reproductive system of male/female adults (5th and 6th class) The language taught at this level will be semen, sperm, erection, ejaculation periods/menstruation, fallopian tube, ovary, ovulation, umbilical cord</li> <li>• Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship (5th, 6th class) The language taught at this level will be Fertilisation, Pregnancy, Breastfeeding</li> <li>• Age of consent: 17, it is a criminal offence under 17</li> </ul>	Week 2	full stop	Week 6	baked bean	Week 8	adult thumbnail	Week 14	Grapefruit, etc.
Week 2	full stop								
Week 6	baked bean								
Week 8	adult thumbnail								
Week 14	Grapefruit, etc.								

## Appendix 3

Dear Parent/s

Relationships & Sexuality education (RSE) is a key component of the Social Personal & Health Education (SPHE) curriculum in primary school. This also forms part of the new Wellbeing curriculum as per the NCCA Primary Curriculum Framework (2023). RSE provides children with opportunities to develop knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and practical skills necessary to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships with self and others.

In addition to learning about relationships, RSE invites children to explore concepts such as physical development and human sexuality. Topics are explored with children in a developmentally appropriate nature throughout their primary education.

If you would like to view the RSE curriculum, teaching documents and resources, please do so on the following link by Oide Primary Wellbeing: <https://oide.ie/primary/home/wellbeing/sphe/resources/>  
There is a letter for parents at the end of each chapter.

Additional information on the RSE curriculum is available at  
<https://www.pdst.ie/sites/default/files/RSE%20in%20Primary%20School%20Parent%20Tips.pdf>

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. Please find attached the home/school links pages of 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 concerns please make an appointment to see the class teacher.

Yours sincerely

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Melissa Hussey  
Principal

## Appendix 4

The following is a list of resources/books/websites for RSE that parents may find useful. We recommend that you look at the book/resources/website before you view/read them with your child.

*How did I begin*, Mick Manning  
*You choose*, Nick Sharraett and Pippa Goodhart  
*The World is Full of Babies*, Mick Manning  
*Waiting for Baby*, Annie Kubler  
*My New Baby*, Annie Kubler  
*Flour Babies*, Anne Fine  
*How Babies are Made*  
*My body! What I say goes*, Jayneen Sanders  
*Great Big Book of Families*, Mary Hoffman  
*The Family Book*, Todd Parr  
*And Tango Makes Three*  
*Heather Has Two Mummies*, Justin Richardsho  
*A tale of two Daddies*, Vanita Oelschlager  
*Growing Up* (Osbourne Publications)  
*The Underpants Rule*  
*The Boy in the Dress*, David Walliams  
*Let's Talk about Where Babies Come From*, Walker Books  
*The Sissy Duckling*, Harvey Fierstein  
*Looking after your mental health* (10yr +)  
*Girl facts, boy facts*, Kathy Bee  
*Made with love*, Kate Petty  
*Mommy, Mama and Me*  
*Mamello*, Ralene K. Goff

[vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu/healthybodies](http://vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu/healthybodies)

[pdst.ie/node/811](http://pdst.ie/node/811)

- Different families/same love
  - We all belong
  - All Together now
  - Being LGBT in school
  - Talking to your young child about relationships, sexuality and growing up.
  - Tom's flower power

For children with a General Learning Disability

- What's Happening to Tom
- Tom needs to go
- Things Ellie likes
- Things Tom Likes
- What's Happening to Ellie – all by Kate E. Reynolds
- *Taking Care of Myself*, Mary Wrobel

## Appendix 5

Class	Strand/ Strand Unit	Content Objectives <i>Consult curriculum for complete content objectives in Growing and changing and Taking care of my body</i>	Language	RSE Resource Materials Book	Walk Tall	Supplementary Resources
Junior/ Senior Infants	<b>Myself</b> Growing and changing Taking care of my body	<b>Growing and changing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Become aware of new life and birth in the world</li> <li>Develop an awareness of human birth</li> </ul> <b>Taking care of my body</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Name the parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms</li> </ul>	Womb Breastfeeding Penis Vulva	New life p.68 My body p.147 Caring for new life p.137 At the beach or swimming pool p.153	Our amazing bodies p.94 (Senior Infant book)	Anatomically correct dolls Picture books of new baby Visit of baby to class
First/ Second Class	<b>Myself</b> Growing and changing Taking care of my body	<b>Growing and changing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin to understand that reproduction, birth, growth and death are all part of new life cycles</li> </ul> <b>Taking care of my body</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Name the parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions</li> </ul>	Womb Breastfeeding Penis Vulva Vagina Urethra	The wonder of new life p.59 & p.151 How my body works p.67 & p.161 Growing means changing p.77 & p.171 A visit to the doctor p.164	Our amazing bodies p.37 (2nd class book)	Picture books of going to the doctors Tom's Power Flower Books / activities on life cycles Birth and new life in nature
Third/ Fourth Class	<b>Myself</b> Growing and changing Taking care of my body	<b>Growing and changing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the physical changes taking place in both the male and female body</li> <li>Realise that changes do not occur at the same time but nonetheless are predictable and natural and that being different is normal</li> </ul> <b>Taking care of my body</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognise and discuss how feelings and emotions are affected by the physical changes that take place during puberty</li> <li>Discuss the stages and sequence of development of human baby from conception to birth</li> </ul>	<b>Revise above</b> Umbilical cord Menstruation <b>Changes in puberty</b>	Preparing for new life p.69 The wonder of new life p.169 As I grow and change p.93 Growing and changing p.195	As I grow I change p.175 (3rd class book) Changing and growing p.140 (4th class book) The wonder of new life p.150	Body system labelling activities Puberty sorting game Picture books on growing and changing
Fifth/ Sixth Class	<b>Myself</b> Growing and changing Taking care of my body	<b>Growing and changing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a loving committed relationship</li> </ul> <b>Taking care of my body</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and discuss the physical changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty and understand that these take place at different rates for everyone</li> <li>Understand the reproductive system of both male and female adults</li> </ul>	<b>Revise above</b> Wet dreams Semen Sexual intercourse <b>Refer to Busy Bodies language for guidance</b>	My body grows and changes p.81 The wonder of new life p.92 Caring for new life p.103 Different kinds of love p.141	My amazing body p.345 (5th class book) Creation p.121 (6th class book)	Busy Bodies Body system labelling activities Puberty sorting games Question box Puberty quiz

