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St. Mary's BNS: Policy on Relationships and Sexuality Education

This policy statement is an approved approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in St. Mary's BNS Maynooth. It was developed in 2018/2019 school year in conjunction with in-school support from the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to the material covered in the RSE programme within the SPHE curriculum.

Ethos

St. Mary's BNS is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin. The school has a Catholic ethos and this ethos is a guiding principle in the formulation and implementation of this RSE 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:

- a) relationship with God
- b) relationship with family
- c) relationship with teachers
- d) relationship with self
- e) relationship with others
- f) 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 RSE, above all, the school's role is subsidiary to that of the parents. We support and compliment their work.

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."

Interim curriculum and guidelines for primary schools (DE 1996, p.5)

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

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

Interim curriculum and guidelines for primary schools (DE 1996, p.9)

Policies that support SPHE/RSE

- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Substance Use Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy

Our school follows a two-year plan for SPHE:

Month/Class Level	JI, 1 st , 4 th , 6 th	SI, 2 nd , 3 rd , 5 th
September/October	Self-identity (Myself)	Myself and my Family (Myself & others)
November/December	My friends and other people (Myself and others)	Relating to others (Myself & others)
January/February	Growing and changing (RSE) (Myself)	Safety and Protection (Stay Safe) (Myself)
March/April	Taking care of my body (RSE) (Myself)	Making decisions (Myself) – 3 rd & 5 th classes* Safety and Protection (Myself) – Safety issues, SI & 2 nd classes
May/June	Media education (Myself and the wider world)	Developing citizenship (Myself and the wider world)

**Some of the content of the Stay Safe programme can be covered under the Making Decisions strand unit*

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'. **Making the Links** is a key document for teachers to support their planning for the delivery of these strand units. Teachers are provided with a copy Making the Links relevant to their class level which includes a copy of the school's two-year plan (Teacher Book Box).

Guidelines for the Implementation of RSE

The SPHE curriculum will underpin all teaching and learning of RSE at St. Mary's BNS. 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 discretionary time. Teachers are encouraged to use an integrated approach for the delivery of SPHE.

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

- Class teachers deliver content containing sensitive materials. Guest speakers from Accord deliver content in 6th class with the class teacher present to assist
- Parents are informed in early January that the RSE programme will be taught to pupils. The letter to parents provides a basic outline of the content to be covered, that correct anatomical terms will be used and that a facilitator from Accord will deliver content to 6th class pupils

Pupil Voice

In our school the voice of our pupils is acknowledged, valued and respected. Teachers promote a safe and secure classroom environment that fosters respect and openness while valuing privacy. Pupils are encouraged to participate fully in lessons, ask questions and have their views and opinions valued. A teacher may refer the child to their parents, or state that this information may be available at a later stage of the curriculum if a question or opinion is not within the parameters of the curriculum being covered.

Parental Involvement

Parents/guardians are the primary educators of their children and as such the school supports them in this role. Parents/guardians may opt withdraw their son from a particular lesson if they so wish (Education Act 1998, s30(2)(b)). The PTA may on occasion arrange for speakers/meetings to help them in the task of communicating with their children on aspects of their development. Parents/guardians are invited to discuss aspects of the RSE curriculum with their son's teacher should they wish to do so. Parents/guardians may access copies of the policy from the school office.

Resources

Teachers may consult any of the following teaching resources when teaching RSE in addition to the DE Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme (this list is not exhaustive):

- PDST Health and Wellbeing RSE <https://pdst.ie/primary/health-wellbeing/RSE>
- NCCA SPHE/RSE Toolkit <https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Primary/Curriculum-Areas/Social,-Personal-and-Health-Education/SPHE-RSE-Toolkit/>
- DE Walk Tall Manuals (provided in Teacher Book Box)
- Making the Links and Beyond (provided in Teacher Book Box)
- Stay Safe programme (provided in Teacher Book Box)
- Walk Tall Programme (provided in Teacher Book Box)
- Anatomical Dolls
- Busy Bodies Booklet/ Videos/ Workbook (PDST)

Assessment

The following methods for assessment may be used in SPHE/RSE:

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

Confidentiality

St. Mary's BNS 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.

Differentiation

The age and stage of development in a class can vary widely and strategies for differentiation can support gradual and appropriate learning. 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.

Provision of Ongoing Support

St. Mary's BNS 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
- collaborative approach to planning to support the teaching RSE
- budgeting for the updating and development of RSE materials
- reviewing RSE policy
- ensure special education teachers have adequate training opportunities

Review

St. Mary's BNS 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.

Implementation:

The plan will be implemented from September 2019

This plan was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting on 27th February 2023.

Signed: 
(Chairperson of Board of Management)
Date: 27/Feb/2023

Appendix 1 – Sensitive Language Grid

Class	Strand /strand Unit	Content Objectives (<i>consult curriculum – for complete objectives in <u>Growing and changing</u> and <u>Taking care of my body</u></i>)	Language	Pages in RSE Resource Materials Book for <u>sensitive objectives</u>	Pages in Walk Tall for <u>sensitive objectives</u>	Supplementary resources
Junior /Senior Infants	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing and changing Taking care of my body 	<p>Growing and changing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Become aware of new life and birth in the world Develop an awareness of human birth Identify what babies need to help them to grow and develop <p>Taking care of my body</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms 	<p>penis</p> <p>vulva</p> <p>womb</p> <p>breast</p> <p>breastfeeding</p>	<p>New Life p68</p> <p>My Body p147</p> <p>Caring for new life p137</p> <p>Giving a Doll a Bath p150</p> <p>At the beach or swimming pool p.153</p>	Our Amazing Bodies p94 (Senior Infants book)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anatomically correct dolls Picture books of new baby Visit of baby to class
First/ Second Class	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing and changing Taking care of my body 	<p>Growing and changing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin to understand that reproduction, birth, growth and death are all part of a life cycle Appreciate what is necessary in order to provide and care for newborn babies in both the animal and human world. <p>Taking care of my body</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name the parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions 	<p>penis</p> <p>vulva</p> <p>vagina</p> <p>womb</p> <p>breast</p> <p>breastfeeding</p> <p>urethra</p>	<p>The Wonder of new life p59 /151</p> <p>How my body works p67/ 161</p> <p>Our Senses p70</p> <p>Growing means changing p77/171</p>	Our Amazing Bodies p37 (2 nd class book)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<p>Myself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing and changing Taking care of my body 	<p>Growing and changing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise and discuss how feelings and emotions are affected by the physical changes that take place during puberty Discuss the stages and sequence of development of human baby from conception to birth <p>Taking care of my body</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the physical changes taking place in both the male and female body Realise that changes do not occur at the same time but nonetheless are predictable and natural and that being different is normal 	<p>Revise above</p> <p>umbilical cord</p> <p>changes in puberty</p> <p>menstruation</p>	<p>Preparing for new life p69</p> <p>The wonder of new life p169</p> <p>As I grow and change p93</p> <p>Growing and changing p195</p>	<p>As I grow I change p175 (3rd class book)</p> <p>Changing and Growing p140</p> <p>(4th class book)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Body Systems Picture books on growing and changing
Fifth/ Sixth Class	<p>Myself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing and changing Taking care of my body 	<p>Growing and changing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed, loving relationship Identify and discuss the changes that are experienced in growing from child to adult Discuss and explore the responsibilities involved in being a parent and the emotional and physical maturity required to be a parent <p>Taking care of my body</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 Understand the reproductive system of both male and female adults 	<p>Revise above</p> <p>wet dreams</p> <p>Busy Bodies language</p> <p>semen</p> <p>sexual intercourse</p> <p>period</p> <p>menstruation</p>	<p>My body grows and changes p81</p> <p>The wonder of new life p92</p> <p>Caring for new life p103</p> <p>Different kinds of love p141</p>	<p>My Amazing body p345 (5th class book)</p> <p>Creation p121 (6th class book)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Power points recap Question Box Puberty Quiz Busy Bodies book and video

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