

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

Aston Village Educate Together National School
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Roll no: 20294I

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Introduction

1.1 Introductory Statement

This policy is an approved approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE both formally and informally. We recognise the importance of teaching RSE as part of the SPHE curriculum. The policy was revised in 2013 and updated in 2019.

1.2 Aston Village ETNS: Ethos and Information

Aston Village ETNS is a multi-denominational, child-centred, democratically-run and co-educational school. It is an urban school, situated in Drogheda, County Louth. We hope through RSE, children will develop their self-worth and self-confidence while also encouraging them to relate to other children around them in a positive way. Parental involvement is encouraged, we recognise their key role in the social, personal and health education of their children. SPHE and RSE both support the healthy development of children into young adults.

Scope and Rationale

2.1 What is Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)?

SPHE is one of the 11 subjects which form the Irish Primary School Curriculum. It 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 and creative development. The content of a school's SPHE programme will include a wide range of topics such as healthy eating, alcohol, drugs, environmental issues, safety and social responsibility, as well as RSE.

The 3 strands of the SPHE curriculum are:

1. Myself
2. Myself and Others
3. Myself and the Wider World.

The content outlined in the SPHE curriculum is implemented in our school through a combination of formal and informal approaches: formally through discrete SPHE time designated on school timetables and informally through the everyday events in the school.

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Current provision for the teaching of SPHE is as follows:

- SPHE lessons
- use of RSE Manuals and Busy Bodies
- Stay Safe Programme
- Walk Tall programme
- Webwise resources
- All Together Now-Homophobic and Transphobic bullying lessons
- Respect Guidelines (suggested approaches for teaching about different families)
- Adapted resources for SEN from www.pdst.ie
- Integration with learn together curriculum at times
- PDST "Making the Links" document
- PDST “Sensitive language grid”

For further SPHE information, please consult our SPHE Policy which is available on the school’s website.

2.2 What is Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)?

RSE is a component of the curricular area of SPHE. It is taught on a spiral-basis (building on core themes in increasing detail each year) throughout primary school from Junior Infants up to 6th Class. Our school acknowledges the importance of SPHE/RSE being taught in the context of a whole school climate that is inclusive, respectful and in accordance with our ethos. RSE provides children with structured opportunities to develop the knowledge, attitudes, values, beliefs and practical skills necessary to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships as children and subsequently as adults. The material covered through RSE addresses the meaning of human sexuality, relationships, growth and development, relevant to personal and social skills.

2.3 Why RSE is taught in our school

The need for this policy arises from our school’s obligation to provide for all the needs of the student body and respond appropriately to sensitive and emotive issues relating to emerging sexuality. Schools are legally bound to teach the RSE programme. Children get information and misinformation about relationships and sexuality from a variety of sources. RSE allows children to discuss sensitive matters in a safe environment. RSE challenges

Aims and Content

3.1 Aims:

The RSE education curriculum provides the child opportunities to (in conjunction with the SPHE curriculum)

- Help young people develop healthy friendships and relationships; Acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction
- Promote an understanding of sexuality to understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity
- Promote a healthy attitude to gender/sexuality, sexual orientation LGBTQ, transgender and to relationships
- Acquire the use of appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development
- Promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction; come to value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood
- Develop an awareness of differing family patterns and understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and wider contexts
- Develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and wellbeing of others
- Develop strategies to make decisions, solve problems and implement actions in various personal, social and health contexts
- Develop coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse

3.2 Parents as Primary Educators

We recognise the role of parents as primary educators of their children. Along with our other policies, our RSE policy is available at the school and on our website for parents to read. Parents are welcome to speak to the class teacher if they have concerns during the year. There is a document which was designed for parents to read, featuring relevant material on RSE in schools entitled *Going Forward Together: An Introduction to Relationships and Sexuality Education for Parents* (see Appendix A). Parents will be informed in advance of lessons on the sensitive area of the RSE programme with a letter relevant to what will be taught at their child's class level example of letter see appendix. The letter will be given in advance to parents giving them an opportunity to meet with class teachers if they wish, to be informed of the content and to prepare children for the information they will acquire and discuss sensitive areas covered in RSE/ SPHE with them. If a parent wishes to withdraw a child from the sensitive lessons after speaking with the principal and class teacher they must state their reasons in writing

3.3 Content to be taught

RSE forms part of the national curriculum for SPHE by NCCA and is taught from Junior Infants to 6th class. RSE is covered under the following strands and strand units of the SPHE Curriculum:

Strand Myself

Strand units:

- ❖ Growing and changing
- ❖ taking care of my body

The RSE programme is divided into two main parts. The general programme which contains the content covered through SPHE strands and strand units and which compliment the objectives of RSE

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

Below is a table featuring some of the themes throughout the Primary Curriculum. The full list of themes can be found on [https://pdst.ie/sites/default/files/NEW Sensitive Language Grid 11.18.pdf](https://pdst.ie/sites/default/files/NEW%20Sensitive%20Language%20Grid%2011.18.pdf) (PDF shared with all class teachers September 2019). This document includes the resource pages in RSE Resource Book, Walk tall and supplementary resources. Teachers should consult the Respect Guidelines for approaching different family types found and also consult the resource different families same love when teaching about different families which includes lesson ideas and resources for all class levels. The poster of different families will also be used. This resource also includes terms and class appropriate explanations. There is a wide range of LGBTQ and different family same love stories available in class library (see appendix B for links to resources) All Together Now-Homophobic and Transphobic bullying lessons will be incorporated as needed.

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Strand/ Strand unit	Class Level	Language used
<p>Myself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Growing and changing ● Taking care of my body <p>Myself and Others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Myself and My Family 	<p>Junior/Senior Infants</p>	<p>womb, breastfeeding, vulva, penis</p> <p>teach family members, mum, dad, two mums, two dads, one mum, one dad, granddad, granny, cousin, uncle, aunt, brother, sister</p> <p>(different family structures and gender stereotyping discussed through stories/posters available in the school library and different family same love resource)</p>
<p>Myself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Growing and changing ● Taking care of my body <p>Myself and Others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Myself and My Family 	<p>First/Second Class</p>	<p>penis, vulva, vagina, womb, breastfeeding, urethra</p> <p>I have..(children use the language learned in junior/senior infants) to discuss their own unique family</p> <p>lesbian, gay</p> <p>(Use the wide variety of stories and posters to teach the vocabulary and to learn about gender stereotyping to children and different family same love resource)</p>
<p>Myself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Growing and changing ● Taking care of my body <p>Myself and Others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Myself and My Family 	<p>Third/Fourth Class</p>	<p>Revise language above (first/second class)</p> <p>Umbilical cord changes in puberty menstruation</p> <p>LGBTQ- lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender</p> <p>(Use the wide variety of stories and posters to teach</p>

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		the vocabulary to children and different family same love resource)
Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Growing and changing ● Taking care of my body 	Fifth/ Sixth Class	Revise language above (third/fourth class) Wet dreams Busy Bodies language semen sexual intercourse Go through LGBTQ lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (covered in third/furth class) heterosexual/ homosexual homophobic/ transphobic bullying (Use the wide variety of stories and posters to teach the vocabulary to children and same love different family same love resource)

NB. Link with RSE – Learn Together topic of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay Bisexual and Transgender) Rights to be taught in 6th class. Further information available from Amnesty International www.amnesty.ie

3.4 Pupils with Special Educational Needs

Children with Special Educational needs will be immersed in the SPHE curriculum through their daily experiences. The children’s needs are central to ensure the learning is meaningful to them. The teacher will use the new sensitive language grid and ‘making the links’ document to see what links can be made taking into account the needs of the children. Some of the language can be pre-taught to the children. In smaller groups material may be adapted for them. Circle time will be used as a methodology. Stories, posters and videos will be used to support the visual learners. Any different or specific objectives related to the pupils own learning needs should be detailed in their IEP or IPLP in consultation with parents/guardians.

3.5 Sensitive themes within the RSE programme

As pupils move up through their primary school education, RSE themes grow accordingly, as designed by the NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment). The teachers providing the 5th & 6th class components of the RSE programme have been specifically trained in this area. The teacher providing this part of the curriculum to 5th and 6th class may therefore be a teacher other than their class teacher.

Recognising parents as primary educators, and to ensure the sensitive themes such as ‘Puberty’ and ‘Conception’ are taught in the most appropriate setting, the opportunity for parents to discuss these areas with their own children at home first will be given. In preparation for delivery of these themes:

- Letters will be sent home the month before ‘sensitive themes’ such as ‘Puberty’ and ‘Conception’ are to be taught notifying parents when the topic will be presented in class. A reminder in the form of a letter or ‘text a parent facility’ will be sent home the week before the lesson is scheduled.
- Female and male pupils of 5th and 6th classes will be taught majority of content together over a 2-day period in Term 3, and are separated for gender-specific lessons on puberty. A copy of the Busy Bodies can be distributed to parents in advance to support the implementation of the sensitive objectives in class
- One parent presentation meeting will be held prior to these themes being taught to allow parents to discuss and view material being presented. Materials can also be provided to parents to view upon request.

NB. Topics such as sexually transmitted diseases, contraception, masturbation and abortion and are not covered in the primary school RSE programme.

3.6 Vocabulary and Answering Questions

Our school’s RSE policy acknowledges different relationship types, as follows: when preparing for and delivering the RSE Themes *This is My Family* (Junior and Senior Infants), *My Family* (First-Fifth Classes) and *Families* (Sixth Class), teachers will take the different family patterns represented within the classroom into account.

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Terminology such as ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’ are taught as in a natural as part of learning about different families. If this terminology is misused or used as a slur (or in any inappropriate context) will not be tolerated, in accordance with our positive behaviour code. it will be dealt with by teachers. For younger classes teachers may explain that may offer a brief interpretation, as follows: ‘Sometimes two men or two women make a life together. They love and care for one another.’ The vocabulary ‘gay,’ ‘bisexual’ ‘lesbian,’ heterosexual,’ and ‘homosexual,’ are taught in the various year groups in a spiral approach gradually building on the vocabulary see theme and language grid. Use of the term ‘gay’ as a slur (or in any inappropriate context) will not be tolerated, in accordance with our positive behaviour code. The teacher will use the resource previously discussed of different family same love document to teach the terminology in an age appropriate way.

Staff will not invalidate questions, but use limits. Some of these limits may be needed when addressing questions related to contraception, abortion, sexually transmitted diseases and as mentioned above Examples:

- ‘I will do my best to answer your questions, but I may not be able to answer all of them.’
- ‘Would you be able to ask your parent/guardian about that?’
- ‘That’s something you’ll learn about as you get older/you’ll learn about in fifth class.’

Please see Appendix A for documents and relevant links for educators and parents.

Monitoring and Review Notes

In accordance with NCCA guidelines, this policy will be monitored and reviewed by the teachers and an RSE committee made up of at least five members including teachers and at least two parent representatives. The RSE policy will be reviewed at least every three years. Amendments will be made as deemed necessary and ratified by the Board of Management before taking effect.

Policy accepted by the Board of Management on: _____ (date)

BOM Chairperson: _____ (signature)

Principal: _____ (signature)

Policy review date (no later than): _____ (date)

RSE Policy Appendix A

Bibliography & Webography

Report of the Advisory Group on Relationships and Sexuality Education. Government of Ireland (1995). Publ. The Stationery Office, Dublin.

Going Forward Together: An Introduction to Relationships and Sexuality Education for Parents. Government of Ireland (1997). Available online at <https://www.pdst.ie/jc/sphe/rse>
Support materials and information on sexual health for parents
<https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/for-parents/resources/>

Resource Materials for RSE visit website:

RSE teacher's manuals available online:

http://www.ecdrumcondra.com/images/stories/rse_documents/padmin_rse_jsclass.pdf
http://www.ecdrumcondra.com/images/stories/rse_documents/padmin_rse_12class.pdf
http://www.ecdrumcondra.com/images/stories/rse_documents/padmin_rse_34class.pdf
http://www.ecdrumcondra.com/images/stories/rse_documents/padmin_rse_56class.pdf

5th & 6th Classes RSE 'Busy Bodies' booklet (HSE)

http://www.ecdrumcondra.com/images/stories/rse_documents/Busy_Bodies.pdf

See Aston Village ETNS website for links to policies, including SPHE Policy.

RSE Policy Appendix B

Online resources available for approaching LGBTQ and different families

Respect Guidelines PDF available visit webpage and scroll down to see picture :

<https://www.pdst.ie/node/811>

Different families same love PDF available visit webpage and scroll down to find link:

<https://www.pdst.ie/node/811>

Different families same love poster available visit webpage and scroll down to see picture:

<https://www.pdst.ie/node/811>

All together now homophobic and transphobic bullying webpage available on:

<https://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/aba-our-work/our-programmes/all-together-whole-school-anti-bullying-programme>

Other helpful resources available online:

<https://www.into.ie/lgbt/EducationalResources/>

<https://www.outforourchildren.org.uk/>

<https://www.outforourchildren.org.uk/teachers-area/>

RSE Policy Appendix C

Resources for approaching LGBTQ and different family type books available in the school library

1. King and king (library royalty basket)
2. And Tango makes Three (library bird basket)
3. I am Jazz (transgender)
4. Red (transgender)
5. My princess boy (gender stereotyping)
6. Pearl power (gender stereotyping)
7. Julian is a mermaid (gender stereotyping)
8. Oliver Button is a sissy (gender stereotyping)
9. How to be a lion (gender stereotyping)
10. 10000 dresses (gender stereotyping)
11. Introducing teddy (transgender)
12. Daddy, papa and me
13. The family book
14. Jerome by heart
15. Pride the story of harvey Milk