



Relationships & Sexuality Education (R.S.E.) Policy

School Details

Holy Well National School is a co-educational school in Carrigaline, Co. Cork, under the Patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Cork & Ross.

Introduction

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). It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE, both formally and informally. The first RSE policy was developed in 2023 with a committee, and subsequently revised.

School Philosophy

We recognise 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 in developing 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 their children's social, personal and health education 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.

Mission Statement

Inspired by its Catholic ethos, Holy Well National School, aims to educate in a professional, all inclusive, caring, safe, happy and respectful environment. We promote and value lifelong learning and strive to motivate and encourage all pupils to achieve their full potential, academically, emotionally, spiritually, socially, physically and morally.

Holy Well NS Motto

*Meas agus Moladh
(Respect and Praise)*

Definition of R.S.E.

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. RSE aims to help children learn, at home and in school, about their own development and about their friendships and relationships with others. This work will be based on developing a good self-image, promoting respect for themselves and others and providing them with appropriate information.

Relationship of R.S.E. to S.P.H.E.

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 situation.
- 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.

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 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.

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.

Current Provision

- Holy Well National School Draft SPHE Plan
- Use of RSE Manuals for teaching RSE lessons
- Use of Stay Safe (2018) Manuals
- Use of the 'Walk Tall' Programme
- Use of Busy Bodies Online Videos (6th Class)

Teachers cover RSE with their classes every year from Junior Infants to 6th Class. The key RSE sensitive lessons are taught every second year (i.e. Senior Infants, 2nd Class, 4th Class and 6th Class) with the essential learning objectives from the previous years revised or revisited at the other class levels (i.e. 1st Class, 3rd Class and 5th Class). Junior Infant teachers should briefly introduce the students to the sensitive RSE content that will be covered in more detail in Senior Infants.

See Appendix 1 for list of Sensitive Topics covered at each class level.

Aims of our RSE Programme

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and wellbeing of the child
- To help children develop healthy friendships and relationships
- To foster an understanding of and healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework
- To promote knowledge 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 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.

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 wellbeing of all of the members of the school community.

Policies which support RSE

- SPHE Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement and Policy
- Substance Misuse Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Enrolment & Admissions Policy
- Internet Acceptable Use Policy
- Personal Appearance Policy
- Social Media Policy

Guidelines for Management of Organisation of RSE in Holy Well National School:

Organisational Matters

- Guidelines as laid down by the Department of Education and Skills and as discussed in this document will be followed.
- It is envisaged that the programme will be taught in an integrated manner where possible.
- Sensitive topics will be taught in the months of January/February (*See Appendix 1*)
- Special consideration will be taken to ensure that the needs of children with SEN are met. Taking into account the pupil's social and emotional development, instruction will be based on individual needs where possible.

Parents

- Parents will be informed that the school fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE programme including sensitive aspects of the programme at enrolment
- Parents will be informed in advance of lessons in January on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme, with a letter/email relevant to what will be taught at their child's class level. (For example of letter, see Appendix 2)
- The letter/email will be issued in advance, giving parents an opportunity to contact the 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 Principal and Class Teacher, if a parent wishes to withdraw their child from the sensitive lessons, this intention should be given in writing stating their reasons for doing so. This document will be filed centrally. Where possible, the child will then be supervised in another classroom while these lessons are taking place. If this is not possible, a parent will be required to collect the child from school at the time the lessons are taking place and return them to school afterwards.
- If a child has been withdrawn from the sensitive RSE lessons, the school takes no responsibility for what the child may hear following on from the teaching of the lessons, e.g. what they may hear on yard.

Curriculum Planning

RSE forms part of the national curriculum for SPHE by NCCA and will be taught from Infants to 6th class, with a key focus on new learning of sensitive material every second year as outlined above. RSE will be covered under the following strands and strand units of the SPHE curriculum:

- Myself
- Growing and changing
- Taking care of my body

The RSE programme is divided into two main parts:

1. The general programme which contains content covered through SPHE strands and strand units and compliment 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 in the table below (next page).
 - The Curriculum by NCCA will be followed as published and will be taught in Infants to 6th class, with new learning of key sensitive material every second year (i.e. Senior Infants, 2nd, 4th and 6th). All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school and the policy. Each class teacher, in consultation with other teachers, will discuss how the content for their class will be taught.
 - Children will be encouraged to discuss material being covered in class with their parents or guardians. Where possible handouts, worksheets etc. will be provided to facilitate this; e. g. Home-School Links pages of the RSE manuals.
 - 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 teachers when it is developmentally appropriate for them to receive it. However, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed outside of the school or on the yard.
 - A respect for personal privacy and information will be emphasised. Teachers will neither give nor request personal information. Children will also be taught to recognise that certain personal disclosures are inappropriate within a group setting.

- Students should stay in their own class groupings for RSE lessons. Boys and girls should receive the same information at the same time. There should be no difference in the content taught to students of either gender.

Topics covered up to 2nd include:	Topics from 3rd to 6th include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 identify some of their functions (2nd class). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bodily changes • Healthy eating, personal hygiene and exercise • Keeping safe • Expressing feelings • Appreciating the variety of family types within our school and community and how these family relationships shape us • Making healthy and responsible decisions • Forming friendships • Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb(4th class) • Introduction to puberty and changes (4th to 6th class) • Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (6th class) • Reproductive system of male/female adults (6th class) • Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship (6th class)

Approaches & Methodologies

When implementing the programme, staff at Holy Well National School 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 6th class, with new learning of key sensitive material every second year (i.e. Senior Infants, 2nd, 4th and 6th). It will be taught through a spiral curriculum (key topics will be revisited in a developmental manner at regular intervals). The material taught will reflect the needs of the children.

The RSE curriculum may be taught using a variety of methodologies including, but not limited to:

- stories and poems
- classroom discussion
- group work
- games
- art activities
- reflection
- circle time
- suitably qualified guest speaker, if appropriate (The class teacher will stay in the room at all times in accordance with Circular 22/2010).

If a suitably qualified guest speaker delivers an RSE lesson to students, it is very important that the class teacher revises and revisits the sensitive content of the lesson with the students in the following days. This is to ensure that students hear the sensitive vocabulary being normalised by their class teacher and so that they feel they can approach their teacher with any questions or concerns they may have.

The sensitive RSE lessons should ideally be taught early in the school day, as it is important that students have time to ask questions or come to the teacher with any concerns they may have before hometime.

Differentiation

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
- ensuring that the language used is pitched at the student's level of understanding of the activity
- through the use of concrete, and where possible, every-day materials
- 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 use of a Question Box.

Students with SEN

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 pupils own learning needs should be detailed in their Continuum of Support Plan or 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 relationship 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 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

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 screened by the teacher. The teacher will answer the questions, 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. They can share information with the teacher after the lesson, if they want to. *If issues arise which might be seen to contravene Children First Guidelines & Child Safeguarding Statement & Policy, 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 may use a variety of assessment methods including, but not limited to:

- 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 2017 and The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017
- 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 (2018)
- Walk Tall Programme
- Anatomical Dolls and Story books
- Busy Bodies videos
- Relevant Picture Books
- RESPECT guidelines for teachers (available on INTO website)

Provision of On-Going 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 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.

Implementation, Review and Communication

This policy was fully reviewed, approved and adopted by the Board of Management on 6th July 2023. The Board of Management will monitor the implementation of all aspects of this policy and amend as required.

The policy will be reviewed every two years or earlier, if necessary.

Next Review Date: Summer 2025

Signed: *Aidan Crowley* (Principal)

Signed: *Diarmuid Cogan* (Chairperson B.o.M.)

Appendix 1: Sensitive Topics in RSE

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	Pages in Walk Tall	Supplementary resources
Junior /Senior Infants	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing and changing Taking care of my body 	Growing and changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Become aware of new life and birth in the world Develop an awareness of human birth Taking care of my body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name parts of the male and female body using anatomical terms 	womb breastfeeding penis vulva	New Life p68 My Body p147 Caring for new life p137 At the beach or swimming pool p.153	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 	Growing and changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin to understand that reproduction, birth, growth and death are all part of new life cycles Taking care of my body <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 	penis vulva vagina womb breastfeeding urethra	The Wonder of new life p59 /151 How my body works p67/ 161 Growing means changing p77/171 A Visit to the Doctor p.164	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	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing and changing Taking care of my body 	Growing and changing <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 Taking care of my body <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 	Revise above umbilical cord changes in puberty menstruation	Preparing for new life p69 The wonder of new life p169 As I grow and change p93 Growing and changing p195	As I grow I change p175 (3 rd class book) Changing and Growing p140 (4 th class book) The Wonder of New Life p.150	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Body Systems Picture books on Growing and Changing
Fifth/ Sixth Class	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing and changing Taking care of my body 	Growing and changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a loving committed relationship Taking care of my body <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 	Revise above wet dreams <u>Busy Bodies language</u> semen sexual intercourse	My body grows and changes p81 The wonder of new life p92 Caring for new life p103 Different kinds of love p141	My Amazing body p345 (5 th class book) Creation p121 (6 th class book)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Busy Bodies Power points recap Question Box Puberty Quiz

Appendix 2: Letter to Parents (RSE)



Dear Parent/Guardian,

Relationships and Sexuality education is an integral part of the S.P.H.E programme. We will be commencing formal RSE lessons in Term 2, January 202_.

RSE predominantly lies within the strand units ‘ Taking care of my body’ and ‘Growing and changing’ which can be viewed [here](#) and is summarised in the table below.

Social, Personal and Health Education Curriculum (NCCA 1999)

INFANTS - 2nd CLASS

Strand Unit - Growing and Changing

- As I grow I change
- New life
- Feelings and emotions

Strand Unit - Taking care of my body

- Knowing about my body
- Food and nutrition
- Making decisions

3rd CLASS - 6th CLASS

Strand Unit - Growing and Changing

- As I grow I change
- Birth and new life
- Feelings and emotions

Strand Unit - Taking care of my body

- Knowing about my body
- Food and nutrition
- Health and wellbeing

The key content of the sensitive lessons is summarised [here](#). In 6th class, the Busy Bodies videos are also used as a resource. They can be viewed [here](#).

Our school’s RSE policy is available to view on our school website, www.holywellns.ie . It outlines our agreed approach to achieve the objectives of the aforementioned strand units. As per the policy, sensitive lessons are predominantly taught in Senior Infants, 2nd class, 4th class and 6th class, with content revised and revisited in all other classes.

If you wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to arrange an appointment to meet with your child’s class teacher.

Yours sincerely,

School Principal