



St. Brigid's Primary School, The Coombe, Dublin 8

**Whole School Plan for
Relationships and Sexuality Education
(RSE)**

Introductory Statement, Rationale and School Details

St Brigid's Primary School is a Catholic co-educational school in Dublin 8. The school has a caring catholic ethos.

This policy statement is an approved approach to the teaching of RSE in St Brigid's Primary School. It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE and how this content is organised and managed across the class levels.

This RSE policy was developed in March 2023

Mission Statement/School Philosophy

We in St. Brigid's School aim to provide a happy, vibrant, Christian environment, where teachers and parents work together to develop the child's full potential, in preparation for adult life. We continue to build our own self-esteem and that of the pupils, by valuing everybody's gifts and celebrating our diversity. As a staff team, we strive to give our best, through keeping up with educational and professional developments. In true partnership, we, the parents and teachers recognise and respect each other's rights and responsibilities as we build a caring supportive school community together.

We recognise that SPHE is intrinsic to the teaching and learning that occurs both formally and informally in school, and RSE is an integral part of this. Through our SPHE/RSE programme 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 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 wider community. Our school values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. Our ethos values respect, inclusion and diversity of all members of our school community. Our school acknowledges that parents/guardians/carers have the primary role in the social, personal and health education of their children and as such, their involvement will be encouraged. SPHE/RSE is a key component in supporting our pupils to develop into healthy young adults.

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.”

RSE in the context of our SPHE programme

SPHE is a subject on the school curriculum that 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. It is taught from Junior Infants up to 6th class. RSE forms part of this programme. It is a spiral curriculum which ensures that topics are taught in a developmental manner through the child’s primary school years, which provides opportunities to consolidate and build on previous learning.

SPHE aims to develop the child’s emotional, moral, social and spiritual growth as well as their intellectual, physical, political, religious and creative development. The content of the school’s SPHE programme covers a wide range of topics such as healthy eating, alcohol and drug awareness, environmental issues, safety and social responsibility as well as RSE. SPHE is a shared responsibility between family, school, health professionals and the community.

Including RSE in the Curriculum

RSE is facilitated in the following ways

- in the context of a positive school climate and atmosphere
- in the context of an effective code of behaviour and anti-bullying policy
- as part of religious education –The Grow in Love and RSE programme Flourish
- as part of timetabled SPHE
- on an integrated cross curricular basis

Aims of our RSE programme

- To help young people develop healthy friendships and relationships
- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child.
- 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

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

We recognise that the parents are the primary educators of their children and that the home is the natural environment in which RSE should take place. The role of the school, therefore, is seen as one of support of the work of the home in this area. The content objectives covered will be taught as laid down by the Department of Education and Skills in the SPHE Curriculum 1999.

- RSE will be taught in all classes
- The SPHE/RSE curriculum will be of a spiral nature and all content objectives will be covered by the time children leave 6th class. RSE will be covered under the strand of Myself and the strand units Growing and changing and Taking care of my body
- Questions arising from lesson content will be answered in an age-appropriate manner.
- All resources used in the teaching of the programme will be in keeping with the ethos of the school and in the spirit of this policy
- ACCORD will facilitate a talk every year for both 5th and 6th class pupils. Parents will be informed of this talk in writing beforehand; this letter will include a consent form and it will briefly outline the topics that will be covered should a family like to raise them in advance at home.

Approaches and Methodologies

When implementing the RSE programme, staff at St. Brigid's PS. will endeavour to display respect 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. It will be taught through a spiral curriculum whereby 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
- role play
- ranking statements
- viewing and discussing videos
- describing photographs
- projects

School Policies, Curricular Plans, Programmes and Resources which support our RSE

We are a child-centred school. The educational and emotional needs of the children in our care are central to our curricular planning and policy making processes.

- SPHE Curriculum
- Stay Safe Programme, Walk Tall Programme, RSE manuals, Weaving Wellbeing
- NCCA SPHE/RSE Toolkit
- PDST Health and Wellbeing RSE
- Grow in Love, Flourish Programme
- School's Code of Behaviour
- Anti –Bullying Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Child Protection Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- ICT and Acceptable Use Policy
- Substance Use Policy
- Administration of Medicine Policy
- Making the Links

*Other resource material as deemed appropriate by class teachers in consultation with the Principal

In keeping with the sentiment and spirit of these policies, we informally support many of the aims on which RSE is modelled. We encourage good behaviour, open communication, understanding and tolerance of differences and respect for staff 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 the members of the school community.

Timetabling

One half hour period per week is timetabled for each class for SPHE. RSE will be included in the programme taught during this time. It is envisaged that some aspects of RSE (including the sensitive issues), will be taught through a number of core periods while some material may be taught in a cross curricular manner.

Parental Involvement, Rights and Responsibilities

RSE is an ongoing process throughout life. St. Brigid's acknowledges parents and guardians as the primary educators of their children and the school works in partnership with parents. The RSE policy is available for parents to see on our school website. The curriculum books and resource materials are available online on www.pdst.ie and parents are welcome to view these if desired.

Since RSE is an obligatory requirement of the Department of Education and Skills it should be inclusive. However, a parent's right to withdraw a pupil from themes pertaining to sensitive issues will be respected on the understanding that the parent is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education. Parents are obliged to inform the school in writing of their decision to withdraw the child from the classes based on sensitive issues. The school cannot be responsible for any information which a child may receive outside the direct teaching of RSE lessons.

Language

There is a great deal of power in language and not being familiar with the biological terms for the body can put children at a disadvantage. To give children this vocabulary, it is recommended that the teacher uses everyday situations to include words for the body, and bodily functions, naturally and without undue emphasis. The RSE and SPHE materials are designed to give teachers a variety of opportunities to introduce terminology for body parts in the context of hygiene practice, illness, injury, swimming, etc. The words to be used are not included in the suggested text or questions. This will be at the discretion of the teacher, and in accordance with this RSE Policy. For language that may be used during RSE lessons, please see the New Sensitive Language Grid attached as an Appendix.

Assessment

St Brigid's will employ the methods that we deem appropriate for assessment in SPHE/RSE including:

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

Confidentiality and Child Protection

Where there is disclosure by a child of abuse, the school will follow the Department of Education and Skills child protection guidelines and guidelines as set out in "Children First".

Implementation

This plan will be adopted by the school community in spring 2023.

Review

This policy will be reviewed as needed. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made.

RATIFICATION & COMMUNICATION

This plan was ratified by the Board of Management of St. Brigid's Primary School on 30th March 2023.

This plan will be shared with teaching staff and will be available on the school website.

Signed: Amanda McGarry

Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed:

Michelle Stedman

Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: 30th March 2023

Date: 30th March 2023

Appendix A

** a version of this Sensitive Language Grid can be found at <https://www.pdst.ie/primary/health-wellbeing/RSE>

The words and language to be used will be at the discretion of the teacher, and in accordance with our RSE Policy. For language that may be used during RSE lessons, see the below grid.

Class	Strand /strand Unit	Content Objectives <i>Consult curriculum for complete objectives in Growing and changing and Taking care of my body</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 Name parts of the male and female body using anatomical terms	womb breastfeeding penis vulva chest vagina	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)	Anatomically correct dolls <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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 Begin to understand that reproduction, birth, growth and death are all part of new life cycles Taking care of my body Name the parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions *Refers to the function of organs i.e. lungs, kidneys etc.	penis vulva vagina womb breastfeeding urethra urine	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)	Picture books of going to the doctors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tom's Power Flower ▪ Books / activities on Life cycles Birth and new life in nature

<p>Third/ Fourth Class</p>	<p>Myself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Growing and changing ▪ Taking care of my body 	<p>Growing and changing</p> <p>Understand the physical changes taking place in both the male and female body</p> <p>Realise that changes do not occur at the same time but nonetheless are predictable and natural and that being different is normal</p> <p>Taking care of my body</p> <p>Recognise and discuss how feelings and emotions are affected by the physical changes that take place during puberty</p> <p>Discuss the stages and sequence of development of human baby from conception to birth</p>	<p>Revise above</p> <p>umbilical cord</p> <p>navel/belly button</p> <p>changes in puberty</p> <p>menstruation period</p> <p>egg</p> <p>hormones</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 (4th class book)</p> <p>The Wonder of New Life p.150</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Body Systems ▪ Picture books on Growing and Changing ▪
<p>Fifth/ Sixth Class</p>	<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 loving committed relationship <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 <p>Understand the reproductive system of both male and female adults</p>	<p>Revise above</p> <p>wet dreams</p> <p><u>Busy Bodies language</u></p> <p>semen</p> <p>sexual intercourse</p> <p>egg</p> <p>womb-lining</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"> ▪ Busy Bodies ▪ Power points recap ▪ Question Box ▪ Puberty Quiz