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**Draft Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy 2023-2025**

**Introductory Statement**

RSE is a mandatory part of the SPHE primary school curriculum. The need for this policy arises from our schools obligation to provide for all the needs of the student body and respond appropriately to sensitive and emotive issues relating to emerging sexuality.This policy is an agreed approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). It was developed to inform teachers and parents/guardians/carers about the provision of RSE in Nun’s Cross National School.

**Philosophy**

We recognise that SPHE is intrinsic to the teaching and learning that occurs both formally and informally in school. 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.

**School Ethos**

The ethos of Nuns Cross National School is founded on Christian principles where inclusion, tolerance and respect for others is paramount in all areas of school life. Nun’s Cross NS is a community where all pupils are equally valued and respected - irrespective of any differences they may have. It is our intention that everyone feels valued and our pupils are encouraged to develop their full potential in a caring and supportive environment. This policy reflects the ethos of our school and it will inform the teaching on Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) within school.

**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.” (Department of Education, 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) Curriculum.

Through SPHE and RSE, pupils are enabled to enhance their self-esteem and wellbeing through developing:

• A sense of identity

• A sense of purpose

• A sense of belonging

• A sense of security

• A sense of competence

**Aims:**

• 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

**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
* GDPR Policy
* Mobile phones policy
* Intimate care Policy

**School Provision**

|  | **Year 1 (even year starts)****2024-25** | **Year 2 (odd year starts)****2023-24** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **September - October** | Self-identity **(Myself)** | Myself and my family **(myself and Others)** |
| **November - December** | My friends and other people **(Myself and others)** | Relating to others **(Myself and others)** |
| **January - February** | Safety and Protection **(Myself)**  | 1. Growing and **Changing (RSE)**

**(Myself)** |
| **March - April** | Making decisions **(Myself)** | 1. Taking care of my body **(Myself)**
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| **May - June** | Media education **(Myself and the wider world)** | Developing citizenship **(Myself and the wider world)** |

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’. Teachers will refer to the resource Making the Links to support their planning for the delivery of these strand units.

**Strand Units:**

**Myself** - Self identity, taking care of my body, growing and changing, safety and protection

**Myself and Others** - Myself and family, friends and relating to other people

**Taking Care of My Body** – Naming parts of the male and female body using appropriate terminology (Junior and Lower Middle classes). Identifying physical changes, understanding puberty and the reproductive system (Senior Classes)

**Growing and Changing** – The stages of development of a baby from conception to birth (Middle Classes). Understanding sexual relations within the context of a committed loving relationship (Senior Classes).

Teachers do not cover the topic of contraception. Children who ask questions in class on content outside the curriculum are talked to individually and discreetly and advised to seek answers from their parents/guardians. In such cases parents and guardians will be informed and asked to talk to their child.

**Methodology**

Circle time is used extensively in Junior Classes to build confidence and address fears. Boys and girls are taught together in all classes. Senior pupils are treated in a mature way and are encouraged to discuss issues that arise with their parents. The Relationships and Sexuality resource material are used extensively in senior classes.

In Nun’s Cross NS the following methodologies will be used to facilitate an active role in the learning process for children in the teaching of RSE:

* Discussion
* Use of Circles/Circle Time
* Role play
* Stories and poems
* ICT Activities
* Group work
* Games
* Art activities
* Reflection
* Interviewing friends, or other school pupils, family members
* Surveys of attitudes
* Analysing and evaluating media
* Engagement with Restorative Practices
* Modelling
* Designing advertisements
* Writing captions
* Ranking statements
* Describing photographs
* Viewing and discussing videos
* Projects

The curriculum will be taught in a developmentally-appropriate manner at all times. The teaching materials and methodologies used will reflect the needs of the children.

**The Stay Safe and Walk Tall programmes**:

The Stay Safe programme is taught in every class every second year, and RSE is taught in every class in alternate years (as shown above). Aspects of the programme such as bullying are revised in all classes each year.

**Topics covered up to 2nd class include;**

* Keeping safe
* Naming bodily parts using correct terminology
* Bodily changes during growth and development
* Making and keeping friends
* Making age appropriate choices
* Appreciating family life
* Recognizing and expressing feelings
* Self care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep (link with P.E. Healthy Eating Policy and S.P.H.E.)
* Expressing opinions and listening to others

**Topics covered from 3rd to 6th Classes include;**

* Bodily changes
* Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise
* Keeping safe
* Expressing feelings
* Family relationships
* Making healthy and responsible decisions
* Forming friendships
* Reproduction, conception (5th and 6th Classes)

**Questions**

In Nun’s Cross NS teachers may use a variety of methodologies to create a safe, open space where pupils feel comfortable to ask RSE related questions.

**Question Box**

For older pupils a ‘question box’ is one methodology that may be used as part of the formal RSE lessons. Teachers can follow up on the written questions at a later date, thus allowing time to prepare suitable answers, consult with colleagues/RSE policy to formulate an appropriate response.

During the delivery of each RSE lesson, pupils can be encouraged to place their questions into a box. These questions can be reviewed and the following may be taken into account:

• All pupils are encouraged to write on the question sheet. If they don’t have a question ask them to write something interesting they learned in the lesson

• Questions arising from lesson content will be answered in an age-appropriate manner.

• The 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 curriculum and they will be advised to talk with their parents/guardians/carers

• Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents if a need arises

• No personal questions will be answered and children will be reminded not to share inappropriate personal information about their families or others

**Open Forum Questions**

Teachers give pupils an opportunity to ask questions at various times throughout the RSE lesson. Questions will be answered in an age and developmentally appropriate way. Children will be made aware that the class teacher may not be able to answer their question and they will be signposted to ask an adult they trust at home.

Possible 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 that we wouldn’t ask anyone personal questions…

• Somebody asked a question and the language that was used was slang language. I think what they meant to ask was….

If a perceived child protection matter arises throughout RSE lessons or indeed otherwise, the teacher, as a mandated person, will refer to the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.

**Resources**

In Nun’s Cross National School our staff may consult any of the following teaching resources when teaching RSE in addition to the DE Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme:

* PDST Health and Wellbeing RSE
* NCCA SPHE/RSE Toolkit
* DE Walk Tall Manuals
* Making the Links and Beyond
* Stay Safe programme
* Walk Tall Programme
* Anatomical Dolls
* HSE publications (www.healthpromotion.ie)
* Busy Bodies Booklet/ Videos/ Workbook (PDST )
* Inclusive picture and story books
* INTO Different Families, Same Love Poster
* INTO Different Families, Same Love Lesson Ideas
* INTO Different Families Same Love Online Presentation JI – 2nd
* INTO Different Families Same Love Online Presentation 3rd – 6th
* RESPECT guidelines
* Gender Equality Matters (GEM)
* All Together Now
* We All Belong
* PDST Education and Transgender Information
* PDST Identity Based Bullying Information
* RSE related educational websites
* Making the Big talk lots of small talks (junior and senior books) - to support parent
* Picture books with various titles
* FUSE anti-bullying Programme

**Differentiation**

The age and stage of development in a class can vary widely and strategies for differentiation can support gradual and appropriate learning. In Nun’s Cross NS, 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.

It is important for us to ensure:

* that objectives are realistic for the students
* that the learning task builds upon prior learning
* providing opportunities for interacting and working with other students in small groups or 1:1 where necessary
* organising the learning task into small stages: outlining the steps to be learned/completed in any given task, posing key questions to guide pupils through the different stages/processes, and assisting in self-direction and correction
* ensuring that the language used is pitched at the pupil’s level of understanding. Some children may be pre-taught language or concepts in preparation of whole class work
* creating a learning environment through the use of concrete, and where possible everyday materials, and by displaying word lists and laminated charts with pictures
* employing active learning methodologies

**Assessment**

Nun’s Cross NS will employ the following methods for assessment in SPHE/RSE:

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

**Parental Involvement**

In Nun’s Cross NS parents/guardians/carers will be informed at enrolment that the school fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE curriculum. Parents/guardians/carers will be informed in advance of the teaching of the formal RSE lessons. This will offer parents/guardians/carers an opportunity to raise any concerns with the relevant teachers about the topics to be covered or indeed to meet with the teacher to discuss/view the material that will be covered and share any personal details they feel the teacher should be aware of prior to their child engaging in RSE lessons. If they wish to withdraw their child from specific formal RSE lessons, this should be provided in writing to the school and kept on file. Alternative arrangements will be considered and agreed upon by the relevant parties. The school cannot accept responsibility for indirect RSE related information delivered to the child outside of formal RSE lessons i.e. on yard, school bus etc. Parents may be signposted to developmentally–appropriate resources to support them in speaking with their child about relationships, sexuality and growing up.

As RSE is an integral component of SPHE, parental consent is not required in advance of lesson delivery. However, the Education Act 1998, section 30 subsection 2 (e) *shall not require any student to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parent.* Therefore, parents/guardians have the right to withdraw their child out of aspects of the SPHE curriculum, if they so wish. Parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children in sexual matters. The school RSE programme acts as a support only to parents, and parents retain the right to withdraw their children from classes. The programme is taught within the ethos of the school and contemporary issues/topics are dealt with by the teacher at a level appropriate to the age and stage of development of pupils within a moral and spiritual framework. If any parents/guardians wish for their child not to attend instruction in RSE, and additionally following a meeting with the class teacher this remains the case, a written letter must be furnished to the school detailing this request as this must be kept on file by the school. Any children not taking part in the RSE programme may complete some work in another class during RSE lessons.

**Language**

Language is a powerful tool and should be used with respect and integrity for the dignity of each person. 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 it can hurt, diminish and demean.

See attached RSE vocabulary.

Where children misuse language the correct language will be used and modelled by the teacher or in certain situations such language will be explicitly taught and explained as we understand that the misuse of language is not always intentional.

**Confidentiality and Child Protection:**

Nun’s Cross NS follows the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017 and subsequently reviewed 2023. 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.

In Nun’s Cross NS the Principal acts as Designated Liaison Person, and the deputy principal acts as Deputy Designated Liaison Person. In cases of disclosure; the DLP will follow the procedures as set out in Children First.

**Teacher Choice/Staff Development:**

The teacher’s right to choose is enshrined in the policy and if teachers do not wish to teach specific aspects of the programme or require additional resources, a suitable speaker will be employed by the BoM. The teacher may need to plan the specific material to be covered and should be present during the talk.

**Provision of Ongoing Support**

Nun’s Cross NS 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 an Oide Advisor (School support received October 2023 in the area of RSE)
* create a mentor system amongst to support the teaching RSE
* budgeting for the updating and development of RSE materials
* reviewing RSE policy on a regular basis
* ensure special education teachers have adequate training opportunities
* staff will reflect on information gathered from pupil questionnaires and focus groups. This will be used to inform future developments regarding RSE.
* signposting staff to resources available from Oide and other sources

**The staff have availed of training in;**

* Relationships and Sexuality Programme (RSE)

**Evaluation:**

* Teacher observation
* Inventory of what needs to be changed
* Ensuring all strands are covered
* Teacher designed tasks and tests and self-evaluation
* Community feedback

**Roles and Responsibilities:**

The school community of BoM, staff, pupils and parents play a key role in the formulation and implementation of the plan.

**Ratification:**

This policy was ratified by the BoM on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson of the Board of Management

**Review:**

Nun’s Cross NS will review this policy every three years and as such this will be reviewed in June 2026. The policy may also be reviewed at an earlier time should a need arise. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made This plan was ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_