

St. Paul's Policy on Relationships and Sexuality Education (R.S.E)

Introductory Statement:

The Staff of St. Paul's National School formulated this school policy on R.S.E., in consultation with our Board of Management and our Parents. This policy applies to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality. This policy applies to the school staff, students, Board of Management, parents / guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators. Our policy is in line with the Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy Guidelines issued by the D.E.S. in 1997.

The R.S.E. programme is offered to the children of St. Paul's National School as part of the Social, Personal and Health (S.P.H.E.) element of the curriculum.

Rationale:

R.S.E. provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire a knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality through processes which enable them to form values and to establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework, **appropriate to their age**. R.S.E. will be taught in accordance with the Department's directives and within the Philosophy framework of the school. Teachers will not teach any content outside the Religion programme used by the school or the D.E.S. curriculum. The teaching methods used in the school are child centred and reflect the age and stage of development of each child. Sensitive issues will be dealt with appropriately.

Overview of RSE programme

Aims

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of each child.
- To help children develop healthy friendships and relationships.
- To promote an understanding and healthy attitude to sexuality and relationships.
- To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction.
- To provide structured opportunities for the children to acquire a knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality, within an appropriate moral and spiritual framework.

Content

There are nine themes in the RSE programme, which are covered each year by all classes. The programme is spiral in nature, which means that the key topics will be revisited, in a developmental manner each year.

Parental Involvement

Relationships and Sexuality Education is an on-going process throughout life. Parents and the family are acknowledged as the primary educators of their children. We work in a

supportive role with the parents of our school, by complementing their role with a school based programme in RSE. A copy of the “Home School link” hand-outs will be provided to parents of children as the children are completing the lessons in school. In classes from 4th to 6th, parents are provided with these hand-outs before the lessons begin.

If parents are concerned about the more sensitive aspects of the R.S.E programme, they are welcome to visit the school to examine the content of the programmes and discuss their concerns with the Principal. Following this meeting if parents wish to have their child/ren withdrawn when sensitive issues are being taught, they are requested to submit this in writing to the Principal. Parents will be expected to make their wishes known each year to the new class teacher. Efforts will be made by the school, using the resources it has, to accommodate these children by providing supervision within another classroom.

Teachers’ concerns

The approach to the teaching of RSE will be kept as normal as possible and will usually be delivered within the child’s class by the class teacher. A teacher who is concerned about teaching a particular topic within the R.S.E. programme should talk to the Principal about his/her concerns. Such concerns will be handled discreetly. The Board of Management will endeavour to accommodate such teachers. Resources outside the school profession may be availed of if considered appropriate.

For some lessons for the older classes, topics will be taught to boys and girls separately. For the topic of “My body grows and changes” in Sixth Class an outside facilitator will visit the class and discuss this topic. In most recent years this has been Dr. Vincent Molony. The class teacher remains in the classroom at all times.

Terminology

In teaching issues relating to RSE, teachers use the correct biological terms for parts of the body.

Dealing with questions

Teachers or external visitors do not cover content outside that of the D.E.S curriculum or our school’s religion programme. Answers to questions must be in line with the Catholic Church’s teaching. Teachers should answer questions in a sensitive, sensible and age appropriate manner. Teachers should be aware that there are children in our school from many social backgrounds. No child should be made to feel uncomfortable or embarrassed when these issues are raised.

Children who ask questions in class on content outside the curriculum taught, should be talked to individually and discreetly by the teacher, and should be encouraged to seek answers from their parents. If a child poses such a question, the parents will be informed and asked not to ignore it but to deal with it as they see fit.

Confidentiality and Child Protection

Where there is a disclosure by a child of abuse, the school will follow the DES Child Protection Guidelines and the guidelines set out in “Children First”.

The Stay Safe Programme

Aim

To teach children personal safety skills so they can look after themselves in situations which could be upsetting or dangerous.

Content

The lessons cover the following areas:

- Feeling Safe and Unsafe
- Friendship and Bullying
- Touches
- Secrets and Telling
- Strangers

Children participating in this programme will learn:

- To distinguish between safe and unsafe feelings
- What to do if lost
- What to do if the phone or doorbell rings when they are alone in the house
- The importance of friends in children's lives
- What to do if bullied
- Stay Safe Rules: Say No/ Get Away/ Tell
- Why not to bully others
- Appreciating normal, appropriate touches
- That unsafe touches should never be kept secret
- How to respond to inappropriate touches (Stay Safe Rules)
- Good and bad secrets
- That some secrets should not be kept
- Who and how to tell if in trouble
- About strangers and safety strategies

Parental concerns

If parents are concerned about the more sensitive aspects of the Stay Safe programme, they are welcome to visit the school to examine the content of the programmes and discuss their concerns with the principal. Following this meeting if parents wish to have their child/ren withdrawn when sensitive issues are being taught, they are requested to submit this in

writing to the Principal. Parents will be expected to make their wishes known each year to the new class teacher. Efforts will be made by the school, using the resources it has, to accommodate these children by providing supervision within another classroom.

Teachers' concerns

A teacher who is concerned about teaching a particular topic within the Stay Safe programme should talk to the principal about his/her concerns. Such concerns will be handled discreetly. The Board of Management will endeavour to accommodate such teachers. Resources outside the school profession may be availed of if considered appropriate.

Timetable

Teachers will decide the timetabling of the Stay Safe lessons.