



## St. Patrick's Loreto Primary School

### Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

<b>Summary of the RSE Policy</b>	
General	RSE is a mandatory component of SPHE and the sensitive lessons must be taught. The sensitive lessons of RSE will be covered under the strand 'Myself' and strand units 'Growing and changing' and 'Taking care of my body'.
Curriculum Planning	<p>The 1999 SPHE Curriculum will underpin all teaching and learning of RSE as part of SPHE.</p> <p>SPHE is allocated 30 minutes discreet teaching time per week.</p> <p>The main programmes used in St Patrick's for the teaching of SPHE/RSE are Walk Tall (Revised 2016), RSE and Stay Safe (Revised 2016).</p> <p>Stay Safe is taught in Senior Infants, 1<sup>st</sup> Class, 3<sup>rd</sup> Class and 5<sup>th</sup> Class in the second or early in the third term.</p> <p>Teachers will refer to the SPHE Whole School Plan (Appendix 2) to support their planning for the delivery of the RSE strands and strand units.</p>
Organisational Planning	<p>Please see Appendix 1 for a yearly glance grid of SPHE/RSE strands and strand units to be covered by each year group.</p> <p>Please see Appendix 2 for specific content objectives for each year group.</p> <p>The main resources for teaching RSE are Walk Tall (Revised 2016), Stay Safe (Revised 2016) and the RSE manuals.</p> <p>Parents will be informed before sensitive lessons are taught. Please see Appendix 5 for sample letters.</p> <p>Accord deliver a one day presentation to 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Class. Please see Appendix 6 for content overview.</p>
Roles and Responsibilities	The staff of St. Patrick's believe that the whole school community must be involved to successfully implement RSE as part of SPHE. This includes staff, parents, students, community and the Board of Management.
Implementation	This policy will be reviewed and, if necessary, amended in the academic year 2027/2028 or sooner if required.
Whole School Plan	See Appendix 1 and 2.

## School Details

St. Patrick's Loreto Primary School is located in Bray, Co. Wicklow and has approximately 700 pupils. Our Junior and Senior Infant classes have both girls and boys. The boys leave after Senior Infants and generally transfer to our neighbouring boys' school, St. Cronan's.

St. Patrick's is a Catholic primary school which is under the patronage of the Archbishop of the Dublin diocese. Our particular school ethos derives from the values and philosophy underpinning the Loreto education tradition.

## Introductory Statement

An SPHE/RSE policy was initially developed in 1999 to inform the teaching of RSE in the school. This policy was then revised in 2014-2015. In 2023, following consultation with staff and students, it was agreed that the postholder with responsibility for SPHE would revise the policy again which resulted in two separate SPHE and RSE policies.

This RSE policy is the approved approach to the teaching of RSE in St Patrick's in accordance with the curriculum guidelines of the Department of Education's Primary Curriculum 1999. Its purpose is to guide teachers in adopting a consistent and coherent approach to the teaching and learning of SPHE in our school. It is intended to also guide teachers in their individual planning for SPHE to ensure appropriate coverage of all aspects of the curriculum from Infants to Sixth Class.

## School Philosophy

St. Patrick's Loreto Primary School seeks to foster a welcoming environment in which the dignity of every child will be valued, respected and equally cherished.

Our aim is the pursuit of excellence through a holistic education based on Gospel values. We strive to develop children's self-esteem and to motivate them to achieve their full potential in a spirit of friendship and belonging.

We recognise that SPHE is an intrinsic part of the learning and teaching that occurs both formally and informally in the school and in the classroom. Through SPHE we wish to assist the children to develop feelings of self-worth and self-confidence, and enhance their wellbeing while encouraging the ability to relate to others in a positive way.

## 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. Relationships and Sexuality education (RSE) is an integral part of SPHE.

SPHE/RSE is:

- a lifelong process which begins before the child comes to school and will continue long after he / she has left school.
- a shared responsibility. Parents, teachers, health workers and members of the wider community all have a responsibility for the social, personal and health education of the child.
- a subject which develops a child's skills, attitudes, values and understanding relevant to a range of social, personal and health issues.
- child-centered. RSE education should prioritise the needs of the child and his/her environment, with appropriate adaptations made to suit individual requirements and individual school situations.

- spiral in nature. Similar content is revisited at different stages throughout the child's time in school.
- taught through active learning methodologies that require the children to be engaged in activity-based learning which will give them increased ownership of and responsibility for their own learning.
- free of bias encouraging children to be inclusive with each other, challenge prejudice and learn how to live together in an intercultural society.

### Aims of RSE

RSE is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. In a school situation RSE, 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. RSE will be taught in accordance with the Department's directives and within the Educational Philosophy framework of Loreto Primary schools. 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.

Specifically the RSE programme as taught in St Patrick's aims:

- to enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well being of the child.
- to help young people 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 understand the physical changes taking place with the onset of puberty
- to enable the child to be comfortable with the sexuality of oneself and others while growing and developing
- to develop coping strategies to protect oneself and others from various forms of abuse

### Policies that support RSE

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SPHE Plan</li> <li>• Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment</li> <li>• Admissions Policy</li> <li>• Code of Behaviour</li> <li>• Anti-Bullying Policy</li> <li>• SEN</li> <li>• Data Protection Policy</li> <li>• Allocation of Children to Classes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administration of Medication</li> <li>• Substance Misuse</li> <li>• Internet Acceptable Use Policy</li> <li>• Pupil Attendance</li> <li>• Critical Incident Management Plan</li> <li>• Healthy Eating Policy</li> <li>• Social Media Policy</li> <li>• Mobile Phone Policy</li> </ul>
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### Curriculum Planning for RSE

RSE is a mandatory component of SPHE and the sensitive lessons must be taught. The sensitive lessons of RSE will be covered under the strand 'Myself' and strand units 'Growing and changing' and 'Taking care of my body'.

RSE also largely looks at the development of relationships, is interwoven through all strands and strand units of the SPHE curriculum. The development of relationships is an integral part of all curriculum subjects. Aspects of RSE are taught during SPHE, Religion, Science, implementation of the Code of Behaviour etc. An integrative approach towards RSE ensures that the children encounter RSE in a holistic manner rather than in isolation.

In St Patrick's the strand units of SPHE are shared over a two year period. The mandatory Stay Safe Programme which covers the Safety and Protection Strand Unit, also addresses some RSE content objectives. Stay Safe is taught in its entirety in one block, during the second or early in the third term in the following class groupings: **Senior Infants, First Class, Third Class and Fifth Class.** Teachers will refer to the SPHE Whole School Plan (Appendix 2) to support their planning for the delivery of these strand units.

### **Guidelines for the Implementation of RSE**

The 1999 SPHE Curriculum will underpin all teaching and learning of RSE in St Patrick's. SPHE is allocated 30 minutes of discreet teaching time per week, however one hour per fortnight or blocks of 1 – 2 hours per month may be timetabled where feasible or appropriate. The discrete time is used to develop and practise particular skills, deal with sensitive issues or explore issues that are not addressed in other areas of the curriculum. Children who are withdrawn for supplementary teaching must be included for as much of the SPHE programme as possible. In circumstances where children from another class are present in a classroom when sensitive content/Stay Safe is about to be discussed, the visiting children will be reassigned to another class for the duration of the lesson.

Parents will be informed upon enrolment of the school's RSE Policy. Parents will receive an email from their class teacher at least two weeks before the commencement of teaching the sensitive lessons informing them of what content objectives will be covered (A sample email is provided in Appendix 5).

In 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Class, the Accord School's Programme will be delivered by external facilitators on one day per class. When a guest speaker addresses the children in SPHE, the class teacher will remain in the classroom (as per Circular 42/2018) and make the speaker aware of this school plan and attached policies.

### **Approaches and Methodologies**

In offering learning experiences in the area of RSE, we will adopt the following approaches and methodologies:

- Active learning which includes drama activities, co-operative games, use of pictures, photographs and visual images, written activities, discussion, use of media and information technologies and looking at children's work.
- Talk and discussion
- Circle Time
- Skills through Content
- Collaborative learning
- Problem-solving
- Use of the Environment
- External facilitator (Circular 0042/2018) Accord Schools' Programme

## Resources

In St. Patrick's our staff may consult any of the following teaching resources when teaching RSE in addition to the DE Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme:

- Walk Tall Manuals Revised 2016
- Stay Safe programme Revised 2016
- RSE Manuals
- Anatomical Dolls
- PDST Health and Wellbeing RSE
- NCCA SPHE/RSE Toolkit
- HSE publications ([www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie))
- Busy Bodies Booklet/ Videos/ Workbook (PDST )
- Picture and story books
- RESPECT guidelines

(See Appendix 3 for a list of SPHE Resources)

## Parental Involvement

It is accepted that the parents are the primary educators of the child, particularly in Relationships and Sexuality Education, and that the school plays a supportive role in this. Parents will be informed that the Stay Safe Programme and RSE are implemented in the school at enrolment. They will receive an outline of the topics to be covered in RSE/Stay Safe and will be able to familiarise themselves with the content of the RSE/Stay Safe lessons at <https://pdst.ie/primary/health-wellbeing/RSE> or [www.pdst.ie/staysafe](http://www.pdst.ie/staysafe). Pupils will be encouraged to discuss the learning outcomes of the RSE lessons with their parents/guardians. Stay Safe Home School Links will be used. Parents will be directed to developmentally appropriate resources to support them in speaking with their child about relationships, sexuality and growing up.

It is best practice to advise parents of the content of lessons dealing with sensitive issues prior to lessons being taught, so they may discuss the issues in advance with their child. If parents wish to opt their children out of any of the sensitive aspects of the RSE programme in any given class they must provide a written statement to inform the school of their decision which will be kept on file. Provisions for supervision will be discussed with the child's parent. The school cannot accept responsibility for indirect RSE related information delivered to the child outside of formal RSE lessons from another source i.e. on yard.

## Differentiation

In St. Patrick's, 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. In planning for and providing learning experiences in the area of SPHE, teachers will take account of

- children with different learning needs
- children for whom English is not a first language
- children who may have been personally affected by specific issues

Teachers will endeavour to adapt and modify activities and methodologies in RSE to encourage participation by children with special needs. The SEN teachers will collaborate with class teachers to support and supplement the work done in the classroom where necessary. Resources such as Stay Safe for Children with SEN or those found on PDST Health and Wellbeing RSE or the NCCA SPHE/RSE Toolkit may be used.

### **Language**

It is important that children are taught the appropriate language in Relationships & Sexuality Education to enable them to communicate confidently about themselves, their sexuality and their relationships. Teachers will model the appropriate vocabulary relating to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, parts of the body and feelings. The correct anatomical terms are used in a consistent way across all class levels. In teaching RSE the approach in the school is child centred and will always take into account the age and stage of development of the pupils. See Appendix 7 for specific terms to be taught in each class grouping.

### **Questions**

Teachers may use a variety of methodologies to create a safe, open space where pupils feel comfortable to ask RSE related questions e.g. Worry Box, Question Box, Circle Time. St. Patrick's is a Catholic school with a clearly defined ethos. Teachers do not cover content outside that of the DES curriculum or the school's religion programme. Questions will be answered in an age and developmentally appropriate way in line with the Catholic Loreto ethos of the school. Teachers should answer questions sensitively, aware that there are children in our school from many social backgrounds. No child should be made feel uncomfortable or embarrassed if sensitive issues are raised.

Children will be made aware that the class teacher may not be able to answer their question. Children, who ask questions in class on content *outside the curriculum* taught, should be talked to individually and discretely, as soon as is possible, by the teacher and encouraged to seek answers from their parents.

Possible responses to questions *outside the curriculum* taught:

- "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 teacher has any concerns regarding confidential information or disclosures, the advice of the Principal as DLP, will be sought.

### **Assessment**

Assessment will be carried out in accordance with the guidelines in the Curriculum Statement Pg. 70 – 77. The approaches include:

- Teacher observation and questioning

- Teacher designed tasks such as worksheets, quizzes or games
- Open forum in Circle Time
- Collation of portfolios of pupils' work
- Pupil self-assessment / reflection

### **Confidentiality**

St. Patrick's Child Safeguarding Statement is reviewed annually in accordance with the Department of Education and Science's Child Protection Protection Guidelines and Procedures (as per circular 36/2023) which are based on Children First, National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children.

Children may disclose personal information during SPHE/RSE lessons. It is important to protect the privacy of children and their families. This can be done by ensuring there are ground rules for the sharing of information in relation to the topics covered in SPHE/RSE. Children will be reminded that any information of a confidential nature which is disclosed in class should not be discussed outside of the classroom. Disclosures of abuse must be dealt with in line with Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (Revised 2023). All teachers are mandated persons under the Children First Act 2015 and have a statutory obligation to report a suspicion or an allegation that a child is being or is at risk of abuse or neglect to the school's designated liaison person(DLP).

### **Provision of Ongoing Support**

St. Patrick's ensures the provision of ongoing support by the following:

- encouraging teachers to attend RSE CPD and share information/skills acquired at these courses with other members of staff during staff meetings
- utilising staff meetings as a platform for discussion and development of RSE
- seeking the support from an Oide Advisor when necessary
- budgeting for the updating and development of RSE materials
- reviewing RSE policy on a regular basis
- signposting staff to resources available from PDST and other sources

### **Review**

St. Patrick's will review this policy every three years. The policy may also be reviewed at an earlier time should a need arise. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made.

(a) Roles and Responsibilities:

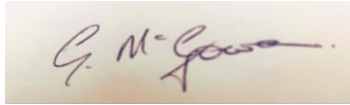
It will be necessary to review this plan on a regular basis to ensure optimum implementation of the SPHE curriculum in the school. The post holder for Wellbeing is responsible for co-ordinating this review.

Those involved in the review will include: *Principal, Deputy Principal, ISL Team, Teachers, Pupils, Parents, Post holder for Wellbeing, BoM/DES/Others.*

(b) Timeframe:

This plan will be reviewed in its entirety in 2027/2028 unless a need arises that has to be addressed. Incidental feedback will be taken by the post holder at intervals in the intervening period. The post holder will co-ordinate the review. In the absence of a post holder with responsibility for SPHE, the Deputy Principal will take responsibility for the review.

This revised RSE policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St Patrick's Loreto Primary School.



Chairperson of Board of Management:

Date: 16<sup>th</sup> April 2024

This plan is available to view at the school by the parents on request or on the school website.