



RSE Policy

School Details

Ballinacarriga National School is a rural 4 teacher mixed school. Relationship and sexuality will be taught in accordance with the aims of our school set out in the school plan. Our school is a place where people feel valued, self-esteem is fostered, creativity and innovation are encouraged and open communication is the norm. Pupils are encouraged to attain high standards, express themselves within the limits of their ability, be aware of their environment and cultural and religious background and to establish and promote good interpersonal relationships at all levels.

We promote in our pupils an ability to make-reasoned judgements and choices and to take responsibility for their actions and we encourage attitudes and habits related to spiritual fulfilment.

Introductory Statement

This policy was drawn up by staff and parents on 15th May 2024 to replace our last RSE policy. It will be reviewed during the school year 2025-26. 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 our school.

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.

The following definition of RSE is referenced from the Interim curriculum and guidelines for primary schools (DE 1996, p.5)

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.”



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).

Through SPHE and RSE, pupils are 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

Consider how your school might achieve this?

SPHE/RSE is

- a lifelong and continual process throughout primary school and should not be confined to once off inputs or solitary lessons
- a shared responsibility and collaboration between family, school, health professionals and the community
- 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. SPHE/RSE formally begins in Junior Infants and is developed throughout the child's time in school. This will provide opportunities to consolidate and build on previous learning in developmentally appropriate manner.
- taught through active learning methodologies. RSE provides a range of learning opportunities that requires children to actively participate in their learning in a wide variety of ways e.g. discussion, circle time, role play.
- free of bias. Lessons, language and resources selected by the school should reflect this. SPHE/RSE encourages children to be inclusive with each other, challenge prejudice and learn how to live together in an intercultural society.

Aims of RSE

- 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

Our school follows a two year plan for SPHE

MONTH	<i>Year 1 - school year 24-25 and every 2nd year after that.</i>	<i>Year 2- school year 25-26 and every 2nd year after that.</i>
September - October	Myself and My Family (Myself and Others) Webwise	Self - Identity (Myself) Webwise
November - December	Relating to Others (Myself and Others)	My Friends and Other People (Myself and Others)
<i>Jan - Feb</i>	Growing and Changing (Myself) RSE	Safety and Protection (Myself) Stay Safe
<i>March – April</i>	Taking Care of My Body (Myself) RSE (5 th & 6 th class only) Busy Bodies 4 th class girls: Menstruation part of Busy Bodies	Making Decisions (3rd-6th) (Myself) 4 th class girls: Menstruation part of Busy Bodies
<i>May - June</i>	Developing Citizenship	Media Education



	(Myself & the Wider World) Safety and Protection (Myself)	(Myself and the Wider World) Safety and Protection (Myself)
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We will teach RSE and Stay Safe at the same time of year but days may change.

Resources that we use: Walk Tall, Stay Safe and RSE books.

Making the links document available here for different methodologies and resources.

<https://www.pdst.ie/sites/default/files/Compressed.pdf>

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.

Guidelines for the Implementation of RSE

The SPHE curriculum will underpin all teaching and learning of RSE in our school.

Teachers are encouraged to use an integrated approach for the delivery of SPHE. All resources used will be in keeping with this RSE policy and will take into consideration the sample criteria for choosing resources, as outlined in the SPHE Teacher Guidelines p.103.

- The strands units 'Growing and changing' and 'Taking care of body' are covered in one year of a 2 year plan
- Lessons containing sensitive material are covered as part of these strand units
- 5TH & 6th class girls and boys together will receive the sensitive topics contained in the Busy Bodies book and videos EVERY SECOND YEAR IN spring. This will be delivered by their class teacher and/or SET teacher.
- SET teacher will support any children with additional needs by pre teaching ideas or supplying teaching aids for understanding.
- Taking into account the pupils' social and emotional development, instruction will be based on individual needs where possible
- Parents will be informed prior to the teaching of RSE and stay safe in the school. A link to the lessons will be sent to parents via email. Parents will be encouraged to talk to their children about the lessons.
- If parents wish for their child to be excluded from RSE, they will need to state this in writing for the attention of the principal.
- Children cannot opt out of the Stay Safe programme.
- Detail any other information you deem necessary
- Where possible, all classes will teach Stay Safe and RSE during the same term and on the same days.
- Classes will be paired together for the purposes of teaching in the following way:
 - Juniors and seniors
 - 1st & 2nd
 - 3rd & 4th
 - 5th & 6th

SET teachers may be utilised to help children remain in the above groups when receiving Stay Safe and RSE lessons.



Pupil's Voice

In our school the voice of our pupils is acknowledged, valued and respected. Children are given opportunities to reflect and feedback on SPHE/RSE provision via focus group. 6th class was our focus group and they were formed in June 2024
This information was used to inform this policy.

Approaches & Methodologies

Active learning is the principal learning and teaching approach recommended for SPHE. It requires children to actively participate in their learning in a wide variety of ways, thereby increasing the possibility of internalising what they have explored and of being able to use this learning in their everyday lives. Active learning contributes significantly to fostering their self-confidence, self-discipline and self-control in the learner. Active learning methodologies are an integral part of teaching and learning in SPHE and RSE. The PDST have developed a suite of resources to support school to implement active learning methodologies in SPHE which are available on <https://www.pdst.ie/SPHE-Approaches-and-Methodologies>

Any or all of the following techniques will allow the child to play an active part in the learning process:

- Discussion
- Use of Circles/Circle Time
- Role play
- Interviewing friends, or other school pupils, family members
- Surveys of attitudes
- Analysing and evaluating media
- Hosting visitors
- 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.

In Ballinacarriga NS, we will use the following approaches and methodologies to teach RSE;

- stories and poems
- classroom discussion
- ICT Activities
- group work
- games
- art activities
- reflection
- circle time



Resources

In our 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 J1 – 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

Parental Involvement

Going Forward Together (Parents Booklet) states – “As a parent, you are the first teacher of your child. You hand on values and attitudes to each new generation of children”.

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 of the student or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years.

Therefore, parents have the right to withdraw their child out of aspects of the SPHE curriculum, if they so wish.

The school should develop effective strategies for dialogue between teachers and parents/guardians/carers. It will be essential that both parties find ways of listening to each other to work together effectively.

Examples of strategies that could be considered are:

- Ask parents to read our policy on SPHE and RSE.
- Inform parents/guardians/carers before formal teaching of RSE
- Creating flexible opportunities for teachers to meet with parents/guardians/carers.
- Ensure opportunities for parents/guardians/carers voice to be acknowledged when reviewing RSE policy.
- Sharing any appropriate books like, “Making the big talk little talks” during parent teacher meetings or at other times.
- Ensuring clarity of language in any form of written or other communication from the school.
- **Sharing and signposting resources that will support parents to talk to their children about relationships, sexuality and growing up.**



In Ballinacarriga NS parents/guardians/carers will be informed at enrolment that the school fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE curriculum and be asked for their consent in the application form.

Parents/guardians/carers will be informed in advance of the teaching of the formal RSE lessons. (A sample letter is provided in Appendix 1).

This will offer parents/guardians/carers an opportunity to meet with relevant teachers 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.

Differentiation

The age and stage of development in a class can vary widely and strategies for differentiation can support gradual and appropriate learning. 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.

If learning activities are to be made meaningful, relevant and achievable for all students, it is important that the teacher finds ways to respond to students' diversity by using differentiated approaches and methodologies.

NCSE Guidelines for teachers of students with Mild, Moderate and Severe and Profound Learning Disabilities is available to download at <https://www.sess.ie/cat-categories>

Consider:

- Who requires differentiation in your class
- How do you differentiate for those pupils
- What resources will support you to do this
- What other supports do you have at your disposal

We must also consider

- 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
- 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

Useful Resources:

- Middletown Centre for Autism
- PDST RSE
- Stay Safe for Children with SEN

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.

Consider:

- what language you model in your classroom? We should model correct and factual words. We should not dismiss slang words, but just provide the correct word.
- What language you use to promote a positive, inclusive classroom environment for all.
- becoming aware of binary language or language that implies gender stereotyping - <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/list-lgbtq-terms>
- if the correct anatomical terms are used in a consistent way across all class levels
- what strategies you use to tackle derogatory language in your classroom (e.g. when a child misuses the word 'gay' or 'lesbian') We should correct by giving them using the word in the correct manner.
- what strategies you use to teach correct anatomical terms (e.g. when a child misuses the word 'willy' or 'pee-pee') We respond by providing the correct anatomical name.
- Familiarising staff with the PDST Identity Based Bullying resource and PDST Education and Transgender resource which is useful in creating an awareness about the spectrum of sexualities and genders that exist.

Questions

Our 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....*

Online Audience Engagement Platform

Teachers may use an online audience engagement platform where children can submit their questions digitally, for example Kahoot.

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.

We may refer to HSE website: <https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/for-parents/sample-questions-and-answers/>

Assessment

Ballinacarriga 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
- Use of reflection or learning log
- Pupil Portfolio

Confidentiality

We follow the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017.

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.

Children may disclose personal information during 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 RSE. This should be stated before teaching RSE. For example:

- *Any members of school staff are here to support you.*
- *You can talk to any of us in private when you need.*
- *If there is something that is upsetting or confusing you, we are here to help, you can talk to us in private.*
- *If you have a specific question but don't want to ask it aloud, you can put it in the question box or write it down later.*



Disclosures of abuse must be dealt with in line with Child Protection for Primary and Post-Primary schools 2017.

Provision of Ongoing Support

We ensure 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 a PDST Advisor
 - 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 PDST and other sources

Some teachers may not feel comfortable teaching RSE. However on-going training, team teaching, mentoring and review can alleviate this issue. Schools can apply to the PDST for continuous professional development support throughout the school year. Additionally, the PDST provides support in the form of seminars on an annual basis in many of the education centres around the country. PDST support can be applied for through the PDST website: www.pdst.ie

Review

Ballinacarriga NS 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.

This plan was ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting on 30th Sept 2024.



Appendix 1

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is an integral part of the Social, Personal and Health Education curriculum. We will be commencing formal RSE lessons for the whole school in _____.

RSE predominantly lies within the strand units 'Taking care of my body' and 'Growing and changing' of SPHE which can be viewed at

https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/462570f8-27cc-4f5b-a13e-d1e2de8c18d2/PSEC06_SPHE_curriculum.pdf

Or

<https://www.pdst.ie/primary/health-wellbeing/RSE>

and is summarised in the table below.

INFANTS - 2nd CLASS	3rd CLASS - 6th CLASS
<p><i>Strand Unit - Growing and Changing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• As I grow I change• New life• Feelings and emotions <p><i>Strand Unit - Taking care of my body</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowing about my body• Food and nutrition• Making decisions	<p>Social, Personal and Health Education Curriculum (NCCA 1999)</p> <p><i>Strand Unit - Growing and Changing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• As I grow I change• Birth and new life• Feelings and emotions <p><i>Strand Unit - Taking care of my body</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowing about my body• Food and nutrition• Health and wellbeing

5th & 6th class will be going over the busy bodies book and videos. These can be found at <https://www.pdst.ie/primary/health-wellbeing/RSE>

We will commence these sensitive lessons on _____.

Our school's RSE policy is available to view on our school website. It outlines our agreed approach to achieve the objectives of the aforementioned strand units. 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



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