

Relationships & Sexuality Education Policy

Introduction

St. Oliver's National School is a co-ed mainstream primary school catering for pupils from infants to sixth class. The school is a catholic primary school under the patronage of the Diocese of Kerry. It is our intention that everyone feels valued and our pupils are encouraged to develop their full potential in a caring and supportive environment. Relationships and Sexuality Education (R.S.E.) encompasses the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, sexual identity and intimacy. In St. Oliver's N.S. we seek to promote the overall development of the child which involves the integration of Relationships and Sexuality into personal understanding, growth and development within the context of our Catholic ethos.

Development of this Policy

Parents were encouraged to play a meaningful role in the R.S.E. policy formation. Consultations took place with staff, parents and Board of Management in the writing of this policy.

Rationale

St. Oliver's N.S. is committed to the education of children regardless of race, religion, gender or status. Relationships and Sexuality are integral parts of the human personality and impact biologically, psychologically, culturally, socially and spiritually. RSE is a lifelong process that involves the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills, and the development of attitudes, beliefs, morals and values. While we believe that the primary responsibility for addressing these issues rests with parents, we acknowledge the vital part the school can play in supporting and complementing this.

Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education

Relationships and Sexuality Education seeks to provide children with opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of relationships and human sexuality, through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework. RSE aims to help children learn, at home and in school, about their own development and about their friendships and relationships with others. This work will be based on developing a good self-image, promoting respect for themselves and others and providing them with appropriate information.

Relationship of RSE to Social, Personal and Health Education

In St. Oliver's N.S, RSE will be taught in the context of Social, Personal and Health Education. SPHE is a subject in the primary school curriculum. SPHE contributes to developing the work of the school in promoting the health and well-being of children and young people. This happens in the context of their emotional, moral, social and spiritual growth, as well as their intellectual, physical, political, religious and creative development. SPHE is taught from Junior Infants to Sixth class and is formally timetabled.

RSE will be facilitated in the following ways within our school:

- In the context of a positive school climate and atmosphere
- As part of timetabled S.P.H.E.
- On an integrated, cross-curricular basis

The RSE Curriculum is a spiral curriculum. This involves revisiting key topics in a developmental manner at regular intervals. As it is a progressive programme it is taught annually over the 8-year primary cycle.

Aims of our RSE Programme

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of each child.
- To help children 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 older 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

Management and Organisation of the R.S.E Programme in our School

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 R.S.E. Parents with particular concerns should discuss these with the principal or class teacher.

Withdrawal from RSE:

Since RSE is an obligatory requirement of the Department of Education and Science, it should be inclusive. St Oliver's N.S. actively promotes the implementation of RSE and strongly discourages withdrawal. The school will, however, take account of parental concerns and a parent's right to withdraw a pupil from themes pertaining to sensitive issues will be honoured on the understanding that the parent(s) is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves. Parents are obliged to inform the school in writing of their decision to withdraw the child from the sensitive issues classes.

Mixed Groups:

The delivery of the RSE programme will be co-educational within the context of the class group. Where multi class groups are concerned exceptions will be made to ensure that pupils are taught the appropriate class level objectives.

Terminology:

In teaching issues related to RSE, teachers will use the correct biological terms for parts of the body. Appropriate vocabulary relating to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, parts of the body and feelings will be used. *The use of slang words will be discouraged.*

Questions:

Questions arising from curriculum content will be addressed by the teacher or by the visitor in a sensible, sensitive and age-appropriate manner. The class teacher cannot answer questions which do not relate to the particular curriculum objectives for a class. Pupils will be informed that that question/issue is not on the programme and they will be referred back to the parent(s). Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents themselves if they feel that a question is very inappropriate. It is our policy not to answer personal questions and to discourage disclosure of personal or family information.

Outside Speakers

We invite a facilitator to work with our 5th and 6th classes for one day annually. The content of this programme is designed specifically for these age groups. Parents are made aware of the content in advance and are asked for their consent in writing in order for their children to take part. A Parents information talk is available also is required by the parents at the time.

Confidentiality and Child Protection:

Where there is disclosure by a child of abuse, or a teacher has any concerns about a child, the school authorities will follow our Child Protection Policy. The Principal is our Designated Liaison Person.

Sources and Resources:

The RSE and the Stay Safe Programmes and other resources that are deemed suitable by the Principal/Teachers will primarily be used for the delivery of the RSE themes. These resources can be seen online or are available by request from the school should parents wish.

Online RSE documents available to download from <http://www.pdst.ie/node/811>

Ongoing Support, Development and Review

The Board of Management of St. Oliver’s N.S. supports and fosters the development of a R.S.E school policy. The programme of work will be reviewed at regular intervals by teachers. St. Oliver’s N.S. will ensure access to in-career development opportunities for teachers in R.S.E. The policy and programme will be reviewed after the first year and every four years thereafter and will involve consultation with parents. Any amendments necessary as a result of reviews will be undertaken.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on _____

Signed: _____
Chairperson

Principal

Overview of Content

Strand	Junior & Senior Infants	First & Second Class
	Strand Units	Strand Units
Myself	I am unique My Body As I grow I change New Life Feeling Safe Feelings and emotions Making decisions	I am unique My Body As I grow I change New Life Feeling Safe Feelings and emotions Making decisions
Myself & Others	Myself and my family Myself and my friends Special people in my life Relating to others	Myself and my family Myself and my friends Other people Relating to others

Strand	Third & Fourth Class	Fifth & Sixth Class
	Strand Units	Strand Units
Myself	Accepting myself Physical development Growing and changing Birth and new life Feelings and emotions Personal Hygiene Personal Safety Making decisions	Accepting myself Physical development Becoming an adult Parenthood Feelings and emotions Personal Hygiene Personal Safety Making decisions
Myself & Others	Roles and responsibilities in families Portrayal of sexuality and relationships Roles of males and females in society Relating to others	Changing relationships in families and friendships Group affiliation and loyalty Portrayal of sexuality and relationships Sexual stereotypes Relating to others

Language:

The acquisition of appropriate language in RSE is crucially important to enable children to communicate confidently about themselves, their sexuality and their relationships (Interim Guidelines, p53).

Not being familiar with the biological terms for the body can put children at a disadvantage. (DES Resource Materials for Education and Sexuality Education, Junior/Senior Infants, pp.148-149).

We will give children the correct and appropriate language outlined in the RSE materials.

- Junior Infants: womb, breast feeding
- Senior Infants: penis and vagina.
- 1st class: urine passes through the penis in boys and the urethra in girls. Baby is in womb for 9 months and may be breast or bottle-fed.
- 2nd class: penis and urethra, vagina (to be revised), navel and breast.
- 3rd class: puberty, the womb, breast feeding, umbilical cord.
- 4th class: developing foetus, changes in puberty – body shape, menstruation, voice changes, mood changes, skin changes, increases in body hair
- 5th class: puberty (to be revised); physical changes in boys and girls
- 6th class: reproduction and sexual intercourse in the context of a loving committed relationship in marriage