

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

Definition of RSE

RSE 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.

Relationship of RSE to SPHE

RSE will be taught as a component part or module, within the Social, Personal and Health Education programme. SPHE contributes to developing the work of the school in promoting the health and well-being of children. It 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.

Current Provision

A Climate of Care:

The staff of Knock NS are most aware of the educational and emotional needs of the children in our care, and keep these in mind in relation to our planning and policy-making processes.

Policies:

We have a range of policies that guide our daily interactions and decisions. Two of these policies relate directly to RSE: Code of Behaviour and Anti – Bullying. Both aim to develop in our children a self-discipline which will guide their behaviour choices in all situations, both in the school and in their lives outside school.

Aims of the RSE Programme

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being 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 and reproduction.
- To develop and promote in the child a sense of wonder 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 RSE

In this context, parents are acknowledged as the primary educators of their children and the school will work in a supportive role.

It is necessary to make specific arrangements to deal with a number of issues relating to the management and teaching of RSE. These issues will generally be dealt with in the ways outlined below. However should circumstances prevail where the principal and teachers find it necessary to make alterations, this will be done with due regard to the spirit of the agreement.

Organisational Matters

Parents will be informed each year that RSE instruction is taking place. Parents will be made aware of the content of the RSE programme for their child's/children's particular class level. If they have any specific areas of concern, they will be invited to let the school know, and these can then be discussed.

A parent's right to withdraw their child from the RSE process will be respected on the understanding that the parent is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves. They will be asked to sign a letter to this effect. It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the school of this decision. Where parents choose to withdraw their child from these parts of the curriculum, an arrangement will be made for the child to go to another class and undertake other school work.

A letter will be sent to all parents prior to the RSE lessons which deal with the sensitive sexual issues, particularly with regard to the curriculum in the senior classes, informing them of the content of these particular lessons. Parents will be invited to an information evening where the content of the programme will be outlined. This will provide parents with the opportunity to discuss upcoming issues at home, if they so wish. Teachers' rights to opt out from the teaching the sensitive sexual issues will be respected.

If no member of staff is available to teach the sensitive sexual issues, the principal and class teacher will arrange for this education to be made available during school time if possible.

In a multiclass situation, children will only receive the RSE instruction that is relevant to their particular year. Arrangements will be made by the class teacher, in conjunction with the principal, to facilitate this. A letter outlining the availability of sanitary bins and sanitary protection will be sent home to all parents of fifth and sixth class girls, this may differ from time to time due to the multi-class situation. RSE instruction for children with special needs will be at the discretion of their parents, who may wish to discuss this matter with the class teacher. RSE instruction will be undertaken during the second term each year.

Curriculum Matters

All content objectives will be covered by the time the children finish sixth class.

The sensitive sexual issues will be covered as outlined in the Department of Education and Science RSE resource books. These are:

- **Senior infants:**
Naming parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms.

- **Fourth class:**
Discuss the stages and sequence of the development of the human baby in the womb.
- **Fifth and sixth classes:**
The changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty.
Reproductive system of male and female adults.
- **Sixth class:**
Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship.

Before the sensitive sexual issues in fifth and sixth classes are introduced to the children in class, parents will be invited to the school. At an information meeting the teacher will give an overview of the content of the RSE programme for this level and parents are invited to view the 'Busy Bodies' DVD dealing with these issues. Busy Bodies booklet is also distributed if available.

In fifth and sixth classes, the issues of puberty, reproduction and sexual intercourse will be presented to the girls and boys separately first, and then together. In sixth class, all the material dealt with in fifth class will be revised.

In all these matters, there will be an equal emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge and the development of skills and values. Opportunities may arise to deal with these matters as they occur spontaneously and informally in the course of the school day, and these will be used by the teachers in an appropriate manner and in keeping with this policy.

Dealing with Questions

It is normal that children should wish to ask questions in the area of RSE as they do in other subject areas. However, this area of the curriculum is treated somewhat differently from other subjects, in that certain topics are regarded as sensitive. These are generally regarded as the areas that deal with growth, development and reproduction.

Where these topics are concerned, there can be quite a range of understanding and often misunderstanding, in the same class level. In order to preserve an attitude of respect and to ensure that parents are confident that only the matters agreed in the policy are dealt within the various class levels, we recommend that:

- Teachers emphasise that questions dealt with in the classroom setting will be confined to material covered in that or previous years. Children may be asked to pose a question to their parents if it is not in keeping with curriculum content.

Guest Speakers

From time to time it is useful to invite guest speakers to address staff, parents or children on a wide range of educational issues.

Where the subject matter relates to the area of RSE, and where the guest speaker is invited to address the children, the following guidelines will apply:

- The teacher/teachers concerned will discuss the planned subject matter with the guest speaker.
- The policy of this school will be outlined and care taken to ensure that the guest speaker is aware of the content which would be covered by the class teacher in the areas of growth, development and reproduction. The guest speaker would be required to only cover matters that are currently in our agreed policy.
- The class teacher or principal would remain with the class group while the guest speaker is present.

Ongoing Support and Development

In line with our policy of continuous professional development for our staff, we may invite guest speakers or arrange workshops to deal with issues relevant to RSE from time to time.

All teachers are made aware of courses pertaining to RSE in our local Education Centre and encouraged to attend.

Resources

In line with the provision of resources throughout the curriculum, resources will be made available for RSE. These resources fall into two categories – those which are only intended as background educational support material for teachers and parents, and those which are intended for use with the children.

When the materials are intended for class use, they should be carefully assessed in order to ensure that they comply with our agreed RSE policy.

Review

This policy was reviewed by staff in September 2012, this policy will remain in effect for a period of three school years, unless major difficulties arise demanding an early review.

The Board of Management will be responsible for approving the final draft of the reviewed RSE policy.