

Rationale

Education in St.Canice's is characterised by care for the individual. The child's many needs are met in a well-structured environment where she/he can live fully the life of a child. While nourishing the child's young life, we hope to provide her/him with a solid foundation for future growth and development in a Christian tradition. The environment is such that the child is encouraged and stimulated to be confident, appreciative, independent and creative. The Relationships and Sexuality (RSE) programme will be implemented within this framework.

Definition of RSE

RSE aims to provide opportunities for children to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way. This work will be based on developing a good image, promoting respect for themselves and others, and providing them with appropriate information.

RSE in the context of our SPHE programme

Throughout the school year, Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is taught as a subject from Junior Infants to 6th class. A wide variety of topics is included in this programme, at age-appropriate levels. RSE forms a part of this programme; it is a spiral curriculum which ensures that topics are taught in a developmental manner throughout a child's primary school years.

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.

Broad Objectives of the RSE programme

The RSE programme should enable the child:

- To acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self.
- To develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth.
- To develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well-being of others.
- To understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and in wider contexts.
- To develop an awareness of differing family patterns
- To come to value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood.
- To develop strategies to make decisions, solve problems and implement actions in various personal, social and health contexts.
- To become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change, and to understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity.
- To develop personal skills which will help them to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships.
- To develop some coping strategies to protect themselves and others from various forms of abuse.
- To acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction.
- To acquire and use an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development.
- To develop in the child a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making.

Overview of content

Strand	Infant Classes	1 st and 2 nd Classes
	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 and 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	3 rd and 4 th Classes	5 th and 6 th Classes
	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 and 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

Guidelines for the management and organisation of RSE in St.Canice's:

We recognise that parents are the primary educators of their children, and that the home is the natural environment in which RSE should take place. The role of the school, therefore, is seen as one of support for the work of the home in this area.

The approach in school is child-centred and will always take the age and stage of development of the children into account. 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 arising from lesson content will be answered in an 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 if a question/issue is not on the programme and they will be advised to talk with their parents. 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.

Our RSE programme is inclusive and so we actively discourage withdrawal. Should a parent seek to have their child withdrawn from the RSE lessons, the school will take account of parental concerns, and parents' right to withdraw their child 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.

We invite a facilitator to work with our 5th class girls and 6th class 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 - an information meeting is held for parents and they are asked to write a letter to the school if they do not consent for their children to take part.

Confidentiality

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.

Ongoing support, development and review

The Board of Management of St.Canice's supports the implementation of the RSE programme. We recognise that our school has a supportive role to that of the home and we have a commitment to ensuring that:

- Our teachers have access to in-career development opportunities.
- Relevant teaching materials are provided.
- Our Special Duties Teacher (Eileen Cody) will work with teachers to support them in whatever way is necessary.

Communication

The ratified policy will be available from the Principal's Office and will be communicated to other members of the school community as appropriate.

Implementation Date

This policy will apply from the date of ratification by the Board of Management.

Ratification

This policy was read, discussed and approved/ratified by the Board of Management. Copies of the policy are available from the principal.

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

Marguerite Ahearne