

# St. Dominic's National School

Mountain Park,  
Tallaght,  
Dublin 24.

Phone: 01-4512443

Fax: 01-4512219

Principal: Séamus Vaughan

Deputy Principal: Maire Meenan

E-Mail: [secretary@stdominicsns.ie](mailto:secretary@stdominicsns.ie)

---

## Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy

### Introductory Statement & Rationale

This policy statement is an approved approach to the teaching of RSE in St. Dominic's N.S. It was originally developed in 2005 by St. Dominic's staff and parents. R.S.E. Policy Committee was formed in March 2017 which included teachers recently trained in RSE, Class Teachers, Resource teachers, representatives of the Board of Management and parent representatives. It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE.

### School Philosophy

St. Dominic's is a co-educational school in a disadvantaged area. St. Dominic's National School is a caring community under Catholic management where the uniqueness of each child is valued and celebrated. The school seeks to cherish and challenge children in a safe, secure and attractive learning environment. We aim to be a holistic inclusive school thereby developing the academic, emotional and social potential of each child. The school is aware that families with different religions and cultures attend St. Dominic's N.S. and this has been taken in to account when drafting the RSE policy. The school is also aware that different types of family units live in the area and is sensitive to their needs.

### Definition of RSE

RSE aims to provide opportunities for children and young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

### Relationship of RSE to SPHE

Social, Personal and Health education, S.P.H.E. provides particular opportunities to foster the personal development, health and well-being of the individual child, to help him/her to create and maintain supportive relationships and be an active and responsible citizen in society. RSE is an integral part of Social, Personal and Health Education and must be taught in this context to keep it in perspective and to give it proper emphasis. SPHE is a time-tabled subject to be implemented in full.

### Current Provision

The school currently provides SPHE /RSE formally and informally through:

- ✓ RSE Programme From DES
- ✓ Walk tall
- ✓ Stay Safe
- ✓ Be Safe
- ✓ Action for Life
- ✓ Anti-bullying-Prim Ed
- ✓ Substance misuse prevention programme

- ✓ Code of Behaviour
- ✓ Circle Time
- ✓ School Counsellors
- ✓ Accord for 4<sup>th</sup> (girls), 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> class
- ✓ Anatomical Dolls'
- ✓ Busy Bodies-Video
- ✓ Respect-GLEN
- ✓ Different families, same love-I.N.T.O.

### **Aims of our RSE programme**

- ✓ To help young people develop healthy friendships and relationships
- ✓ To promote a healthy attitude to sexuality and to relationships
- ✓ To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child
- ✓ 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

### **Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School**

R.S.E is an integral part of S.P.H.E. and will be taught in this context. The curriculum is spiral in nature starting in infants. R.S.E specific education will be covered in the strand units "Taking care of my body" and "Growing and Changing" (see S.P.H.E. plan). The programme will be taught in the normal classroom situation by the class teacher. The effectiveness of an R.S.E. Programme is dependent on a collaborative process involving teachers, parents and members of Board of Management. It is recognised that a teacher has the right to opt-out of teaching some or all of the programme (e.g. sexually sensitive issues in RSE). In this case alternative arrangements will be made to ensure that the programme will be taught to all classes. It is responsibility of the Board of Management to ensure that the curriculum will be taught to the children by another teacher or an outside speaker. Teachers will adhere to the limits of the content of the programme. Visitors such as: Nurse, Garda, Fire Person, Post Office Worker, Farmer, Mother and baby may be brought into any class if a teacher feels that such a visit would be beneficial to the pupils. Issues discussed will be age appropriate. Topics will be dealt with in a manner that will show care and sensitivity to all pupils. Sensitive issues will be dealt with in the last term, if not before then, and home school link pages will be sent home in advance of these lessons.

## **Curriculum Matters**

- Curriculum Content – The curriculum detailed in the RSE books will be followed as published, and will be taught in Junior Infants to 6<sup>th</sup> class. All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school and the policy.
- When an outside speaker is used, the class teacher is responsible for making them aware of school policy and that teacher will sit in during the lesson.

## **Organisational Matters**

- As parents / guardians are the primary educators of their children they may wish to deal with certain aspects of the RSE programme in the home. A letter reminding parents that the programme is beginning, will be sent out in advance of the start of the programme each year to parents and guardians. A copy of this policy and the language will be available on our school website. Parents and guardians can access the SPHE curriculum on [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie). Parents and guardians can also view in the school the content of the RSE curriculum for all the classes as contained in the DES Resource Materials for RSE handbook for schools.
- Consequently, having been made aware of the programme a parent may decide to withdraw the child from the classroom while the lessons are being taught. Parents should discuss their concerns with the class teacher. If they still have concerns, and wish to withdraw their child, they must put this in writing to the school. The principal will be informed of any such cases. The school will make arrangements for the supervision of children whose parents have decided that they will not take part in the RSE programme. With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom.
- Multi class situations. The class will be taught as a group except in the case of the sensitive issues which may not be appropriate for the more junior classes. In this case supervision will be arranged to enable the teacher to teach the programme to the more senior class.
- Children with Special Needs. Where severe learning difficulties occur some adaptations may need to be made to the programme to suit ability and rates of physical growth. The programme will be delivered to the children with special educational needs in consultation with the teachers of the SET as the need arises. The class teacher and team members will decide the best method for the child to access the programme ie as part of the whole class with the class teacher with follow up support from the SET teacher or on a small group basis with the SET teacher.

## **Dealing with Questions**

All questions answered will reflect the parameters of the curriculum. Certain topics will not be discussed i.e. abortion, masturbation and contraception. Questions to the teacher may be written or oral within the group setting and answered within the boundaries of the curriculum and policy. Any questions asked by the children that are judged to be inappropriate, the teacher will refer the child to their parents. See sample answers below. The school cannot guarantee confidentiality if a child asks a question of a personal nature relating to themselves or discloses personal information.

If children asks a question that pertains to any area not on the curriculum for that class at that time the teacher will say:

“That is a question that you should ask your mum or dad”

Or

“You will be learning about that in another class/next year”

Or

“That question will be answered when you are older”.

## **Provision for Ongoing Support**

- The Board of Management will collaborate in drafting of policies and development of programmes within curriculum guidelines. The Board will examine and approve completed policies and review them at regular intervals.
- The Principal will be involved in:
  - Allocating time for planning, training, delivery and appraisal
  - Setting up communication structures, to include B.O.M.
  - Allocating resources
- The coordinator/support teacher will be involved in:
  - Raising the awareness of colleagues about the place of S.P.H.E. in the curriculum
  - Promoting teacher participation in the programme
  - Identifying and collecting suitable resource material
  - Negotiating relevant training for teachers
  - Attending relevant training
- Parents are welcome to view curriculum if they wish.
- Regular contact with parents prior to the teaching of lessons involving “sensitive issues” in the form of the home/school link page accompanying such lessons in the RSE Resource Books. Contact will be made with parents prior to the address by outside speakers. Accord talk will be available for parents.

## **Review**

This policy was initially implemented from 2005 and was reviewed in 2017. The policy will also be reviewed should a need arise. The programme and teaching methodologies used shall be reviewed, on an ongoing basis, addressing the following issues:

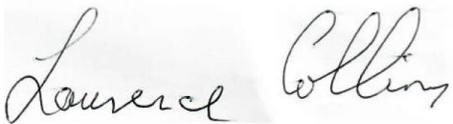
- ✓ Is the programme working?
- ✓ What are its strengths/weaknesses?
- ✓ Are changes necessary?
- ✓ How are these changes to be effected?
- ✓ The RSE policy itself shall be reviewed and evaluated in June 2020 and any amendments necessary as a result of such a review will be undertaken.
- ✓ Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments.

## **Communication**

A copy of this policy has been given to each teacher and is available for parents to view on the school website.

## **Ratification**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on: 27th March 2017.



Chairperson, Board of Management



Principal

## Appendix

Social, Personal and Health education “*provides particular opportunities to foster the personal development, health and well-being of the child and to help him/her to create and maintain supportive relationships and become an active and responsible citizen in society*”. (SPHE Teacher Guidelines p. 2)

Relationships and Sexuality Education is an important part of S.P.H.E. Relationships and Sexuality Education aims to help the child to develop healthy friendships and relationships and to promote an understanding of and a healthy attitude towards human sexuality and relationships. The themes relating specifically to sexuality are only a small part of the S.P.H.E. programme. Perhaps some of the language used in these lessons may be of concern to some parents. To alleviate any fears you may have, we have compiled a list of specific vocabulary which is used in each of the classes and the objectives they relate to in the SPHE curriculum.

We expect that this factual information is delivered to the children in a sensitive, healthy and relaxed manner, with the view to awaken in each child a sense of wonder of themselves and others.

### Infants

**Junior Infants:** The theme of new-life is dealt with, which relates to nature and family e.g. New life in Spring, pets and family

(RSE Teaching Materials p. 68-76)

Vocabulary Introduced: **born, womb**

**Senior Infants:** Taking care of my Body – covers personal hygiene and self-awareness

(RSE Teaching Materials p. 148-156)

Vocabulary Introduced: **Penis, vulva/vagina, breasts**

*As SPHE is spiral in nature, the work in Junior Infants is revisited re: New Life and expanded*

(RSE Teaching Materials p. 158-167)

Vocabulary Introduced: **breastfed, little seed – 9 nine months in womb**

### Relevant Objectives from SPHE Curriculum

The child should be enabled to:

- develop an awareness of human birth: *that a baby grows and is nurtured in the mother’s womb until ready to be born*  
(SPHE Curriculum – Infants – p. 18)
- name parts of the male and female body, using appropriate anatomical terms  
(SPHE Curriculum – Infants – p. 17)

## First and Second Class

**First Class:** The themes covered include “New Life” and “How my body works”  
(RSE Teaching Materials p. 68-75)

Vocabulary Introduced: **urine, urethra**

**Second Class:** Themes explored include “The Wonder of New Life”, “When My Body Needs Special Care”  
(RSE Teaching Materials p. 162-169)

Vocabulary Introduced: **vagina, anus**

### Relevant Objectives from SPHE Curriculum

The child should be enabled to:

- name parts of the male and female body, using appropriate anatomical terms, and identify some of their functions  
(SPHE Curriculum – 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Class – p. 27)
- appreciate what is necessary in order to provide and care for new-born babies in both the animal and human world  
(SPHE Curriculum – 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Class – p. 28)

## Third and Fourth Class

**Third Class:** Preparing for New Life

(RSE Teaching Materials p.70-79)

Vocabulary Introduced: **Pregnancy, umbilical cord, navel (belly button)**

**Fourth Class:** Themes include “The Wonder of New Life” and “Growing and Changing” which deal with all stages of pregnancy and birth and encourages children not to take these daily miracles for granted (respect).

(RSE Teaching Materials p.170-181 & 196-205)

Vocabulary Introduced: **Fertilized egg, scan, hormones, cells, menstruation, periods, pubic areas, pubic hair and perspiration**

### Relevant Objectives from SPHE Curriculum

The child should be enabled to:

- discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby, from conception to birth  
(SPHE Curriculum – 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Class – p. 41)
- understand the physical changes taking place in both the male and female body: *growing height and weight, increasing strength growing from boy to man, growing from girl to woman*  
(SPHE Curriculum – 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Class – p. 39)

## Fifth and Sixth Class

**Fifth Class:** Themes developed include “My Body Grows and Changes”, “The Wonder of New Life” and “Caring for New Life”

(RSE Teaching Materials p. 82-92 & 94-101)

Vocabulary Introduced: **ovaries, fallopian tubes, uterus, cervix, testicles, scrotum, sperm production, erection, wet dreams and conception**

**Sixth Class:** Themes covered include “Growing and Changing”, “Relationships and New Life” and “A Baby is a miracle”

(RSE Teaching Materials p. 184-197 & 200-208 & 210-219)

Vocabulary Introduced: **Adolescence, responsibilities**

### Relevant Objectives from SPHE Curriculum

The child should be enabled to:

- identify and discuss the physical and other changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty and understand that these take place at different rates for everyone:
  - *female hormonal changes, changing body shape*
  - *development of breasts, appearance of*
  - *pubic hair, onset of menstruation (periods)*
  - *male hormonal changes, physical growth*
  - *enlargement of testicles and penis*
  - *appearance of pubic, underarm and facial hair*
  - *breaking of the voice, beginning of sperm production*
  - *onset of nocturnal emissions (wet dreams)*
  
- understand the reproductive system of both male and female adults  
(SPHE Curriculum – 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Class – p. 56)
  
- understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed, loving relationship
  
- discuss and explore the responsibilities involved in being a parent and the emotional and physical maturity required to be a parent
  - *preparing for the birth of the baby taking care of offspring from birth onwards emotional, psychological and practical provisions*  
(SPHE Curriculum – 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Class – p. 58)