

Holy Family Senior School,
Aughnaharna,
Portlaoise,
Co. Laois



‘Fáilte, Foghlaim, Fás’

RSE Policy

Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy

School Details

Holy Family Senior School is a co-educational mainstream school catering for pupils from 3rd to 6th and also caters for children in the Star Centre varying in primary school ages. The school is a catholic primary school under the patronage of the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin.

Introductory Statement

This policy is an approved approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in the Holy Family Senior School. It was developed in 2020, parents and the Board of Management were consulted as part of the process. It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programmes part of the SPHE curriculum. The policy is designed to provide clarity and consistency as to the content and delivery of RSE in our school. It will inform the planning and teaching of staff and provide clarity for parents as to the content and language used in the delivery of the programme.

School Philosophy

The RSE policy was developed and will be implemented in ways which are in keeping with the ethos of the school. We endeavour to provide a holistic Catholic education for each child, where respect and care for all are central values. While upholding the Catholic ethos we promote inclusiveness and Holy Family Senior School is committed to the education of children regardless of race, religion, gender or status. We endeavour to cater for the holistic development of each child, educationally, spiritually, morally and socially and acknowledge that 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 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. 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 SPHE

In Holy Family Senior School, RSE will be taught in the context of Social, Personal and Health Education. (SPHE). 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 and formally timetabled from 3rd to 6th class and in the Star Centre.

Current Provision:

RSE is facilitated in the following ways:

- in the context of a positive school climate and atmosphere
- in the context of an effective code of behavior and anti-bullying policy
- as part of timetabled SPHE lessons
 - use of the RSE Manuals and Busy Body resources
 - Stay safe Programme / Walk Tall Programme
 - as part of religious education
 - on an integrated cross curricular basis

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- Fifth and Sixth Class
- To understand the physical changes taking place with the onset of puberty- Senior Classes
- 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.

We support the aims on which RSE is modelled. We encourage good behaviour, open communication, understanding and tolerance of differences, and respect for self and others. We recognise that both pupils and staff have rights and responsibilities in our school. A sense of responsibility is fostered and attention is paid to the wellbeing of all of the members of the school community.

Policies which support SPHE/RSE

- Child Protection Policy
- Code of behaviour and discipline
- Anti-Bullying Policy – where specific strategies to prevent and deal with homophobic and transphobic bullying are listed
- Enrolment Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Mobile Phone Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- Administration of Medicines Policy
- School Visitors Policy
- School Tour Policy

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School Curriculum Matters

Curriculum Matters

- The curriculum as published by NCCA will be followed, and will be taught from 3rd to 6th class and in the Star Centre. Each class teacher will teach the content for their class level each year as laid out in the curriculum. Occasionally, it may be deemed necessary for an outside speaker or the principal/deputy principal to address the ‘sexually sensitive issues’ on the 6th Class curriculum. The speaker will be made aware of the school’s RSE policy.
- All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school, the whole school plan for SPHE and the RSE policy.
- The SPHE/RSE curriculum will be of a spiral nature and all content objectives will be covered by the time children leave 6th class.
- For an outline of the RSE programme (See Appendix 1).
- We will give children the correct and appropriate terminology as recommended in the Department of Education and Skills RSE materials. The use of slang will be discouraged. See Appendix 2 for the list of Language for sensitive issues at each class level

Organisational Matters:

- **Timetable:** Individual teachers will decide the timetabling of RSE/Stay Safe Lessons. SPHE is timetabled for 30 minutes per week. If there is no request for withdrawal of a pupil from these lessons, the work may be spread throughout the year to allow the pupils to absorb the values within which this knowledge is presented. However, it may be deemed necessary to address the ‘sexually sensitive issues’ on the 6th Class curriculum within a concentrated timeframe.
- **Parental Involvement:** RSE 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 will be informed in advance of lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme, example of letter (See Appendix 3). The letter will be issued in advance, giving parents an opportunity to observe what is covered and to prepare their children, it also gives parents an opportunity to become involved, to inform themselves of the programme content and to prepare children for the information they will acquire around the sensitive areas and discuss areas covered in RSE/SPHE. Parents are invited/welcome to view the curriculum books and resource materials that are available in the school and on the PDST website and parents are invited to view these if desired.
- **Special Education Needs (SEN):** Special consideration will be taken to ensure that the needs of children with SEN are met. Taking into account the pupil’s social and emotional development, instruction will be based on individual needs where possible. Consultation with parents/ guardians in advance and anticipation of the children’s needs will be central to ensuring learning is meaningful.
- **Withdrawal from RSE:** Since RSE is an obligatory requirement of the Department of Education and Science, it should be inclusive. Holy Family Senior School 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. Where a child is to be withdrawn for specific content objectives, the teacher will inform parents of the dates and times of specific lessons. The school can take no responsibility for information shared with these individual pupils from others. Responsibility rests with parents to inform their own children appropriately.

- **Teachers Opt Out:** It is envisaged that all aspects of SPHE and RSE will be taught by class teachers to their own classes unless an outside speaker or principal/deputy principal addresses the 'sexually sensitive issues' on the 6th class curriculum. Teachers are asked to refer to this policy and the RSE curriculum when designing and delivering the RSE and Stay Safe programmes. A teacher's right to opt out from teaching the sensitive areas will be respected. Arrangements for the teaching of the programme in that teacher's class will be made by the Principal.
- **Concept of Confidentiality:** Under current legislation, as in all other areas and times in school, if a matter is divulged to a teacher where either an accusation or a suggestion of a criminal act is made, the matter must be brought to the attention of the Designated Liaison Person, who is in this case the principal, and the Child protection Guidelines i.e. Children First guidelines will be adhered to in full.

Dealing with Questions:

It is natural that children should wish to ask questions in the area of RSE. The main aim of talk and discussion is to create an atmosphere where children feel comfortable to ask important questions and that the relationship fostered in these sessions is open, controlled and safe for all pupils. However, this area is treated somewhat differently from other subjects due to its sensitive nature. All questions answered will reflect the parameters of the curriculum and will be addressed by the teacher in a sensible, sensitive and age-appropriate manner. Questions may be written or oral within the group setting and answered within the boundaries of the curriculum and school policy.

Should a pupil require information that is not in line with the curriculum content or ask questions which are not considered to be age-appropriate for the general body of pupils, the school will:

- Not give such information.
- 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.
- For older children a 'question box' can be used as part of a structured RSE lesson. Teachers can follow up on the written questions at a later date, thus allowing time to prepare suitable answers, consult with colleagues, etc.
- It is our policy not to answer personal questions and to discourage disclosure of personal or family information.

We use some simple principles when fostering discussion and questioning:

- ✓ No personal questions of the teacher
- ✓ The Question Box will be availed of by the children
- ✓ The teacher will be mindful of their reaction to any questions
- ✓ Questions do not have to be answered straight away

Sample 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 in our contract that we wouldn't ask anyone personal questions
- ✓ Somebody asked a question and the language they used was slang language, what they meant to ask was....
- ✓ A question was asked, and we cannot talk about that particular topic but I think that question was about...

Curriculum Planning

RSE forms part of the national curriculum for SPHE by NCCA and will be taught from 3rd to 6th class and in the Star Centre. RSE will be covered under the following strands and strand units of the SPHE curriculum:

Myself

3. Self-Identity
4. Taking care of my body
5. Growing and Changing
6. Safety and Protection
7. Making decisions (3rd Class onwards)

Myself and Others

8. Myself and my family
9. My friends and other people
10. Relating to others

The RSE programme is divided into two main parts:

A. The general programme which contains content such as:

- Friendship
- Self-identity
- Family
- Self-esteem
- Growing up

B. The second section will deal with any sensitive / specific content covered through RSE strands and strand units. The sensitive aspects are in **bold**.

<p>Topics covered up to 2nd (Star Centre) include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keeping Safe• Bodily changes during grown and birth(birth-9)• Making age appropriate choices• Appreciating the variety of family types and a variety of family life that exists in our school and community• Recognising and expressing feelings• Self-care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep• Expressing opinions and listening to others• Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms (Junior/ Senior Infants)• Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions(1st/2nd)	<p>Topics from 3rd to 6th include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bodily changes• Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise• Keeping Safe• Expressing Feelings• Appreciating the variety of family types within our school and community and how we these family relationships shape us• Making healthy and responsible decisions• Forming Friendships• Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (Fourth class)• Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (Sixth Class)• Reproductive system of male/female adults (Sixth Class)• Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship (Sixth Class)
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Topics such as sexually transmitted diseases, contraception, masturbation and abortion are not covered in the primary school RSE programme.

Approaches & Methodologies

When implementing the programme, staff at Holy Family Senior School will endeavor to display respect for and sensitivity towards the different cultural family backgrounds experienced by the children. The curriculum will be taught in an age-appropriate manner at all times. The curriculum will be taught from Junior Infants to 6th class. It will be taught through a spiral curriculum (key topics will be revisited in a developmental manner at regular intervals). The materials taught will reflect the needs of the children.

The RSE curriculum will be taught through:

- Stories and poems
- Classroom discussion
- Group work
- Games
- Art activities
- Reflection
- Circle time
- Guest speaker

Differentiation

The approach in school is child-centered and will always take the age and stage of development of the children into account. Teachers use assessment and professional judgment to differentiate the programme and content to suit the needs of the class.

Communication with Parents/Parent Choices:

- The Parents Council, the representative body for parents will be formally involved in the RSE Policy formation.
- The Holy Family Senior School will respect the right of parents to withdraw children from specific sensitive lessons.
- It is a parent's responsibility to inform the School in writing of this decision.
- Specific lessons may be timetabled close to a break or end of day to facilitate withdrawal of a pupil by parents if required.
- Parents have the primary responsibility for Relationship and Sexuality education for their children.
- The programme and resource materials are available in the school to parents.
- Parents will be made aware of the RSE and Stay Safe topics to be covered each year and the ethos within which they will be delivered.
- Parents should discuss these topics with their children both prior and post lesson delivery.
- Any parent who has concerns should make an appointment to discuss them with the class teacher.

Sources and Resources:

- The core resources are the RSE documents from the Department of Education and Skills, the Stay Safe programme and the Walk Tall programme.
- Busy Bodies DVD and booklet (Both available online www.healthpromotion.ie). This DVD and booklet were developed to support the teaching of the 5th and 6th class component of RSE within the context of SPHE.
- Teachers may also use a variety of other materials and books which deal in an age appropriate manner with the topics and support the content agreed by all.
- We may also invite guest speakers when teaching certain aspects of the programmes. Visitors will be referred to the agreed language and content of this policy and will be subject to the necessary legislative requirements. The principal will be consulted in advance of any invitation being made.

Provision of Ongoing Support

- Opportunities provided by our Education Centre will be brought to the attention of staff members. Teachers will be encouraged to attend CPD in RSE.
- Where necessary or if opportunities arise, In-career development will be sought for teachers and the PDST may be asked to provide guidance and training.
- Staff meetings utilised as a platform for discussion and development of RSE materials.

Holy Family Senior School, Portlaoise

Roll No. 20480F

Relationship & Sexuality Policy

Review

- The policy will be reviewed after every two 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:

Date: _____ Signed: _____

(Chairperson)

Date: _____ Signed: _____

(Principal)

RSE Contents - Appendix 1

Junior Infants (Star Centre):	Senior Infants (Star Centre):
<p>This is Me Who Are You We are Friends This is My Family People Who Teach Us about Keeping Safe. We Have Feelings New Life I Grow Making Choices</p>	<p>Look what I can do These are my friends This is my family I can be safe Other people have feelings too Caring for new life My Body I grow and change Making decisions</p>
First Class (Star Centre):	Second Class (Star Centre):
<p>Things I like to do My friends My family Keeping Safe Showing our feelings The wonder of new life How my body works Growing means changing Decisions and their consequences</p>	<p>Other people are special Being friends My family Keeping safe Coping with our feelings The wonder of new life When my body needs Special Care Growing and changing Personal Decisions</p>
Third Class:	Fourth Class:
<p>Special Gifts Sometimes Friends Fight My family Keeping safe Expressing feelings Preparing for new Life Our Senses As I grow I change Making Decisions</p>	<p>Myself and others Bullying Behaviour My family Reasons for Rules Feelings and emotions The Wonder of new life Being Clean - Keeping Healthy Growing and Changing Problem-solving</p>
Fifth Class:	Sixth Class:
<p>The person I am Different kinds of friends My family Keeping Safe Feelings and Emotions My Body grows and changes The wonder of new Life Caring for new Life Making Healthy Decisions</p>	<p>Me and My Aspirations Different kinds of love Families Keeping Safe and Healthy Feelings and Emotions Growing and Changing Relations and New Life A Baby is a Miracle Choices and Decision Making</p>

RSE SENSITIVE AREAS LANGUAGE- Appendix 2

Class	Strand /strand Unit	Content Objectives <i>Consult curriculum for complete objectives in Growing and changing and Taking care of my body</i>	Language	Pages in RSE Resource Materials Book	Pages in Walk Tall	Supplementary resources
Junior /Senior Infants	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Growing and changing ▪ Taking care of mybody 	Growing and changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Become aware of new life and birth in theworld ▪ Develop an awareness of humanbirth Taking care of my body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Name parts of the male and female bodyusing anatomical terms 	Identify external parts of the male/female body. Private parts- penis, vulva/vagina/urethra, nipples. New life: a baby grows and is nurtured in the mother’s womb until birth.	New Life p68 My Body p147 Caring for new life p137 At the beach or swimming pool p.153	Our Amazing Bodies p94 (Senior Infants book)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anatomically correct dolls ▪ Picture books of new baby ▪ Visit of baby to class
First/ Second Class	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Growing and changing ▪ Taking care of mybody 	Growing and changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Begin to understand that reproduction, birth,growth and death are all part of new lifecycles Taking care of my body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Name the parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify someof theirfunctions 	As above and introduce womb, breast, breast feeding. Name as above and identify some of their functions.	The Wonder of new life p59/151 How my body works p67/161 Growing means changing p77/171 A Visit to the Doctor p.164	Our Amazing Bodies p37 (2 nd class book)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Picture books of going to the doctors ▪ Tom’s Power Flower ▪ Books / activities on Lifecycles ▪ Birth and new lifein nature
Third/ Fourth Class	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Growing and changing ▪ Taking care of mybody 	Growing and changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the physical changes taking place inboth the male and femalebody • Realise that changes do not occur at the same timebut nonetheless are predictable and natural and thatbeing different isnormal Taking care of my body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise and discuss how feelings and emotions are affected by the physical changes that take placeduring puberty • Discuss the stages and sequence of developmentof human baby from conception tobirth 	Revise above Discuss the stages and sequence of development of a human baby in the womb. Introduce umbilical cord. Changes in puberty - body changes, hormones, changes in shape, increase in body hair, pubic hair, menstruation ,	Preparing for new life p69 The wonder of new life p169 As I grow and change p93 Growing and changing p195	As I grow I change p175 (3 rd class book) Changing and Growing p140 (4 th class book) The Wonder of New Life p.150	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BodySystems ▪ Picture books on Growing and Changing
Fifth/ Sixth Class	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Growing and changing ▪ Taking care of mybody 	Growing and changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a loving committedrelationship Taking care of my body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify and discuss the physical changes that occurin boys and girls with the onset of puberty and understand that these take place at different ratesfor everyone ▪ Understand the reproductive system of both maleand femaleadults 	Revise above Physical development: Puberty Growth spurts, testicles, scrotum, penis enlarge, facial/pubic hair, voice deepens, wet dreams, perspiration, oily skin, pimples Breast develop, menstruation/periods, growth spurt, underarm/pubic hair, hips broaden, perspiration, oily skin, pimples, male/female reproductive organs, ovulation/menstruation. How new life begins: ovum(ova)/sperm, ovaries, conception. Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within a context of a committed relationship.	My body grows and changes p81 The wonder of new life p92 Caring for newlife p103 Different kinds of love p141	My Amazing body p345 (5 th class book) Creation p121 (6 th class book)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BusyBodies ▪ Power points recap ▪ QuestionBox ▪ Puberty Quiz

Appendix 3

Holy Family Senior School,
Aughnaharna,
Portlaoise,
Co. Laois



Date

Dear Parents/ Guardians,

We wish to inform you that the pupils in this class will be covering the more sensitive areas of the Relationship and Sexuality Education Programme

Relationships and Sexuality education is an integral part of the S.P.H.E. programme. The sensitive elements of the Relationships and Sexuality education programme are covered under the Stand Units, 'Growing and Changing' and 'Taking Care of my Body'.

The RSE programme is part of the Social, Personal and Health Education curriculum which all primary schools are required to implement. Co-operation between parents and teachers is essential to the success of this programme. It is important that parents are aware of the content of the RSE lessons and are able to discuss the lessons with their children.

You can familiarise yourself with the content of the RSE lessons at
<https://pdst.ie/node/811>

We urge you to do this before we begin this mandatory programme as the content of some lessons is sensitive in nature and teachers are not permitted to deviate from the content in any way.

The language and content of the more sensitive areas is available as part of our RSE Policy. Please ask teacher for same if you would like to see it.

Please be advised that all pupils will cover these lessons unless you as parents inform us otherwise in writing.

Yours sincerely,

Class Teacher

