

# Scoil Oilibhéir Naofa Junior School



**Bettystown, Co Meath A92 H762 Roll No: 20216L**

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Principal– Maria White

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## RSE POLICY

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## **Our school**

Scoil Oilibhéir Naofa is a co-educational, Catholic, Junior school, catering for children aged 4-9 years.

Scoil Oilibhéir Naofa is an inclusive school that aspires to celebrate and respect diversity while promoting the formation of our pupils in the Roman Catholic faith.

Our school strives to provide a happy, caring, learning environment. We aspire to enable all our pupils to reach their potential, through a rich variety of educational experiences and activities.

We seek at all times the support and assistance of our parents/guardians/carers so that home and school can work together for the benefit of all our students. We promote the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the pupil- intellectual, physical, cultural, spiritual, emotional, and moral.

We encourage the children to treat one another and staff with respect, courtesy, kindness and friendship –this is promoted in classrooms, in the playground and at morning meetings. We aim to create a positive atmosphere throughout the school, where we work together as a team.

## **Introductory Statement and Rationale**

This policy statement is an approved approach to the mandatory teaching of RSE and Stay Safe in Scoil Oilibhéir Naofa. The content taught is informed by the programme outlined by the Department of Education. The policy has been disseminated amongst parents/guardians/carers, teachers and members of the Board of Management. The aim of the policy is to inform what material is covered in the RSE and Stay Safe programmes within SPHE and how this material is taught in our school.

## **School Philosophy**

We recognise that SPHE is intrinsic to the teaching and learning that occurs both formally and informally in school. Through our SPHE/RSE programme we wish to assist children to develop feelings of self-worth and self-confidence, while encouraging their ability to relate to others in a positive way. The curriculum encourages children to be aware of their rights as an individual, while at the same time accepting responsibility for their actions as members of the school and wider community. Our school values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. Our ethos values respect, inclusion and diversity of all members of our school community. Our school acknowledges that parents/guardians/carers have the primary role in the social, personal and health education of their children and as such, their involvement will be encouraged. SPHE/RSE is a key component in supporting our pupils to develop into healthy young adults.

### **Definition of RSE**

The following definition of RSE is referenced from the interim curriculum and guidelines for primary schools (DE 1996, p.5):

“Relationships and Sexuality Education is an integral part of SPHE and must be taught in this context. It provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality and relationships through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework. In particular, it addresses the meaning of human sexuality, relationships, growth and development, relevant to personal and social skills.”

### **Definition of Stay Safe Programme**

The Stay Safe Programme is a child abuse prevention programme with five themes taught as specific levels in the school. It relates to SPHE through its topics and themes linking it to the strands of the SPHE curriculum.

### **SPHE/RSE Curriculum**

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) 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.

RSE is part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).

Through SPHE and RSE, pupils are enabled to enhance their self-esteem and wellbeing through:

- A sense of identity
- A sense of purpose
- A sense of belonging
- A sense of security
- A sense of competence

### **RSE is**

- a lifelong and continual process throughout primary school
- a subject which develops a child's skills, attitudes, values and understanding relevant to a range of social, personal and health issues
- child-centered: RSE education should prioritise the needs of the child and his/her environment, with appropriate adaptations made to suit individual requirements and individual school situations
- spiral in nature: SPHE/RSE formally begins in Junior Infants and is developed throughout the child's time in school. This will provide opportunities to consolidate and build on previous learning in developmentally appropriate manner.
- taught through active learning methodologies: RSE provides a range of learning opportunities that requires children to actively participate in their learning in a wide variety of ways e.g. discussion, circle time, role play.

- free of bias: Lessons, language and resources selected by the school should reflect this. SPHE/RSE encourages children to be inclusive with each other, challenge prejudice and learn how to live together in an intercultural society.

### **Aims of our RSE Programme**

(taken from the Interim Curriculum and Guidelines for Primary Schools (DE 1996, p.9)

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and wellbeing 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, 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**

(taken from the Interim Curriculum and Guidelines For Primary Schools (DE 1996, p.9)

When due account is taken of abilities and varying circumstances, the RSE education curriculum should enable the child to (in conjunction with the SPHE curriculum)

- Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self
- Develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and wellbeing of others
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-worth
- Understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and wider contexts
- Develop an awareness of differing family patterns
- Come to value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood
- Develop strategies to make decisions, solve problems and implement actions in various personal, social and health contexts.

Become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change and understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity

- Develop personal skills which help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships
- Develop coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse
- Acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction
- Acquire the use of appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development
- Develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making.

### **Policies that support SPHE/RSE**

- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Code of Conduct
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- GDPR Policy

### **Planning / Guidelines for the implementation of SPHE / RSE**

The SPHE curriculum will underpin all teaching and learning of RSE in Scoil Oilbhéir Naofa. The SPHE curriculum is allocated 30 minutes of discrete teaching time by the Department of Education. Teachers can use their professional discernment if extra time is required, this can be taken discretionary time. Teachers are encouraged to use an integrated approach for the delivery of SPHE.

We follow a two-year plan for SPHE/RSE meaning that all topics are covered during Junior/Senior infants and First/Second class. Topics of a sensitive nature will not be taught until the **second term** of the school year.

The RSE topics covered to Second Class include:

- Keeping safe
- Bodily changes during growth and birth (from birth to 9 months)
- Making age-appropriate choices
- Appreciating family life
- 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
- Naming the parts of the male/female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identifying some of their functions

The Stay Safe Programme will be taught throughout the school every second year in the **second term**. The five topics of the Stay Safe Programme are:

1. Feeling safe and unsafe
2. Friendship and bullying
3. Touches
4. Secrets and Telling
5. Strangers

### **Approaches and methodologies**

Active learning is the principal learning and teaching approach recommended for SPHE. It increases the possibility of children internalising what they have explored and of being able to use this learning in their everyday lives.

The curriculum will be taught in a developmentally-appropriate manner at all times. The teaching materials and methodologies used will reflect the needs of the children.

The following are examples of approaches and methodologies we use in Scoil Oilibhéir Naofa to teach RSE and Stay Safe:

- stories and poems, classroom discussion, ICT activities, group work, games, art activities, reflection and circle time, role play, modelling, viewing and discussing videos, writing captions.

### **Parental involvement**

In Scoil Oilibhéir Naofa parents/guardians/carers will be informed at enrolment that the school fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE curriculum. Parents/guardians/carers will be informed in advance of the teaching of the formal RSE lessons. This will offer parents/guardians/carers an opportunity to meet with relevant teachers to discuss/view the material that will be covered and share any personal details they feel the teacher should be aware of prior to their child engaging in RSE lessons. If they wish to withdraw their child from specific formal RSE lessons, this should be provided in writing to the school and kept on file. Alternative arrangements will be considered and agreed upon by the relevant parties. The school cannot accept responsibility for indirect RSE related information delivered to the child outside of formal RSE lessons i.e. on yard, school bus etc.

Should parents/guardians/carers want further information, some resources are available including: <https://www.pdst.ie/sites/default/files/Talking-to-Your-Young-Child-about-Relationships-Sexuality-and-Growing-Up.pdf> and Making the 'BigTalk' many small talks Ages 4-7 and Ages 8-12.

### **Differentiation**

In Scoil Oilibhéir Naofa, teachers use assessment and professional judgment to differentiate the curricular objectives and content to best suit the needs of all pupils. Adaptations to the way in which the content is delivered will be made for children with additional educational needs. Parents/guardians/carers will be informed in advance of the teaching of the formal RSE lessons. The anticipation of the pupil's needs will be central to ensuring learning is meaningful. This may be reflected in the student's support file.

Teachers will consider:

- that objectives are realistic for the students
- that the learning task builds upon prior learning
- providing opportunities for interacting and working with other students in small groups or 1:1

- organising the learning task into small stages: outlining the steps to be learned/completed in any given task, posing key questions to guide pupils through the different stages/processes, and assisting in self-direction and correction
- ensuring that the language used is pitched at the pupil's level of understanding. Some children may be pre-taught language or concepts in preparation of whole class work
- creating a learning environment through the use of concrete, and where possible everyday materials, and by displaying word lists and laminated charts with pictures
- employing active learning methodologies

### **Pupil Voice**

In our school the voice of our pupils is acknowledged, valued and respected. Children are given opportunities to reflect and give feedback on SPHE/RSE provision from time to time via focus groups and questionnaires. This information will be used to inform school improvement in relation to future RSE and Stay Safe provision.

The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (DE 2019) encourages schools to enhance the voice of children in their school community (DE 2019, p.30). This is reflective of the key principles of the SPHE curriculum.

### **Language**

The SPHE curriculum provides a context in which children are given opportunities to develop and enhance their language skills and to increase their vocabulary related to SPHE. Language is a powerful tool and should be used with respect and integrity for the dignity of each person. When used positively, language can build up, affirm and show respect to another human being but if used in a negative manner can hurt, diminish and demean. Children need to recognise and become sensitive to the ways in which they themselves use language in their relationship and their everyday interactions.

Teachers will teach sensitive language in an age-appropriate manner. This ensures the teaching of the correct anatomical terms and the use of slang will be discouraged. The use of unacceptable language and/or gestures out of context will not be tolerated. Incidents will be dealt with under the Anti-Bullying Policy and/or the Code of Behaviour.

### **Explicit Questions**

In Scoil Oilibhéir Naofa, teachers will use a variety of methodologies to create a safe, open space where pupils feel comfortable to ask RSE related questions. During lessons teachers may give pupils an opportunity to ask questions at various times throughout the RSE lesson. It is natural that children should wish to ask questions in the area of R.S.E. All questions answered will reflect the parameters of the curriculum. Staff will not invalidate questions but rather set boundaries and manage expectations around questions. Questions which may arise with regard to the sensitive content of the programme will be answered by the class teacher in an age-appropriate manner depending on the nature of the question and provided that they relate to topics covered in the RSE programme, in line with our school ethos and this policy.

The following sample responses may be used when addressing questions:

- I will do my best to answer your questions, but I may not be able to answer all of them.
- That is something you will 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 would not ask anyone personal questions.
- Questions will be answered in an age and developmentally appropriate way.

Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents if a need arises.

Children will be made aware that the class teacher may not be able to answer their question and they will be encouraged to ask an adult they trust at home.

### **Confidentiality**

The school follows Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 and The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017. During RSE lessons often children may wish to connect and disclose personal or related stories and information. While students should not be encouraged to disclose personal or private information in class, there may be times when they do talk about their own lives. This will be done by ensuring there are ground rules for the sharing of information in relation to the topics covered in RSE for example by encouraging children to tell the teacher anything private after lessons.

Parents are invited to share any changes in circumstances with the school as necessary e.g. changes in family structures etc. For the welfare of some children, this information may be important for a teacher to know prior to engaging in specific topics on family/relationships etc.

It is important that pupils are made aware of the limits of confidentiality. Confidentiality will be respected unless there is a disclosure made, or a teacher has any concerns about a child, they will report these concerns to the Designated Liaison Person or the Deputy Designated Liaison Person. The school will refer to the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.

### **Assessment**

Assessment in RSE is important to enable the teacher to pitch the lessons correctly to their respective class group. The teacher may use; observation and questions to assess the children's engagement and interest; teacher-designed tasks such as worksheets, quizzes or games.

### **Review**

This policy has been made available to school personnel and it is published on the school website. Scoil Oilibhéir Naofa will review this policy periodically and should a need arise. Parents/guardians/carers and staff will be informed of any amendments made.