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Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

Introductory Statement

Relationships and Sexuality Education encompasses the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, sexual identity and intimacy. It 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.

Ethos

Rush National School is a co-educational primary school, which strives to provide a well ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere where the intellectual, spiritual, physical, moral and cultural needs of the pupils are identified and addressed. While respect is paid to all religious and/or value systems, Rush National School is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin

Compliance with School Ethos

Whilst formulating the R.S.E. programme, which is an integral part of the S.P.H.E. programme, due consideration is given to the philosophy and ethos of Rush N.S. The school supports the principles of inclusiveness, equality of access, and of participation in the school life, with respect for diversity of traditions, values and beliefs, language and ways of life in society, whilst working within the context and parameters of the Department of Education and Science regulations and programmes.

Rationale

In its R.S.E. programme, Rush N.S. intends to encourage children to:

- Examine and explore the various relationships in their lives.
- Learn how to develop and enjoy friendships which are based on responsibility and mutual respect.
- Build the foundation for developing more intimate relationships in later life.
- Learn about themselves as sexual human beings, about their spiritual, social, emotional and physical growth.

An education in relationships and sexuality is one element of the child's holistic development. It compliments learning in other areas and helps to prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and challenges of childhood, adolescence and adult life.

Aims

The aims of R.S.E. are:

- 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, 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.

Objectives

When due account is taken of intrinsic abilities and varying circumstances, the relationships and sexuality education curriculum should enable the child to:

- Acquire and develop knowledge of self.
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth.
- Develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness, and well-being of others.
- Understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and in wider contexts.
- Develop an awareness of different 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 will help to establish and sustain healthy and personal relationships.
- Develop some coping skills to protect self and others from various forms of abuse.
- Acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction.
- Acquire and use an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development.
- Develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making.

Content

R.S.E. is taught within the wider context of the Social, Personal and Health Education curriculum as directed by the Department of Education and Science.

An integrated approach is very significant for the implementation of the R.S.E. programme, as it ensures that children encounter R.S.E. in a holistic manner rather than in isolation.

However, there are certain sensitive aspects of R.S.E. which will be taught within a specific time on the school timetable due to the sensitive nature of the lesson content. It is envisaged that all sensitive issues will be dealt as per SPHE curriculum at each level through Primary school.

The two year SPHE cycle ensures that the Discreet/sensitive RSE lessons will be taught in their entirety every second year.

The month of February every second year will be designated as RSE month. Parents will be informed of the content to be covered at each level prior to RSE month. This is in order for them to address the sensitive topics in advance of them being covered in school.

The comprehensive programme for R.S.E. (Discreet lessons and other lessons) devised by Rush N.S. provides for the balanced development of the following:

- The acquisition of language for discussing feelings, emotions, physical growth, bodily functions and for enhancing communication skills.
- The development of personal and social skills and abilities appropriate to the age and maturity of the child.
- The acquisition of factual information about growth and bodily functions necessary for understanding and coping with growing up and the onset of puberty.
- The development of attitudes, values and beliefs concerning relationships and sexuality.
- The ability to understand the various influences exerted on him/her when making choices and decisions.

An overview of the R.S.E. content (Sensitive lessons) to be covered at each level in Rush National school accompanies this document.

Methodologies

Teaching methodologies employed in R.S.E. reflect the aims and objectives of the programme. Methods may be placed on a continuum running from those which are very teacher directed to those which employ maximum pupil participation. Similarly, pupil participation may be placed on a corresponding continuum ranging from a passive role to that of an active role. Any of the following techniques allows the child to play an active part in the learning process:

- Discussion.
- Role play.
- Hosting visitors.
- Projects.

- Interviewing friends/family members.
- Analysing and evaluating newspapers and magazines.
- Designing advertisements/captions.
- Ranking statements.
- Describing photographs.
- Viewing and discussing videos.

The level of *pupil* participation varies greatly in the activities outlined above. Some of the activities are more suited to acquiring information while others allow the child to apply information in a practical manner. The teacher will decide when and where a particular approach is suitable, ensuring that the child is active in the process.

The teaching of sensitive issues within the R.S.E. programme in senior classes will be complimented by a one day course delivered by Accord specifically for 6th class pupils. This course will be provided annually for 6th class pupils.

Roles and Responsibilities

Role of the Parent

Parental involvement in the implementation of R.S.E. is essential for the child. A child's first experience of love, of intimacy and of relationships takes place in the family and amongst those closest to the child. As he/she grows and develops, the home continues to exert a major influence on all aspects of the child's life especially so in the domain of relationships and sexuality. Parents will therefore be informed as to when the sensitive areas of the programme will be taught, and will also receive an overview of the content to be covered at his/her child's level during RSE month. This will afford them the opportunity to discuss the various topics being dealt with, either before or after their introduction in the classroom. It will also give the parents an opportunity to withdraw their children from their class R.S.E. lessons should they so wish.

This policy is supported in its development and implementation by the whole school community of Rush National School, which includes the Parents, Pupils, Teachers and Board of Management.

Role of the SPHE Coordinator

- Co-ordination of the RSE policy and school plan.
- Distribution of the RSE content for sensitive RSE lessons for each class level prior to RSE month in February every second year.
- Acceptance of feedback, and evaluation of the RSE policy.
- Identifying areas of need in the area of RSE.
- Organising and sourcing of relevant RSE resources.
- Ensuring all teaching staff have access to the relevant materials to deliver RSE lessons effectively.

- Supporting and guiding teachers in their teaching of RSE within the context of the SPHE curriculum when necessary.
- Updating staff on changes in RSE content, if they occur.
- Upskilling in the area of RSE.

Role of the Teacher

- Plan RSE lessons both sensitive topics and otherwise in accordance with the whole school plan.
- Liaise with class level colleagues when planning for the teaching of RSE within the context of the SPHE plan.
- Deliver the RSE content using a multi-sensory approach.
- Plan learning which builds on children's prior knowledge.
- Make provision for children with differing needs when delivering the RSE curriculum.
- Use language appropriate to level and topic being taught.
- Create an effective learning environment, providing for pupils who need additional support with communication, language and literacy.
- Ensure an environment where children can be afforded a safe space to express their feelings and opinions on topics being covered.
- Provide equality of opportunity through teaching approaches and personalization of tasks and materials as appropriate.
- Seek support and advice from SPHE coordinator if required.
- Utilise the relevant resources available in order to enhance delivery of the RSE curriculum.
- Ensure that the RSE sensitive topics programme is covered in full during RSE month (February) in the first year of the two year SPHE plan.

Role of the Principal

The Principal will support the RSE content in the context of the school SPHE plan, and will also:

- Commit to providing professional development opportunities for teachers, and promote a readiness to share and learn from best practice.
- Provide teachers with the opportunity to share in the planning and delivery of RSE.
- Ensure that resources for RSE are provided to support high quality learning and teaching.
- Foster an awareness of good practice.
- Facilitate upskilling and participation in relevant courses.

- Use staff meetings to promote staff development in the area of RSE when required.
- Support new staff members and new teachers in their delivery of RSE content.
- Notify Parents of the delivery of the sensitive RSE topics prior to their delivery every second year.
- Include the RSE content for each level in the notification so that Parents, being the child's Primary educator, can cover the sensitive topics with their child prior to its delivery in school should they so wish, or choose to withdraw their child from the R.S.E. lessons should they so wish.

Role of the Board of Management

The Board of Management will:

- Provide funding for equipment.
- Support professional development for teachers.

Ratification, Communication, Implementation and Review

A copy of the draft RSE Policy was made available to all members of staff and to the Board of Management. The suggestions/proposals arising were considered by the Policy Committee in finalizing this policy.

The draft policy was subsequently reviewed and formally ratified by the Board of Management on _____.

Subsequent to BOM ratification, the policy was made available on the shared teacher drive on the school IT network to all teaching staff members. Parents were made aware of the existence and availability of the policy by means of School Newsletter and this policy is also included on the Rush National School website at www.rushnationalschool.ie

The plan will be implemented by the teachers and SNAs supported by the Board of Management from _____.

It will be reviewed every ____ years.

Review Date: _____

Signed: _____

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: _____

Junior/Senior Infant RSE lesson content

Lesson title	Content	Vocabulary
Body parts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce lesson topic by singing 'Heads, shoulders, knees and toes'. • Chat about body parts. • Label the picture with the relevant body parts. 	Foot, eye, arm, hand, head, leg, ear, mouth, shoulders, nose, toes
Body parts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recap lesson one. • Focus on a picture with missing body parts and identify them. • Draw in the missing body parts. • Discuss similarities between boys' and girls' bodies. • Identify differences between boys and girls bodies. 	Eye, hand knee, foot, penis, vagina.
Caring for New Life.	<p><i>Conor's New Baby Sister.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions & answers based on the above story. Children will complete a worksheet. 	Careful bathing, doctor appointments, nappy changing, food and drink, love, warmth.
My Body.	<p><i>Labelling Body Parts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussing and naming physical gender differences. 	Eyes, ears, mouth, nose, legs, hands, teeth, penis, vagina

1st and 2nd class RSE lesson content

Lesson title	Content	Vocabulary
My body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children discuss and name the different parts of the body. • Introduce and discuss the correct names for private body parts. • Children complete a worksheet by labelling the different parts of the body. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General vocabulary linked to body parts: eyes, nose, ears, mouth, neck, arms, legs, stomach, back, ankle, chest, elbow, finger, foot, hand, knee, shin and toe. • Specific reference to the terms penis, vagina and breast.
How does our body work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils are introduced to a number of systems which make our bodies work: Circulatory/digestive/nervous/muscular/ Skeletal/respiratory systems. • Complete worksheet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulatory system – heart, blood, blood vessels. • Digestive system – mouth, stomach, small intestine. • Nervous system – brain, nerves, senses. • Muscles, skeleton. • Respiratory system – nose, mouth, throat, lungs. • Urinary system – kidneys, bladder.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlocking SESE – Growing Up: Use e-book on whiteboard and discuss the changes that occur 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General vocabulary linked to growing and changing.

<p>Growing means changing</p>	<p>as we grow up.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss responsibilities we have in first/second class and how we can look after ourselves. • Discuss how we could help look after younger children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young /younger/youngest. • Old /older/oldest. • baby, child, adolescent, teenager, young adult, middle-aged adult, old person, senior citizen.
<p>Looking after a baby</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss how babies need lots of looking after. • Complete worksheet about things babies need to stay healthy. • Discuss qualities needed to look after a baby. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General vocabulary linked to babies. • Medical check-ups, love and attention, careful bathing, nappy changing. • Qualities needed to look after babies, e.g. love, patience, energy.
<p>Childhood changes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion about the differences between when they were a baby, how they are now, and how they imagine they will be when they are 12 years old. • Complete worksheet based on discussion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General vocabulary linked to growing and changing. • Looked like/looks like/will look like. • Played with/play with/will play with. • Was only able to/am able to/will be able to. • Similarities/differences.
<p>Coping with our Feelings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compose a class acrostic poem based on a particular feeling • Discuss ways we sometimes feel • ‘How does this music make you feel?’ activity • Paint a feeling 	<p>Happy, sad, excited, fine, worried, angry, upset, anxious, lonely, etc.</p>
<p>The Wonder of New Life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils talk about themselves as babies and are encouraged to interview parents. • Introduce and discuss the cycle of life • Discuss the care of new-born babies 	<p>Baby, birth, born, womb, weight, bottle, milk, breastfeed, nappy, winding, cot, sleep, hospital, pram,</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils bring in a photograph of themselves as a baby. 	buggy, playpen, teething, etc.
When My Body Needs Special Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils discuss specific parts of the body to include the heart, lungs and stomach and their function. • Introduce and discuss the correct names for private body parts. • Complete a worksheet on personal hygiene. 	Heart, lungs, stomach, muscle, organ, urine, womb, penis, urethra, vulva, vagina, umbilical cord, breast, etc.
Growing and Changing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present interview results(The wonder of new life) to class and discuss. • Pupils discuss changes in their lives as they grow (since specific milestones). • Listen to 'A Poem of Ages'. • This can be illustrated and displayed. 	Baby, toddler, teething, food, solids, older, bigger, stronger, crawling, birthday, age, mature, responsibility, etc.
Personal Decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils are presented with a number of everyday scenarios to act out. • In groups, the pupils discuss these scenarios. • The pupils are given options to deal with each scenario. Class discussion/debate shall be encouraged. 	Truth, help, responsibility, discuss, choose, choice, independent, sensible, decision, trouble, feelings, hurt, etc.

3rd and 4th class RSE lesson content

Lesson title	Content	Vocabulary
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Changes As I grow I change	Realise that growing and changing are continuous throughout life.	Changes Emotions Feelings
Growing into an Adult	Recognise and discuss how feelings and emotions are affected by the physical changes that take place at puberty.	Breasts Men/Women Spots/Acne Male/Female Body Hair Penis Puberty Deeper Voice Adult
The Wonder of New Life	Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby, from conception to birth. Develop an appreciation of the wonder of a new-born baby.	Uterus Womb Fertilize Pregnant Egg Medical Check-Ups Foetus
Growing Strong and Healthy Discuss what a baby needs to grow.	Identify the care that needs to be taken while waiting for a baby to be born.	Milk Buggy/Pram Nappies Soother Bibs Baby monitor Blankets Steriliser Cot
Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical changes • Emotional changes • Predicting future changes • Impact of these changes on our lives 	Physical, emotional, positive, negative, friendships, appearance, living arrangements
Puberty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male and Female physical change 	Puberty, pubic area, pubic hair, penis, breasts, period, growth spurt, facial hair, opposite sex
Emotional Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How puberty changes feelings and emotions • How to deal with these feelings and emotions • Difficult situations and positive responses 	Feelings, emotions, positive relationships, puberty, mature, immature
Waiting to be Born	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of baby from conception to birth • Matching factual statements related to pregnancy. 	Development, conception, pregnancy, stages, medical check-ups, things to avoid, measurements, birth

Relationships/Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing healthy relationships • Describing relationships • Appropriate behaviour towards others • Types of relationships • Review/Qs + As Session 	Communication, respect, courtesy, manners, appropriate, mature
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5th and 6th class RSE lesson content

Lesson title	Content	Vocabulary
Puberty	Physical and emotional changes that occur during puberty	Puberty, mature, emotional, physical, moods, pimples/spots, hormones
Puberty in girls	How girls' bodies grow and develop during puberty, Including menstruation	Uterus, vagina, ovaries, fallopian tube, ovum, breasts, underarm/pubic hair, hips broaden, menstruation/periods, sanitary pads, tampons
Puberty in boys	How boys' bodies grow and develop during puberty	Testicles, scrotum, penis, erections, pubic, facial and other body hair, nocturnal emissions, sperm production, voice changes
How babies are made	Conception to birth. Responsibility of a baby	Conception, fertilisation, pregnancy, labour, child birth, contractions, cervix, umbilical cord
Body Hygiene Review	Hygiene practices during puberty. Questions and answers on RSE content	Perspiration, deodorant, privacy, medicine

	covered	
<p>Relationship programme by 'Accord'</p> <p>** (6th class only) **</p> <p><u>One day programme –Date to be confirmed</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The journey from childhood to adulthood and the changes that take place at a spiritual, intellectual and emotional level. • Examine the pressures that children can experience at this time in their development and helps with some skills to deal with these pressures • Physical changes will be discussed and conception and childbirth will be explained. • The children will get the opportunity to reflect on the morning and ask questions. They will get the opportunity to write questions at this point to allow the quieter children to have an opportunity to ask a question that they may otherwise find difficult to ask. 	