

# **Réalt Na Mara GNS**

## **RSE Policy**

This policy statement is an approved approach to the teaching of RSE in Réalt Na Mara Girls' School. It was developed in 2018 by the RSE Policy Committee, which included two teachers, two representatives of the Board of Management and two parent representatives. It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to the material covered in the RSE programme within the SPHE curriculum.

### **School Philosophy**

Réalt Na Mara GNS is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Bishop of Meath. It is managed by a Board of Management. The school has a Catholic ethos and this ethos is a guiding principle in the formulation and implementation of this RSE Policy. This ethos recognises the value and dignity of each pupil and all those working in the school community, and aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person, including:

- a) relationship with God
- b) relationship with family
- c) relationship with teachers
- d) relationship with self
- e) relationship with others
- f) relationship with the environment.

This ethos also acknowledges the cultural and religious values of all the pupils attending the school. Parents have the primary role in the social, personal and health education of their children. The school recognises that the parents are the primary educators of their children and we support them in that role. In the area of RSE, above all, the schools' role is subsidiary to that of the parents.

### **Definition of RSE**

RSE is an integral part of Social, Personal and Health Education 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. (p. 5 NCCA curriculum and guidelines for RSE). RSE is the formal approach to educating children in:

- Relationships with others – parents, siblings, friends and the community in general
- Respect for themselves and others
- Physical development – bodily functions and changes, and personal hygiene
- Emotional development – maturing in society
- Parenting, personal and social skills and relationships
- Sexuality in context – part of a loving relationship.

### **Relationship of RSE to SPHE and Religion**

Social, Personal and Health Education 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. (p.5 Going Forward Together Parents Information Booklet).

The key characteristics of this programme are that SPHE is a lifelong process and is a shared responsibility between family, school, health professionals and the community. The main strands of the SPHE programme are:

- Myself
- Myself and Others
- Myself and the Wider World

It is clear that the Relationships and Sexuality Programme is correctly defined as being an integral part of the programme outlined above. Sexually sensitive issues will be covered within the strand units:

- Taking care of my body
- Growing and changing
- Safety and protection.

As stated previously, the content of all lessons will be governed by the schools' Catholic ethos as taught in the Grow In Love programme.

### **Current Provision**

Included in the school curriculum in Réalt Na Mara School is:

- Religious Education (Grow In Love)
- SPHE lessons
- Stay Safe Programme
- Use of RSE Manuals and Busy Bodies resources
- Adapted resources for SET from [www.pdst.ie](http://www.pdst.ie)

### **Policies which support SPHE/RSE**

- Code of behaviour and discipline policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Enrolment Policy
- Mobile phone policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- School Tour Policy
- School Visitors Policy
- Internet Safety Policy
- Administration of Medicines Policy.

In keeping with the sentiment and spirit of these policies, we informally support many of 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 well being of all of the members of the school community.

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

When due account is taken of intrinsic abilities and varying circumstances, the Relationships and Sexuality Education curriculum should enable the child to:

- 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 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, 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 personal relationships
- Develop some coping strategies to protect themselves 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.

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

## Curriculum Matters

The curriculum as published by the NCCA will be followed. All content objectives will be covered by the time each pupil leaves 6<sup>th</sup> class – (see Appendix A for further details). The curriculum will be taught every second year in Senior Infants, 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, 4<sup>th</sup> Class, and 6<sup>th</sup> class. It will ideally be taught by the teaching staff with help from Accord. In 6<sup>th</sup> Class Accord will address the “sexually sensitive issues” i.e. puberty, reproductive system, conception, birth and sexual intercourse on the 6<sup>th</sup> Class curriculum. All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school and this policy.

- Sensitive Issues. Topic 1 on the fifth class programme (menstruation) and Topic 2 (puberty) will be delivered in the first term. The sixth class programme will be delivered during the child’s first term in school
- When an outside speaker is used, the Principal will make them fully aware of school policy. Parents/Guardians will be notified of the name of this speaker in advance of the lesson. The class teacher will remain with the class during the lesson.

## Parental Involvement

- Parents are to be informed in advance of the programme content.
- Parents will be informed that the school fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE programme, including sensitive aspects of the programme, at enrolment.
- Sensitive issues may be dealt with in the following classes.  
Puberty –in 5<sup>th</sup> Class  
Puberty, intercourse and birth during 6<sup>th</sup> Class
- As always, parents are requested to inform teachers of special family situations. These will be dealt with in confidence. It is the experience of the teachers that it is to everyone’s benefit if they are kept informed.
- Prior to the teaching of lessons involving “sensitive issues”, parents will be informed by letter. with an accompanying outline of the lesson (including vocabulary to be used)
- Written parental consent will be sought for lesson 3 (conception) in 6<sup>th</sup> class
- It is a parent’s/guardian’s right to withdraw a pupil from these lessons. If a parent wishes their child to be withdrawn from a formal lesson they must first discuss it with the class teacher and the principal and then the request for withdrawal must be made in writing.
- If parents/guardians request the withdrawal of a child from RSE lessons, every effort will be made to withdraw the child with the minimum of fuss. The school takes no responsibility for what the child might hear following on from the teaching of the lessons, eg. What they might hear on yard.
- Parents have the responsibility to become involved, to inform themselves of the programme content, to prepare children for the information they will acquire around the sensitive areas and to discuss areas covered in RSE/SPHE with their children.
- Parents are welcome to view the curriculum and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns.

## **Children**

- Children will be encouraged to discuss the material being covered in class with their parents/guardians. Where possible, worksheets etc will be provided to facilitate this.
- In a class situation children will be encouraged to recognise that certain information is for them only i.e. that it is inappropriate for them to discuss information received about puberty, intercourse and birth with younger siblings or friends from outside school... It will be explained that other children will be given this information by their own parents and teachers when they reach the appropriate age.
- Children will also be taught to recognise that certain personal disclosures are inappropriate. Teachers will neither give nor request personal information. A respect for personal information and a respect for personal privacy will be emphasised. ***At all times the child's and teacher's right to privacy will be maintained***
- **Children with General Learning Difficulties** Taking into account students' social and emotional development, instruction will be based on individual needs. Parents will be consulted around sensitive issues before they are included in the student's IEP.

## **Dealing with Questions**

It is natural that children should wish to ask questions in the area of RSE. 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 teachers will only answer those questions which are relevant to the programme for that year. Questions arising from curriculum content will be addressed in a sensible, sensitive and age-appropriate manner. Should a pupil require information that is not in line with curriculum content and not considered to be age-appropriate she will be referred back to her parents.

## **Resources**

Lesson plans from the DES have been assessed and amended where necessary in line with this school policy.

## **Provision for Ongoing Support**

- Parents are welcome to view curriculum if they so wish.
- Funding will be sought for the provision of suitable materials when deemed necessary.
- Opportunities provided by our Education centre will be brought to the attention of staff members. Career development will be sought for staff when required, or as requested.

## **Review**

The staff, under the guidance of the Principal will review this policy every two years. This policy will also be reviewed should the need arise.

## **Ratification and Communication**

The Board of Management of Réalt Na Mara School ratified this policy on 25/6/18 and it will be reviewed in June 2019 and every two years thereafter.

*Mr John Corbett*

Chairperson of the Board Of Management



## **Appendix A**

### **RSE - Sensitive Areas**

#### **Senior Infants**

New Life – mention of baby in the womb.

My Body – specific names for male and female sex organs – vagina, penis, womb.

#### **Second Class**

New Life – New baby. Baby joined to mother by umbilical cord – mention breast feeding.

Birth of baby through vagina. Mention umbilical cord and breast feeding.

#### **Fourth Class**

As for second class, but in more detail.

Language around baby's development in womb, i.e., fertilised egg, cord. Pictures of foetuses (in RSE manual) to be used.

#### **Fifth and Sixth Classes**

Menstruation in the context of hygiene and growth from a girl to a woman.

Boys and girls development – puberty.

How does new life begin? ( 6<sup>th</sup> class only)

Biological facts as follows: ( 6<sup>th</sup> class only)

- What journey does the egg make?
- What journey does the sperm make?
- Where do they meet?
- What happens when they meet?
- Optional videos : Fifth class – Growing
- Sixth class – Busy Bodies.