



Presentation Primary School
Greenside South, Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary



Relationships and Sexuality Policy

Introductory Statement

As R.S.E. is an ongoing process throughout life, our policy in Presentation Primary, Carrick-on-Suir, has been developed using a collaborative process involving teachers, parents and members of the Board of Management. We recognise the primary role of parents in their children's education. We acknowledge the fact that a child's first experience of love and of relationships takes place in the family, amongst those closest to the child. We aim to complement this aspect of a child's development by a school-based programme in R.S.E.

School Philosophy

Presentation P.S. is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Bishop of Waterford and Lismore. It is managed by a Board of Management, elected according to the procedures agreed by the Partners in Education. The school has a Catholic ethos and this ethos is a guiding principle in the formulation and implementation of this R.S.E. 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.

Rationale

We plan for R.S.E. to:

- ❖ conform to the principles outlined in the revised curriculum
- ❖ ensure a consistent, spiral approach from class to class, where R.S.E. will be taught as part of our S.P.H.E. Programme, complimented by integration with other subjects where appropriate
- ❖ give a sense of purpose and direction to our teachers' long and short-term planning. It will also inform new and temporary teachers of the approaches and methodologies in our school.

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Definition

R.S.E. is an education process which 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 behaviour within a moral, spiritual and social framework. R.S.E. is the formal approach to educating children in:

- a) relationships with others – parents, siblings, friends and the community in general
- b) respect for themselves and others
- c) physical development – bodily functions and changes, and personal hygiene
- d) emotional development – maturing in society
- e) parenting, personal and social skills and relationships
- f) sexuality in context – part of a loving relationship.

Context

- ❖ Our R.S.E. policy will reflect our school ethos and climate where the holistic development of each child is nurtured in a caring and respectful manner, where the school partners the home in providing knowledge, fostering values and promoting a framework of positive behaviours.
- ❖ All of our R.S.E. programme will be delivered within the context of S.P.H.E. teaching. The content objectives and lessons will be addressed in discrete time in line with the Making the Links and Beyond, PDST Manual.

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
- ❖ to develop an awareness of differing family patterns
- ❖ to help the child to develop strategies to make decisions, solve problems and implement actions in various personal, social and health contexts

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- ❖ to help the child develop coping strategies to protect themselves and others from various forms of abuse
- ❖ to enable the child to acquire and use appropriate vocabulary and to discuss feelings, sexuality and growth.

Policies which support S.P.H.E./R.S.E.

- ❖ Code of Behaviour and Discipline Policy
- ❖ Anti-Bullying Policy
- ❖ Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- ❖ Enrolment Policy
- ❖ Mobile Phone Policy
- ❖ Healthy Eating Policy
- ❖ School Tour Policy
- ❖ School Visitors Policy
- ❖ Internet Acceptable Usage Policy
- ❖ Administration of Medicines Policy

In keeping with the sentiment and spirit of these policies, we informally support many of the aims on which R.S.E. is modelled. We encourage good behaviour, open communication, understanding and tolerance of differences, and respect of 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.

The following arrangements have been made in collaboration with parents, Board of Management and teachers.

Timetable

Teachers will decide the timetabling of R.S.E. lessons.

Where a child is being withdrawn from specific objectives, the teacher would need to inform parents of the dates of lessons e.g. several consecutive weeks, and to make arrangements with the Principal for the child(ren) to be supervised elsewhere. Every effort will be made to minimise attention being drawn to these children.

Dealing with Questions

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Teachers establish ground rules limiting the discussion to material covered in present or previous lessons. Teachers will use discretion, based on the content or spirit of this plan, to decide whether the question should be discussed in the classroom context or referred to parents.

Confidentiality

The child's and teacher's right to privacy will be maintained. To aid this, teachers will establish ground rules covering the limits of the discussion, the level of respect required and the concept of confidentiality. The school cannot guarantee total confidentiality if a child asks a question of a personal nature or discloses personal information. All discussions will remain within the parameters of planned material. If a matter is divulged to a teacher, where either an accusation or a suggestion of a criminal act is made, the matter should be brought to the attention of the Principal, the Designated Liaison Person, who will refer it to the proper authorities. (See Children First Guidelines and our school's Child Protection Policy.) In these matters, a teacher should never agree to keep a secret for a child.

Communications with Parents re. R.S.E. Matters/Parents' Choices

Parents have a right to choose whether or not their children receive instruction in the areas covered by the R.S.E. objectives. Parents may choose to withdraw their children from some or all of these objectives.

Parents are welcome to view the R.S.E. Policy and agreed lessons and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns. Parents will be advised, by the class teacher, about sensitive material that will be covered prior to commencing such lessons. If a parent opts for a child's withdrawal from same, they will be required to state this in writing and also state that they are now solely taking responsibility for this area of the child's education. Only parents who have done this will be contacted about the actual date of specific lessons and arrangements made for supervision for that child.

While teachers may normally check with the previous teacher whether any children were withdrawn from specific objectives, it will not always be possible to do so. Parents will be expected to make their wishes known each year to the new class teacher.

Where parents choose to withdraw their children from specific objectives, they will be withdrawn from formal lessons covering these matters. Teachers will then avoid addressing these issues formally in the context of other class discussions. Teachers cannot be held responsible for language used necessarily in school life by children.

Teachers' Choices

Teachers have a right to choose whether or not to give instruction in the areas covered by the R.S.E. objectives. Where a teacher decides not to give instruction in these lessons, the following guidelines will apply:

- ❖ Another staff member may cover this material

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- ❖ A guest speaker may be invited to cover this issue (6th Class only)
- ❖ Teachers who choose not to cover these aspects of the S.P.H.E. Programme must bring this to the attention of the Principal at the earliest possible opportunity to enable alternative arrangements to be put in place.

Guest Speakers

The Principal, and the 6th class teachers involved, will consult with suitable agencies should guest speakers be required to deal with R.S.E. issues. The following guidelines will then apply:

- ❖ The teacher/teachers concerned will make the guest speaker aware of the objectives to be covered and the policy and ethos within which they will be discussed. Parents/guardians will be notified of the name of the speaker/ lesson content in advance of the lesson.
- ❖ The class teacher or another class teacher will remain with the class group while the guest speaker is present.

Resources

Our school's RSE programme will be taught in line with the Making the Link and Beyond, PDST Manual. The Grow in Love Programme, the Stay Safe Programme and a selection of other appropriate resources can also be used.

All resources are available for parents/guardians to view on the NCCA website.

Provision for Ongoing Support

- ❖ Opportunities for CPD provided by Teachers Centre etc. will be brought to the attention of staff.

Review

The staff, under the guidance of Principal and S.P.H.E. Co-ordinator will review this policy every three years or as required.

Ratification and Communication

The Board of Management ratified this amended policy in November 2023.