

RSE and Stay Safe Policy Statement

Introductory Statement and Rationale


This policy statement is an approved approach to the teaching of RSE and Stay Safe in Dunboyne Junior Primary School. RSE and the Stay Safe Programme are mandatory at primary level. The content taught is informed by the programme outlined by the Department of Education. The policy was disseminated amongst parents, teachers and members of the Board of Management for feedback and approval. The aim of the policy is to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE and Stay Safe programmes within SPHE and how this material is taught in our school. Parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children in sexual matters. The school RSE and Stay Safe programmes act as a support only to parents, and parents retain the right to withdraw their children from classes.

School Philosophy


Dunboyne Junior Primary School is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Bishop of Meath and therefore all policies are implemented in ways which are in keeping with the ethos of the school. An integral part of RSE is learning to respect others, this will include respect for families or individuals who are different from the norm. The Equal Status Acts 2000 and 2004 provide protection against discrimination on nine grounds. The inclusive school prevents and combats discrimination. It is one that respects, values and accommodates diversity across all nine grounds in the equality legislation: gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community. It seeks positive experiences, a sense of belonging and outcomes for all students across the nine grounds. Outcomes include access, participation, personal development and achieving education credentials. The ethos of the school is also characterised by the following:

- Sensitivity to the reality of our children's lives in a changing world
- Mutual respect between all partners in education
- Child-centred
- Aims to ensure each child reaches full potential in the holistic sense
- Hopes that children are equipped with high self-esteem to enable them to live happy and fulfilled lives
- Aims to teach the truths of human relationships and sexuality in a way that is child centred and supportive of parents as their child's first teacher

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Definition of RSE

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

“Relationship and Sexuality Education is an important part of the education of young people, and schools provide a safe context within which young people can learn about themselves and the wider world. Relationships and Sexuality Education is an integral part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (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. SPHE is taught through school atmosphere and culture, integration and discrete teaching time.

RSE is an integral part of SPHE. Formal and informal RSE messages must be consistent with the wholeschool approach to 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

In an ever-changing world, RSE encourages children through consistent messages that are taught in line with SPHE. The school has a responsibility to ensure that its curriculum is free of bias and that issues of inequality in any form are addressed and dealt with (SPHE Teacher Guidelines, p.25). In learning about cultures and traditions of others, children can develop a sense of respect for difference and appreciate the contribution that such has to offer. It will encourage children to be inclusive with each other, challenge prejudice and learn how to live in an intercultural society.

RSE is

- *a lifelong and continual process* throughout primary school and should not be confined to once off inputs or solitary lessons *a shared responsibility* and collaboration between family, school, health professionals and the community
- 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.

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.

Aims of The Stay Safe Programme

The aim of the programme is to reduce vulnerability to child abuse and bullying through the provision of a personal safety education programme for children at primary school level, continuing professional development for teachers, and training for Boards of Management and information sessions for parents. The Stay Safe programme itself is a personal safety skills programme designed for use with primary school children from Junior Infants through to 6th class. The programme seeks to enhance children's self-protective skills by participation in lessons on safe and unsafe situations, bullying, inappropriate touch, secrets, telling and stranger danger. The programme aims to give children the skills necessary to enable them to recognise and resist abuse/victimisation and teaches them that they should always tell (an adult that can help) about any situation which they find unsafe, upsetting, threatening, dangerous or abusive.

Policies which support RSE (not an exhaustive list)

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| • Anti-Bullying Policy (updated annually) | • Intimate Care Policy |
| • Child Safeguarding Statement & Risk Assessment (updated annually) | • Pupil Internet Safety - Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) |
| • Code of Behaviour | • Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy |
| • Critical Incident Policy (updated annually) | • Safety Statement |
| | • Special Educational Needs Policy |

Guidelines for the Implementation of RSE in Dunboyne Junior Primary School

The SPHE curriculum will underpin all teaching and learning of RSE. The SPHE curriculum (1999) is allocated 30 minutes of discrete teaching time by the Department of Education. RSE will be

included in the content taught during this time. The approach to the teaching of RSE will be kept as normal as possible and will be delivered within the child's class by the class teacher. Teachers 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.

RSE forms part of the SPHE curriculum and the Department of Education RSE programme will be followed as published and will be taught every second year from Junior Infants to Second Class. RSE relates to the following areas of the SPHE curriculum: Friendship; Self-identity; Family; Self-esteem; Growing and Changing and Taking Care of My Body.

- RSE will be taught throughout the school every second year in the second term.
- The strands units 'Growing and changing' and 'Taking care of my body' are covered in Year 2 of a two year plan i.e. Senior Infants and Second Class
- Teachers will take lessons from both year groups covering total content, not all lessons are needed to be covered from programme of both year groups
- The sensitive lessons and topics are covered as part of this two year plan (see underlined elements in table below and sensitive language used in Appendix 1)
- When implementing the programme, Dunboyne Junior Primary School will endeavour to display respect for and sensitivity towards the different cultural family backgrounds experienced by the children
- Special consideration will be taken to ensure that the needs of children with additional needs are met. Taking into account the pupil's social and emotional development, instruction will be based on individual needs where possible

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

- 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

Our school follows a two year plan for SPHE as outlined below:

	Junior Infants First Class	Senior Infants Second Class
September	Self- Identity (Myself)	Myself and my family(Myself and others)
October	Road safety Fire Safety	Road safety Fire Safety
November December	My Friends and other people (Myself and others)	Relating to others (Myself and others)
January February	Safety and Protection (Myself) Stay Safe	Growing and changing (Myself) RSE
March April	Stay Safe: ALL lessons in the programme to be completed	Taking care of my body (Myself) RSE: Lessons are taken from both year groups covering total content, not all lessons are needed to be covered from programme of both year groups
May June	Media Education (Myself and the wider world) Water safety	Developing citizenship (Myself and the widerworld) Water safety

Approaches & Methodologies

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 teaching approach in Dunboyne Junior Primary School is child-centred and will always take the age and stage of development of the children into account. Appropriate vocabulary relating to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, parts of the body and feeling will be used. The use of slang will be discouraged. The RSE programme includes several possibly sensitive issues, listed in Appendix 1. It is school policy to deal with these issues through structured lessons, as naturally as possible and without undue emphasis. A contract is drawn up at the start of the year in each classroom to ensure respect and sensitivity to others at all times. The importance of this contract should be emphasised before each sensitive lesson.

Interactive learning is the principal learning and teaching approach recommended for SPHE and RSE. It requires children to actively participate in their learning in a wide variety of ways, thereby increasing the possibility of internalising what they have explored and of being able to use this learning in their everyday lives. Inter-active learning contributes significantly to fostering their self-confidence, self-discipline and self-control in the learner.

In Dunboyne Junior Primary School, we will use the following approaches and methodologies to teach RSE and Stay Safe: stories and poems; classroom discussion; ICT activities; group work; games; art activities; reflection and circle time. Any or all of the following techniques will allow the child to play an active part in the learning process: Discussion; Use of Circle Time; Role play; Interviewing friends, or other school pupils, family members; Surveys of attitudes; Analysing and evaluating media; Engagement with Restorative Practices; Describing photographs; Viewing and discussing videos etc.

Language

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 and spiral manner as per the table in Appendix 1. This ensures the teaching of teach 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.

Equality of Participation & Access

Staff at Dunboyne Junior Primary School recognise and value diversity and equality. We believe that all children are entitled to access the services, and facilities that are available in the school environment. Dunboyne Junior Primary School is a Catholic co-educational junior school and we endeavour to challenge traditional stereotypes and ensure that equal opportunities are given to all. The class teacher will try to ensure that the whole class is present during discrete RSE and Stay Safe lessons.

The Equal Status Acts 2000 and 2004 protect against discrimination on nine grounds, one of which is sexual orientation. The Acts oblige those who manage schools to protect students and staff from discrimination or sexual harassment.

Differentiation

The age and stage of development in a class can vary widely and strategies for differentiation can support gradual and appropriate learning. Teachers must also be mindful of children who have been exposed to bereavement or abuse. In Dunboyne Junior Primary School, 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 may be made for children with additional educational needs. Both consultation with parents/guardians/carers in advance of lessons and the anticipation of the pupil's needs will be central to ensuring learning is meaningful. This may be reflected in the student support file.

Teachers will use their professional judgement and 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
- Useful Resources include: Middletown Centre for Autism; PDST RSE and Stay Safe for Children with SEN

Explicit Questions

In Dunboyne Junior Primary School 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. 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. 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
- We agreed in our contract that we would not ask anyone personal questions
- Questions will be answered in an age and developmentally appropriate way. Children will be made aware that the class teacher may not be able to answer their question and they will be signposted to ask an adult they trust at home.

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.

Pupil Voice

In our school the voice of our pupils is acknowledged, valued and respected. Children are given opportunities to reflect and feedback on SPHE/RSE provision and from time to time 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.

Parent Involvement

Dunboyne Junior Primary School recognises that parents are the primary educators of their children and that the home is the natural environment in which RSE should take place. The role of the school therefore is seen as one of support. Parents have a responsibility to become involved in educating their child in relation to the RSE curriculum. Parents should inform themselves of the programme content and prepare children for the information they will acquire around the sensitive areas. A copy of this policy will be made available on the 'About' section our school website www.dunboyneips.ie and to any parent on request from the school office.

Parents/guardians/carers will be informed in advance of the teaching of the formal RSE lessons. Class teachers may provide copies of specific 'Home-school Links' letters to parents/guardians in advance of the teaching of these sensitive lessons or after teaching has taken place. Should parents want further information some resources are available including: [talking to your young child about relationships, sexuality and growing up](#) and Making the 'BigTalk' many small talks [Ages 4-7](#) and [Ages 8-12](#).

In the class situation, children will be encouraged to recognise that certain information is for them only and it would be inappropriate to discuss this with younger siblings/children. Concerning matters of a confidential or sensitive nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what a child may say in the yard or classroom.

Our RSE and Stay Safe programme is inclusive and so we actively discourage withdrawal. Parents who opt to withdraw their children from these sensitive areas of RSE lessons should also be aware that material taught during the RSE programme may be discussed by the children outside class time, and the staff cannot prevent the child hearing the language being used or discussed by other children outside of these lessons. Furthermore, television, videos, advertising, magazines, computers and friends may be informal sources of information which may influence children's attitudes to relationships and sexuality. Parents may not even be aware of, or indeed may not like, the messages their children are getting from these informal sources.

Dunboyne Junior Primary School believes that it is preferable that this information is presented

accurately and sensitively by a professional educator. If a parent wishes to withdraw their child for the sensitive lessons, they must organise a meeting with the principal to discuss their concerns. After this meeting, if they still wish to withdraw their child from specific formal RSE lessons, this should be provided in writing to the school principal and kept on file. A letter will need to be provided to the principal each year that the child is withdrawn.

A parent's right to withdraw their child from themes pertaining to sensitive issues, as outlined above will be honoured on the understanding that the parent is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves. In cooperation with parents who do not want their children to attend an RSE lesson. Alternative supervision will be organised for the child (e.g. they can help out in a younger class etc.)

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. It is important to protect children and families and their privacy. 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.

Monitoring / Evaluation / Review

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website, is available from the school office and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and the patron if requested.

Dunboyne Junior Primary School will review this policy periodically and should a need arise. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made.

Signed : 

Appendix 1 – PDST Sensitive Language Grid

Class	Strand StrandUnit	Content Objectives <i>Consult curriculum for complete objectives in Growing and changing and Taking care of my body</i>	Language	RSE Resource Materials Book	Walk Tall	Supplementary resources
Junior Infants Senior Infants	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing and changing Taking care of my body 	Growing and changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Become aware of new life and birth in the world Develop an awareness of human birth Taking care of my body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name parts of the male and female body using anatomical terms 	womb breastfeeding penis vulva	New Life p.68 My Body p.147 Caring for new life p.137 At the beach or swimming pool p.153	Our Amazing Bodies p.94 (Senior Infants book)	Anatomically correct dolls Picture books of new baby Visit of baby to class
Second Class	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing and changing Taking care of my body 	Growing and changing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin to understand that reproduction, birth, growth and death are all part of new life cycles 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 some of their functions 	penis vulva vagina womb breastfeeding urethra	The Wonder of new life p. 59 /151 How my body works p. 67/ 161 Growing means changing p.77/171 A Visit to the Doctor p. 164	Our Amazing Bodies p.37 (2 nd class book)	Picture books of going to the doctors Tom's Power Flower Books / activities on life cycles Birth and new life in nature