**St. Mary’s N.S.**

**RSE Policy**

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| This policy statement is an approved approach to the teaching of RSE in St. Mary’s N.S. It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to the material covered in the RSE programme within the SPHE curriculum. The policy has been developed through consultation between staff, parents and the Board of Management. |
| **School Philosophy**  St. Mary’s N.S. is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Bishop of Ferns. 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 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. 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. We support and compliment their work. |
| **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.  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 Alive-O/Grow in Love Religion programmes. |
| **Current Provision**  Traditionally we have been a child-centred school. The educational and emotional needs of the children in our care are central to our planning and policy making processes. We have always, and will always continue to put the welfare of the children first.  Included in the school curriculum in St. Mary’s N.S. is:   * Religious Education (Alive-O/Grow in Love) * Anti-bullying material * Transition programme * SPHE incorporating: * Stay Safe Programme * Walk Tall Programme * Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme  Policies which support SPHE/RSE  * Code of behaviour * Anti-Bullying Policy * Child protection policy * Enrolment Policy * Healthy Eating Policy * Internet Acceptable Usage 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 wellbeing 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 6th class – (see Appendix A for further details). The curriculum will be taught from Infants to 6th class. It will be ideally be taught by the teaching staff. Occasionally it may be deemed necessary for an outside speaker to address the “sexually sensitive issues” i.e. puberty, reproductive system, conception, birth and sexual intercourse on the 6th Class curriculum*.* All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school and this policy.   * Sensitive issues are generally taught from infants to 4th every second year and revisited every alternate year during the months of March an April. * The Busybodies programme will be used every November in 5th and 6th Classes. * In a multi class situation, the younger class will be withdrawn when topics being taught are not age-appropriate in accordance with the curriculum. * When an outside speaker is used, the SPHE coordinator/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.   **Organisational Matters**   * Prior to the teaching of lessons involving “sensitive issues”, parents will be sent an outline of the content along with a consent form. * Written parental consent will be sought for the Busybodies programme involving the area of conception. * It is a parents/guardians right to withdraw a pupil from these lessons. This request for withdrawal must be made in writing. * If parents/guardians request the withdrawal of a child from RSE lessons, provision will be made for them to leave the classroom at that time. Supervision will be provided. With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom. Should a child who is withdrawn from the sexually sensitive classes receive inappropriate information from others outside of these classes, it will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian to address the issues. * Any teacher has the right to opt-out from teaching the sexually sensitive issues in RSE.It is responsibility of Board of Management to ensure that the curriculum will be delivered to the children, by another teacher, or an outside speaker. * Parents are always welcome to speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns.   **Dealing with Questions**  It is natural that children should wish to ask questions in the area or 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. Certain topics will not be discussed i.e. abortion, masturbation, homosexuality, contraception. Questions to the teacher may be written or oral within the group setting and answered within the boundaries of the curriculum and school policy. If any questions asked by the children are judged to be inappropriate, the teacher will refer the child to their parents, or state that this information may be available at a later stage of the curriculum. The school cannot guarantee confidentiality if a child asks a question of a personal nature or discloses personal information. At all times the child’s and teacher’s right to privacy will be maintained**Parental Involvement**  Parents/Guardians are the primary educators of their children and as such the school supports them in this role. As stated parents/guardians will be given the option of withdrawing their child from a particular lesson if they so wish. Parents/Guardians may access this policy from the school website. |
| **Resources**  Lesson plans from the DES have been assessed and amended where necessary in line with this school policy. The Alive O/Grow in Love, Stay Safe, Walk Tall and RSE programmes and other appropriate resources will also be used. Busy Bodies will be used in Fifth and Sixth Classes. All resources are available for parents/guardians to view if they so request.  **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. |
| **Ratification**  The Board of Management of St. Mary’s N.S. ratified this policy on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_.  **Signed**  **Date** |

**Appendix A**

**RSE - Sensitive Areas**

**Junior Infants/Senior Infants**

* New Life – mention of baby in the womb.
* My Body – specific names for male and female sex organs – vagina, penis, womb.

**First/Second Classes**

* 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.

**Third/Fourth Classes**

* 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? ( 6th class only)
* Biological facts as follows: ( 6th class only)
* What journey does the egg make?
* What journey does the sperm make?
* Where do they meet?
* What happens when they meet?
* Fifth and Sixth Classes – Busy Bodies.

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The areas outlined above (as required by the curriculum) will be covered in your child’s class during the months of March and April.

Please refer to the RSE policy on the school’s website for any further information. Your child’s teacher will also be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have.

I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

to take part in lessons (as required by the curriculum) as outlined above.

I understand I have the right to withdraw my child from these lessons and have read the RSE policy for further clarification.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix B**

**St. Mary’s N.S.**

**Stay Safe Programme**

Dear Parent,

We are planning to teach a personal safety education called “Stay Safe” over the next few weeks. The aim of the Stay Safe programme is to teach children personal safety skills so they can look after themselves in situations which could be upsetting or dangerous. It deals initially with common situations which most children will experience at some stage or other, e.g.getting lost or being bullied. The programme also teaches children the safety skills necessary to protect themselves from physical or sexual abuse and emphasises the importance of telling a trusted adult about any problems they have.

The Stay Safe programme is part of the Social, Personal and Health Education curriculum which all primary schools are required to implement. Co-operation between parents and teachers is essential to the success of this programme. It is important that parents are aware of the content of the Stay Safe lessons and are able to discuss the lessons with their children. Your child may bring home worksheets which will inform you on the topics being covered in class and how you can reinforce the messages at home.

You can familiarise yourself with the content of the Stay Safe lessons at [www.staysafe.ie/teachers/resources.htm](http://www.staysafe.ie/teachers/resources.htm). Please contact the school if you wish to discuss the programme further.

Thank you for your co-operation,

Principal

**The Five Core Topics of Stay Safe**

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| **Feeling Safe and Unsafe**   * Helping children to recognise when they feel safe and unsafe * “Yes” feelings are safe feelings, “No” feelings are unsafe feelings * Giving children skills to cope with common emergencies like getting lost |
| **Friendship and Bullying**   * The importance of friends in children’s lives * What to do about bullying. It is not your fault if you are bullied * Stay Safe rules: Say no, get away and tell * Importance of not bullying others * Onlookers and bullying |
| **Touches**   * Appreciating normal appropriate affection * Touches children like * Touches children dislike * Touches and secrecy * The Stay Safe rules |
| **Secrets and Telling**   * Recognising good and bad secrets * Telling a trusted adult about any problem a child may have * When, where and how to tell * Telling about a “no” feeling even if it involves someone you know |
| **Strangers**   * Misconceptions children may have about strangers * Stay Safe safety rules * Dealing assertively with approaches from strangers |