



## **RIVERVIEW ETNS RSE POLICY**

### **Introductory Statement**

RSE (Relationships and Sexuality Education) provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality and relationships, which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within their emerging moral, spiritual and social framework. RSE is part of the SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) curriculum, however two separate policies are required. This policy has been developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE. This review was undertaken in June 2025.

### **School Ethos**

Our RSE programme is centred on the core values that inform the ethos of the school: child centred, multi-denominational, co-educational and democratically run. RSE is a key component in supporting our children to develop into healthy young adults. We recognise that RSE (and SPHE) occurs both formally and informally in school, however this document addresses the formal teaching. Through our RSE programme, we wish to assist children to develop their personal self-knowledge and self confidence as they explore their unique place in their family, school and society. RSE is taught in a space of deep respect, tolerance and openness. As parents are the primary educators in the social, personal and health education of their children, their involvement is encouraged as much as possible.

### **Objectives of our RSE Programme**

- Enhance the personal development, self-esteem and wellbeing of the child
- Help the child to develop healthy friendships and relationships
- Foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework
- Enable the child to acquire an understanding of, and respect for, human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction
- Develop and promote in the child a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life
- Enable the child to be comfortable with the sexuality of oneself and others while growing and developing
- 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 different family patterns
- Come to value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood
- 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

#### **Other school policies which support RSE and SPHE**

- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- SPHE policy
- Parental Involvement Policy

#### **Management and Organisation of RSE in our School**

The curriculum by the NCCA will be followed as published, and will be taught from infants to 6th class. All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school, the whole school plan for SPHE and the RSE policy. Each class teacher will teach the content for their class level each year as laid out in the curriculum, utilising the RSE manuals and other resources to complement their teaching.

The strands *Growing and Changing*, and *Taking Care of my Body* are covered in Year 2 of a 2-year SPHE plan, the sensitive lessons being covered as part of these broad topics (see below). Taking into account the pupil's social and emotional development, instruction will be based on individual needs where possible, and special consideration will be taken to ensure that the needs of children with SEN are met.

The RSE programme is divided into two main parts:

1) The general programme which contains content covered through SPHE curriculum:

- Friendship
- Self-identity

- Family
- Self-esteem
- Growing up.

2) The second section will deal with any sensitive/specific content covered through RSE strands and strand units.

Topics covered up to 2<sup>nd</sup> class include:

- Keeping safe
- Bodily changes from birth (birth-9)
- Making age-appropriate choices
- Appreciating the variety of family types and the variety of family life that exists in our school and community
- 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 (Junior/ Senior Infants)
- Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identifying some of their functions (1st/2nd).

Topics from 3rd to 6th include:

- Bodily changes
- Healthy eating, personal hygiene and exercise
- Keeping safe
- Expressing feelings
- Appreciating the variety of family types within our school and community and how these family relationships shape us
- Making healthy and responsible decisions
- Forming friendships
- Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (3rd - 4th class)
- Introduction to puberty and changes (3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> Class)
- Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Class)
- Reproductive system of male/female adults (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Class)
- Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Class)

### **Parental Involvement**

The school acknowledges that parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children about growing and changing. Parents will be informed that the school fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE programme including sensitive aspects of the programme.

A letter will be issued to parents in advance of the delivery of the RSE programme each January, informing them of the content. This provides parents with an opportunity to become involved, to inform themselves of the programme content and to prepare

children for the information they will acquire around the sensitive areas, and discuss the areas covered. Parents are welcome to view the curriculum and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns at any time during the year.

If a parent wishes to withdraw their child from the sensitive lessons, a meeting should be held with the class teacher and a letter sent to the school requesting withdrawal. In this case, a parent will be required to look after the child for the duration of the lesson.

If a child has been withdrawn from the sensitive RSE lessons, the school takes no responsibility for what the child may hear following on from the teaching of the lessons, eg. what they may hear in the yard from other children.

### **Special Educational Needs**

Adaptations to the way in which the content is delivered will be made for children with Special Educational Needs. Consultation with parents in advance and anticipation of the children's needs will be central to ensuring learning is meaningful.

Children may be pre-taught language or concepts in anticipation of whole class work.

Children may work in smaller groups or 1:1 on adapted and suitable material. Any different or specific objectives related to the pupils own learning needs should be detailed in their SSP in consultation with parents/guardians.

### **Language**

The 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. Children should become aware of the power and influence of language. 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. Language is a powerful tool and should be used with respect and integrity for the dignity of each person.

There are two areas where the use of language is applied in RSE lessons:

- The formal use and teaching of language generally throughout the school
- The use of language in discussion through the formal RSE lessons

Appropriate vocabulary in formal teaching relating to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, parts of the body and feelings will be used. The use of slang will be discouraged. Anatomical terms and language introduced is consistent with RSE Materials Books (see Appendix 1 for list of terms introduced at each class level).

### **Questions**

Guidelines when fostering discussion and questioning:

- No personal questions should be asked to the teacher
- A Question Box will be provided for 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> class, allowing them to write their questions anonymously. Teachers can follow up on the written questions at a later date, thus allowing time to prepare suitable answers, consult with colleagues, etc.
- The teacher will be mindful of their reaction to any questions
- Questions do not have to be answered straight away

Sample responses teachers may use for difficult questions:

- “I’ll do my best to answer your questions but I may not be able to answer all of them.”
- “Is that something you could talk to your parents/family about?”
- “We agreed that we would not ask anyone personal questions.”
- “The language that was used in this question was slang. We might say instead ....”  
(teacher repeats the question using formal terminology).

### Question Box

During the delivery of each section of the sensitive lessons children will be encouraged to place their questions into a box in the classroom. These questions will then be monitored and screened with the teacher answering the questions the following week, taking into account the following:

- Questions arising from lesson content will be answered in an age-appropriate manner.
- The class teacher cannot answer questions which do not relate to the particular curriculum objectives for a class.
- Pupils will be informed if a question/issue is not on the programme and they will be advised to talk with their parents.
- Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents themselves if they feel that a question is very inappropriate or needs to be communicated with home because of other reasons.
- No personal questions will be answered and children will be reminded not to share personal information about their families or others, but can share with the teacher after the lessons.
- If issues arise which might be seen to contravene Children First Guidelines, the teacher will notify the Designated Liaison Person in the school.

### **Confidentiality**

The school follows Children First Guidelines 2017 and The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017. If a child is withdrawn from the teaching of sensitive issues, the school cannot guarantee that the other children will not tell or inform him/her about what happened.

### **Resources**

- Relationships and Sexuality Education Resource Materials (DES)
- SPHE lessons (provided through discrete curricular time and integration)
- Stay Safe programme
- Anatomical dolls, story books and social stories
- Busy Bodies booklet (3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> class)
- Different Families, Same Love
- MindUp
- Learn Together curriculum

### **Implementation**

The Principal in co-operation with staff and the SPHE coordinator will be responsible for the implementation of this programme and the upkeep of resources.

## Provision of Ongoing Support <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

Opportunities provided by our Education Centre will be brought to the attention of staff members. Teachers will be encouraged to attend CPD in RSE. Staff meetings will be utilised as a platform for discussion and development of RSE materials. Support from a PDST Advisor may be requested. Promotion and communication of resources is available from [www.pdst.ie](http://www.pdst.ie).

## Ratification and Communication

This policy has been made available to school personnel and the Parents' Association and is readily accessible to parents via the school website.

A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested. This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management at regular intervals.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2019.

This policy was reviewed and updated on the 4th June 2025.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal, Margaret Burke.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson of Board of Management, Joan Ward.

## Appendix 1.

Class	Strand/ Strand Unit	Content Objectives	Language
Junior/Senior Infants	<b>Myself</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Growing and changing</li><li>▪ Taking care of my body</li></ul>	<b>Growing and changing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Become aware of new life and birth in the world</li><li>▪ Develop an awareness of human</li></ul>	womb breastfeeding penis vulva breast nipple testicles

		birth <b>Taking care of my body</b> ▪ Name parts of the male and female body using anatomical terms	umbilical cord
	<b>Pages in RSE Book</b>	<b>Pages in Walk Tall</b>	<b>Supp Resources</b>
	New Life p68 My Body p147 Caring for new life p137 At the beach or swimming pool p153	Our Amazing Bodies p94 (Senior Infants book)	▪Anatomically correct dolls ▪Picture books of new baby ▪Visit of baby to class

<b>Class</b>	<b>Strand/ Strand Unit</b>	<b>Content Objectives</b>	<b>Language</b>
<b>First/Second Class</b>	<b>Myself</b> ▪ Growing and changing ▪ Taking care of my body	<b>Growing and changing</b> ▪ Begin to understand that reproduction, birth, growth and death are all part of new life cycles <b>Taking care of my body</b> ▪ Name the parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions	(Revise above) vagina urethra
	<b>Pages in RSE Book</b>	<b>Pages in Walk Tall</b>	<b>Supp Resources</b>
	The Wonder of new life p59 /151	Our Amazing Bodies p37	▪ Picture books of going to the doctors

	How my body works p67/ 161 Growing means changing p77/171 A Visit to the Doctor p164	(2nd class book)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tom's Power Flower</li> <li>▪ Books/activities on Life cycles</li> <li>▪ Birth and new life in nature</li> </ul>
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Class	Strand/ Strand Unit	Content Objectives	Language
<b>Third/Fourth Class</b>	<b>Myself</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Growing and changing</li> <li>▪ Taking care of my body</li> </ul>	<b>Growing and changing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the physical changes taking place in both the male and female body</li> <li>• Realise that changes do not occur at the same time but nonetheless are predictable and natural and that being different is normal</li> </ul> <b>Taking care of my body</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Name parts of the male and female body using anatomical terms</li> </ul>	(Revise above) Changes in puberty menstruation periods
	<b>Pages in RSE Book</b>	<b>Pages in Walk Tall</b>	<b>Supp Resources</b>
	Preparing for new life p69 The wonder of new Life p169 As I grow and change p93 Growing and Changing p195	As I grow I change p175 (3rd class book) Changing and Growing p140 (4th class book) The Wonder of New Life p.150	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Body Systems</li> <li>▪ Picture books on Growing and Changing</li> <li>▪ Sorting Game</li> </ul>

Class	Strand/ Strand Unit	Content Objectives	Language
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<b>Fifth/Sixth Class</b>	<b>Myself</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Growing and changing</li> <li>▪ Taking care of my body</li> </ul>	<b>Myself</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a loving committed relationship</li> </ul> <b>Taking care of my body</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify and discuss the physical changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty and understand that these take place at different rates for everyone</li> </ul>	(Revise above) Busy Bodies language semen Sexual intercourse sex hormones testosterone oestrogen Pubic hair scrotum, ovaries wet dreams Nocturnal emissions Erections sperm, ejaculation cervix fallopian tubes conception
	<b>Pages in RSE Book</b>	<b>Pages in Walk Tall</b>	<b>Supp Resources</b>
	My body grows and changes p81 The wonder of new life p92 Caring for new life p103 Different kinds of love p141	My Amazing body p345 (5th class book) Creation p121 (6th class book)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Busy Bodies</li> <li>▪ Power points recap</li> <li>▪ Question Box</li> <li>▪ Puberty Quiz</li> <li>▪ Sorting Game</li> </ul>