
RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE) POLICY



FEBRUARY 2026
(FEBRUARY 2023)

Introductory Statement

At primary level, Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) aims to help children learn, at home and in school, about their own development and about their friendships and relationships with others. This work will be based on developing a good self-image, promoting respect for themselves and others and providing them with appropriate information. In the school setting, RSE will be part of a wider programme of Social, Personal and Health Education. (SPHE).

This school policy has been developed through consultation with teachers, management, parents and support agencies.

School Philosophy and Ethos

The ethos of our School is Catholic and our RSE programme is concerned with fostering the development of relationships – the love of God and the love of every human being. While the Catholic ethos of the school is maintained we respect the beliefs of pupils of other denominations. The RSE programme is based on values of mutual respect, caring, self-discipline and social responsibility.

Aims of Programme

- To help the child to develop healthy friendships and relationships.
- To enable the child to be comfortable with the sexuality of oneself and others while growing and developing.
- To help the child grow towards the management of emotions leading to responsible behaviour.
- To develop and promote in the child a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life.
- To develop the child's skills for coping with peer pressure, conflict and threats to personal safety.
- To foster in the child an awareness of gender equity.
- To foster an understanding of human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- To create an atmosphere where dignified discussion regarding human sexuality can take place.
- To assist parents in their role as primary educators.

How the Programme will be taught

RSE will be part of an overall, ongoing programme of social, personal and health education (SPHE). It will be provided throughout primary school from infants to sixth class. It will be spiral and cross curricular. This means that it will return to similar topics each year. It will develop them to suit the age and maturity of the children. *Appendix A (page 5)* sets out the sequence of development within the spiralling programme in our school.

Suitable teaching methods will include group discussion, role-play and project work. At all times the teacher will endeavour to create an atmosphere in the classroom which respects the privacy of the individual and will treat all with sensitivity and care.

The Role of Parents

The school acknowledges parents as the primary educators of their children. To optimise the benefits of the RSE programme and to achieve consistency, parents will be encouraged to familiarise themselves with it. Engaging with their children on the content will complement the work being done in the classroom.

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of R.S.E.

Rights and Responsibilities

- Parents are acknowledged as the primary educators of their children and the school works in a supportive role. Therefore the implementation of the R.S.E. is a responsibility that is shared between home and school. Parents and teachers work together to help children develop a good self-image, promote respect for themselves and for others and provide them with age appropriate information.
- All content objectives will be covered by the time the children leave 6th class.
- It is the responsibility of the parents to inform themselves of the content of the R.S.E. programme which is available in the school for reviewing. It may also be viewed online at www.stfelimsns.ie
- The dignity, modesty and privacy of each child and teacher will be respected.

Sensitive Issues:

- Sensitive issues will be dealt with in accordance with the Catholic ethos of the school and in an age and gender appropriate manner.
- The sensitive language covered is as outlined in the curriculum and as given to teachers attending in-service organised by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) Support Services, the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). The Principal and another staff member attended.
- Teachers' right to opt out from teaching the sensitive issues in senior classes will be honoured with the Principal ensuring that arrangements are put in place to cover all areas.
- A parent's right to withdraw a pupil from the process will be honoured on the understanding that the parent is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves. It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the school of this decision, in writing on an annual basis. Parents will be informed of the week/fortnight where sensitive areas will be covered and should discuss with the school arrangements for the child during these lessons. The school cannot guarantee that content from the sensitive lessons may not transfer into other lessons during the year.

Dealing with Questions:

- Questions will be dealt with sensitively and the confidentiality of the pupils will be respected. In the event of a disclosure the school policy on Child Protection will be followed. While it is important to create an environment in which a child feels free to ask questions, it is also important that a safe environment is created for all the children in the class. Teachers are advised to set boundaries in the teaching of RSE as they would in any other subject.

When deciding whether it is appropriate to answer a question or not the teacher should consider:

- The age and stage of development of the children
- The ethos the school
- The RSE policy
- The content objectives of the SPHE curriculum guidelines

Suggested ways of setting limits are to say:

- I'll do my best to answer your questions but I may not be able to answer all of them
- Would you be able to talk to your mum or dad about that?
- That's something you'll learn about as you get older
- We agreed in our contract that we wouldn't ask anyone personal questions

Timetabling:

- R.S.E. will be timetabled for the third term each year. In this way the sensitive issues will be dealt with in the same term in every class.

Information evening for parents

An information evening for parents will be held annually to share content being covered and to discuss any concerns.

Resources:

- SPHE Curriculum
- Resource Materials for RSE
- Walk Tall
- Stay Safe Programme
- Alive O/Grow in Love
- Making Links
- Making Links and Beyond

Methodologies

When implementing the programme, staff at St. Felim's NS will endeavour to display respect for and sensitivity towards the different cultural and family backgrounds experienced by the children. The curriculum will be taught in an age-appropriate manner at all times. The curriculum will be taught from Junior Infants to Sixth Class.

Differentiation

Teachers use assessment and professional judgement to differentiate the programme and content to suit the needs of the class. Some techniques used;

- ensuring that objectives are realistic for the students
- ensuring that the learning task is compatible with prior learning
- providing opportunities for interacting and working with other students in small groups and spending more time on tasks
- organising the learning task into small stages and ensuring that the language used is pitched at the student's level of understanding
- sometimes the stage of development in a class can vary widely and strategies to differentiate in class can support gradual and appropriate teaching
- group work and discussion

SEN Children

Adaptions to the way in which the content is delivered will be made for children with Special Educational Needs, Consultation with parents/ guardians 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 small 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 IEP or IPLP in consultation with parents/ guardians

Assessment

Assessment in RSE is important to enable the teacher to pitch the lessons correctly to their respective class group.

The teacher uses:

- observation and questions to assess the children's engagement and interest
- use of teacher-designed tasks such as worksheets, quizzes or games

Continuing Professional Development

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 utilised as a platform for discussion and development of RSE materials
- promotion and communication of resources available from www.pdst.ie
- promotion of summer courses in RSE offered in local education centres

Evaluation

As with other curricular areas, the effectiveness of the programme will be continuously reviewed and evaluated by the teachers. Views of parents will be welcomed on an on-going basis. Ongoing support and training (where necessary) will be provided for all members of the school staff and the school community.

Review

The policy will be reviewed every year and it is due to be reviewed again in the academic year 2026/2027. The policy will be reviewed before this should a need arise. Parents will be informed of any amendments made.

Ratified by the Board of Management on 10/02/2026.

Chairperson Marie For

Appendix A R.S.E. : CONTENT

THEMES	JUNIOR AND SENIOR INFANTS	FIRST AND SECOND CLASSES	THIRD AND FOURTH CLASSES	FIFTH AND SIXTH CLASSES
Human Growth & Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ People who help me grow and care for myself. ▪ I'm growing: physical and emotional growth. ▪ Things I can do: development of abilities and interests. ▪ Language of growth: naming the external parts of the body. ▪ The beginning of life-me, animals and plants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Factors, which help me grow and take care of myself. ▪ I'm growing: new skills and abilities. ▪ Size me up: physical growth and individual difference. ▪ My body parts: the functions of different internal parts of my body. ▪ New life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Keeping healthy: exercise, diet, immune system. ▪ Changes in my own body and in those of others. ▪ Naming, grouping and functions of body parts. ▪ Growing: new roles and responsibilities. ▪ How babies begin and are born. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What helps and harms my body. ▪ Body changes in me and in others and why they are happening. ▪ Conception to birth and beyond. ▪ Humans and how they reproduce. ▪ Differences and similarities: rates of growth and development.
Human Sexuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I am unique. ▪ Myself/my body ▪ We are different. ▪ People in my life: what I do for them and what they do for me. ▪ The wonder of my world. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-image: how I see myself. ▪ Ideals and role models: people I look up to. ▪ What I like or don't like about other people. ▪ Appreciation of others and their gifts. ▪ The wonder of human life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accepting my body ▪ Differences between boys and girls ▪ Varied lifestyles in the class and community and how we feel about the differences ▪ Leisure time and how we spend it ▪ Messages about sexuality from the world around me. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-concept and Self-esteem: myself and others ▪ Male and Females: differences in the sexes ▪ Sexuality: what it is and what words describe it ▪ Images of sexuality from the media ▪ Differences in people and their lifestyles
Parenting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ My parents ▪ How parents take care of me ▪ Getting ready for a new baby ▪ All the things parents have to do 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parents are not all the same ▪ Caring for young children ▪ Welcoming the new arrival ▪ Parents are busy people ▪ Being loved is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Many ways of being a parent ▪ Providing for children – practical, emotional and psychological provision ▪ How parents and families prepare for a new baby ▪ Role of parents ▪ Responsibilities of parents: to children, families and the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parents in different cultures ▪ Parenthood: what it means and how I understand it ▪ Taking care during pregnancy ▪ Media portrayal of parents ▪ Appropriate treatment of children
Personal and Social Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Getting on with people – listening and sharing ▪ Simple ways to keep safe and find help ▪ Naming my feelings ▪ I have a choice ▪ Managing new situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Getting on with people – listening, discussing and sharing ▪ Keeping safe ▪ Naming and expressing my feelings ▪ Making choices ▪ Coping with changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skills of communication – self-expression & questioning ▪ Ways to keep safe and find help for oneself and others ▪ Making decisions: influences on me ▪ Understanding and respecting my own feelings and those of others ▪ Coping with new situations and new people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skills of communication: critical thinking / analysis ▪ Taking risks and keeping safe ▪ Choices and consequences ▪ Strong feelings: learning how to cope with strong feelings and their appropriate expression ▪ Changes in the future: how I feel and how I'll cope ▪ Asserting myself

<p style="text-align: center;">Relationships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Myself and my family: different roles and responsibilities ▪ My friends ▪ Special people in my life ▪ Co-operation at play ▪ Creating space in my life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Feelings in families: e.g. jealousy, love etc. ▪ Friendships: who our friends are, making and losing friends ▪ Conflict e.g. bullying and teasing ▪ Relating to others ▪ A right to privacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ My role and my responsibilities within my family ▪ My concept of family ▪ Conflict and resolution ▪ The meaning of friendship: exploring values in friendship e.g. love, trust, loyalty ▪ Personal boundaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Families and how they behave; what families expect of each other ▪ Discord and harmony within relationships ▪ Group affiliation and loyalty ▪ Changing relationships: growing towards intimacy ▪ Private and personal integrity
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Appendix B: RSE SENSITIVE AREAS LANGUAGE

Junior/ Senior Infants

My Body: Identify external parts of the male and female body.
Head, eyes, ears, nose, nipple, breast, skin, hips, navel, private parts, penis, bottom, vagina/vulva/urethra

New Life: A baby grows and is nurtured in the mother's womb until ready to be born.

First/ Second Classes

My body: How my body works. Name and identify external parts of the male and female body and their associated function.

Navel: The proper name for the part of the body where a baby was joined to his/her mother before being born.

Penis: The proper name for the part of the body of a boy that passes urine.

Urethra: The proper name for the part of the body of a girl that passes urine.

Vagina: Opening where a baby leaves a mother's womb. Sometimes a mother has to have an operation to have the baby. This is all normal.

Vulva: The vulva is external and is the correct name for the opening of the vagina which is internal.

Breasts: Breasts produce milk after a mother has had a baby. Sometimes the mother feeds the baby with this milk. It is known as breast-feeding. Some mothers also use powdered milk.

New Life: Caring for a new born baby. A baby grows in the mother's womb until ready to be born.

Third Class

My body: As I grow I change (Ref: pp.95-101 RSE Third Class Resource Materials).

New Life: Caring for a new baby. Nutrition in the womb and the function of the umbilical cord. Before a baby is born the baby spends nine months in the mother's womb and gets food through a tube called the umbilical cord. (Ref: pp.73-74 RSE Third Class Resource Materials).

Fourth Class

My body: Growing and changing-body changes. Hormones. Changes in shape. Increases in body hair. Pubic hair. Menstruation. (Ref: p.199 RSE Fourth Class Resource Materials).

Birth and New Life: Stages of growth of a baby from conception to birth. Identify objects which coincide with size of foetus at different stages. Care while waiting for a baby. After nine months the baby is ready to be born. Develop an appreciation of the wonder of the birth of a new baby. (Ref: The Wonder of New Life pp.170-181 RSE Fourth Class Resource Materials).

Fifth Class

Physical Development: Puberty
Physical changes for boys: Growth spurts, Testicles, Scrotum, Penis enlarge, Pubic/Facial and other body hair, Voice deepens, Nocturnal emissions-'wet dreams', Perspiration, Oily skin, Pimples.
Physical changes for girls: Breasts develop, Menstruation/Periods begin, Growth spurt, Underarm and pubic hair, Hips broaden, Perspiration, Oily skin, Pimples, Male/Female Reproductive Organs. Ovulation/Menstruation. Psychological, Emotional and Social Changes. (Ref: pp.82-92 RSE Fifth Class Resource Materials).

New Life: How New Life Begins? Ovum (Ova)/Sperm. Ovaries. Conception. (Ref: p.96 Fifth Class Resource Materials).

Sixth Class

Growing and Changing:

Responsibility. What age must I be to...?. Rituals. Post-Primary School. Adulthood. (Ref: pp.184-197 Sixth Class RSE Resource Materials).

New Life:

Relationships and a context for New Life. Conception. Sexual Intercourse in the context of a committed loving relationship. Respect for Human Life. Development in the womb. (Ref: Chapters 7 and 8 RSE Sixth Class Resource Materials).

**Portrayal of Sexuality and Relationships:
Fourth to Sixth Classes**

Body Images male/female in the media/Soaps/Films/Magazines
Relationships in the media
How sexuality is defined in the media
Sexual images portrayed in advertising (drink/perfume/aftershave)
The influences of famous personalities on our understanding of sexuality and relationships
Gender Equality in sport and leisure
Roles in Society
Sexual Stereotyping