



LEIXLIP
Educate Together
National School

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Roll No. 20526D

RSE POLICY

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Leixlip Educate Together National School is a recently established primary school. Leixlip ETNS is committed to the values laid down in the Educate Together Charter. Our school is learner-centred, equality-based, co-educational and democratically-run. We currently have classes up to second class with plans to expand over the four years to become an eight class, single-stream school.

Introductory Statement

All schools are required to have an RSE policy to detail how RSE is taught in the school, including the sensitive aspects. This policy is an approved approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). It was developed to inform teachers and parents/guardians as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE both formally and informally. The RSE policy was first developed by the school principal in September 2019, and was ratified following consultation with parents/guardians and staff. It was reviewed by staff in March 2022 and subsequently ratified by the Board of Management on 19th May 2022.

Relationship to School Ethos

Leixlip Educate Together NS is a recently established equality-based school which upholds the values of the Educate Together ethos, encapsulated in the motto “Learn Together to Live Together”. Leixlip ETNS values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. We recognise that SPHE is intrinsic to the teaching and learning that occurs both formally and informally in school and in the classroom. Through our SPHE programme and subsequently through RSE, we wish to assist children to develop feelings of self-worth and self-confidence while encouraging their ability to relate to others in a positive way. The curriculum also encourages children to be aware of their rights as an individual while at the same time accepting responsibility for their actions as members of the school and the wider community. Our school values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. Our ethos means that we value respect, tolerance and openness through the lived experience of the children and school community. Parents/guardians have the primary role in the social, personal and health education of their children so their involvement will be encouraged as much as possible. SPHE and RSE are key components in supporting our school and children to develop into healthy young adults.

Definition of RSE

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.

Relationship of RSE to SPHE

RSE is an integral part of SPHE. SPHE is taught through school atmosphere and culture, integration and discrete teaching time. Formal RSE lessons and informal RSE messages must be consistent with the whole school approach to SPHE.

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 a lifelong process and consequently RSE is a continual process throughout primary school and is not confined to once off inputs or lessons
- Is a shared responsibility between family, school, health professionals and the community RSE education should include an input from all, and collaboration can be fostered through the teaching and delivery of materials

- Is a generic approach. It is not so much about the specific content of RSE but rather the relationship with a child's skills, attitudes, values and understanding relevant to a range of social, personal and health issues
- Is based on the needs of the child, therefore RSE education should prioritise the needs of the child and his/her environment, with appropriate adaptations made within the curriculum to suit individual requirements and individual school situations
- Is spiral in nature. RSE is revisited at different stages throughout the child's time in school, this will provide opportunities to consolidate and build on previous learning. This allows for issues and topics to be explored and treated in a manner appropriate to the children's needs, abilities and levels of maturity
- Engages children to be involved in activity based learning. RSE should provide a range of learning opportunities that include working together, learning about one's own feelings and those of others, developing a sense of empathy and experiencing and supporting healthy relationships.

Through SPHE and RSE, members of the school community should be 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, p25). 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.

Current Provision Included in the School Curriculum

- SPHE lessons (provided through discrete curricular time and integration)
- Use of the RSE Manuals and Busy Bodies resources
- Stay Safe Programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Webwise resources
- All Together Now – Homophobic and Transphobic bullying lessons
- RESPECT Guidelines (suggested approaches to teaching about different families)
- Adapted resources for SEN from www.pdst.ie
- Ethical Education Programme.

Aims of our RSE Programme

- 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

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.

Policies which support SPHE/RSE (not an exhaustive list)

- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Code of Positive Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Admissions Policy
- RSE Policy
- Health and Safety Policy (draft)
- Acceptable Use Policy (Internet)

Future Policies to be developed

- Healthy Eating Policy
- Parental Involvement Policy
- Substance Use and Abuse Policy

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School

Curriculum Content

The Department of Education RSE programme will be followed as published, and will be taught every second year from infants to 6th class. All resources used will be age appropriate and in keeping with the ethos of the school, the whole school plan for SPHE and the RSE policy.

Management of RSE

- RSE will be taught throughout the school every second year in the second or third term
- Teachers will use the RSE programme as follows: (as advised by the PDST)
 - Junior and Senior Infants - Senior Infant lessons from the DE RSE programme
 - 1st and 2nd Classes - 2nd class lessons from the DE RSE programme
 - 3rd and 4th Classes - 4th class lessons from the DE RSE programme
 - 5th and 6th Classes - 6th class lessons from the DE RSE programme
- The sensitive lessons are covered as part of this two year plan (as outlined below and see appendix 1)

- Special arrangements may be made for the delivery of the sensitive elements of the 4th class programme to 3rd class pupils.
- Special consideration will be taken to ensure that the needs of children with additional or different needs are met. Taking into account the pupil's social and emotional development, instruction will be based on individual needs where possible. Parents/guardians will be consulted around sensitive issues.

Parental/Guardian Involvement

- Parents/guardians will be informed that the school fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE programme including sensitive aspects of the programme at enrollment.
- Parents/guardians will be informed in advance of lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme, with a letter relevant to what will be taught at their child's class level, example of letter see Appendix 2.
- The letter will be issued in advance, giving parents/guardians an opportunity to meet with relevant class teachers if they so wish, to discuss or clarify what is covered and to prepare their children, it also gives parents/guardians 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 areas covered in RSE/SPHE.
- Parents/guardians are welcome to view the curriculum and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns at any time during the year. The school acknowledges that parents/guardians have the primary responsibility for educating their children about growing and changing.
- Following discussion with the Principal and class teacher, if a parent/guardian wishes to withdraw their child from the sensitive lessons, this should be stated in writing stating their reasons for doing so and this will be centrally filed. Parents/guardians will also be required to declare that they will subsequently teach their child the content that will be missed
- If a child has been withdrawn from the sensitive RSE lessons, the school takes no responsibility for what the child may hear from other children following on from the teaching of the lessons.

Organisation and Curriculum Planning

RSE forms part of the SPHE curriculum and will be taught from infants to 6th class. RSE relates to the following areas of the SPHE curriculum:

- Friendship
- Self-identity
- Family
- Self-esteem
- Growing and Changing
- Taking Care of My Body

Topics covered up to 2nd include:

- Keeping safe
- Bodily changes from birth to nine years
- 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 identify 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 (3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th class)
- Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (5th and 6th Class)
- Reproductive system of male/female adults (5th and 6th class)
- Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship (5th, 6th class).

Approaches & Methodologies

When implementing the programme, staff at Leixlip ETNS will endeavor 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 6th class. It will be taught through a spiral curriculum (key topics will be revisited in a developmental manner at regular intervals). The materials taught will reflect the needs of the children. The RSE curriculum will be taught through:

- stories and poems
- classroom discussion
- group work
- games
- art activities
- reflection
- circle time
- guest speaker (The class teacher will stay in the room at all times in accordance with Circular 22/2010).

Differentiation

Teachers use assessment and professional judgment 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
- understanding of the activity using task analysis, outlining the steps to be learned/completed in any given task, posing key questions to guide students through the different stages/processes, and to assist in self-direction and correction
- having short and varied tasks creating a learning environment through the use of concrete, and where possible everyday materials, and by displaying word lists and laminated charts with pictures.

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
- higher and lower order questioning in groups
- moderated whole class discussions through use of a question box or worry box

Pupils with Additional Needs

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 smaller groups or one to one, on adapted and suitable material

- Any different or specific objectives related to the pupils own learning needs should be detailed in their student support plans in consultation with parents/guardians.

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. 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 your 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.

Questions

The main aim of talk and discussion is to create an atmosphere where children feel comfortable to ask important questions and that the relationship fostered in these sessions is open, controlled and safe for all pupils. While teachers may not be able to answer all questions, they will create a classroom environment where children will not be put off seeking answers in the school setting but will talk to their parents/guardians and ask the questions again at different stages of schooling or education, and are not put off because they perceived the topics or questions be embarrassing.

We use some simple principles when fostering discussion and questioning

- No personal questions of the teacher § The Question Box will be availed of by the children
- The teacher will be mindful of their reaction to any questions
- Questions do not have to be answered straight away

Sample responses;

- I'll do my best to answer your questions but I may not be able to answer all of them
- That's something you'll learn about as you get older
- Is that something you could talk to your parents / guardians / family about?
- We agreed in our contract that we wouldn't ask anyone personal questions
- Somebody asked a question and the language they used was slang language, what they meant to ask was....
- A question was asked, and we cannot talk about that particular topic but I think that question was about.

For older children a 'question box' will be used as part of a structured RSE lesson. Teachers can follow up on the written questions at a later date, thus allowing time to prepare suitable answers, consult with colleagues, etc.

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/guardians
- Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents/guardians 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.

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
- Use of reflection or learning log.

Confidentiality

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. 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.

- 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
- If a child is withdrawn from the teaching of sensitive issues, parents/guardians should be aware that they may hear about the content of the lesson from other children in the class.

Resources

Relationships and Sexuality Education Resource Materials (DES) - Each class teacher has a copy of the appropriate manual or access to it in online. Other resources that support the broader aims of RSE include:

- Stay Safe programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Anatomical Dolls and story books
- Busy Bodies DVD and Booklet. This DVD and booklet were developed to support the teaching of the 5th and 6th class components of RSE within the context of SPHE.
- Picture and story books in classroom and school library
- INTO Different Families, Same Love Poster & RESPECT guidelines.

Provision of Ongoing Support

- Opportunities provided by Kildare 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
- Support from a PDST Advisor
- Promotion and communication of resources available from www.pdst.ie.

Implementation

The Principal in cooperation with staff will be responsible for the implementation of this programme and the upkeep of resources.

Success Criteria

The success of this plan will be evaluated through teacher's planning and preparation, and if the procedures outlined in this plan have been consistently followed. We will also judge its success if the children have been enabled to achieve the aims outlined in this plan.

Review

The policy will be reviewed after every two years. The policy may also be reviewed at an earlier time should a need arise. Parents/guardians and staff will be informed of any amendments made.

Ratification and Communication

This policy has been made available to school personnel and will be accessible to parents/guardians via the school office and via the school website.

A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and the patron if requested.

This updated policy was ratified by the Board of Management on _____

Signed: _____ Principal, Date: _____

Signed: _____ Chairperson BofM Date: _____

Appendix One

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| <p>Topics covered up to 2nd include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keeping Safe• Bodily changes from birth (birth-9)• Making age appropriate choices• Appreciating the variety of family types and an 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 identify some of their functions (1st/2nd) | <p>Topics from 3rd to 6th include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bodily changes• Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise• Keeping Safe• Expressing Feelings• Appreciating the variety of family types within our school and community and how we 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 (3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th class)• Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (5th and 6th Class)• Reproductive system of male/female adults (5th and 6th class)• Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship (5th, 6th class) |
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Appendix Two

Dear...

Relationships and Sexuality education is an integral part of the S.P.H.E programme. The sensitive elements of the Relationships and Sexuality education programme are covered under the Strand Units, 'Growing and Changing' and 'Taking Care of my Body'. We will be completing these Strand Units with all class levels in the forthcoming weeks.

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| <p>Topics covered up to 2nd include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keeping Safe• Bodily changes from birth (birth-9)• Making age appropriate choices• Appreciating the variety of family types and an 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) <i>The Language at taught at this level will be.....</i>• Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions (1st/2nd)) <i>The Language at taught at this level will be.....</i> | <p>Topics from 3rd to 6th include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bodily changes• Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise• Keeping Safe• Expressing Feelings• Appreciating the variety of family types within our school and community and how we 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 (3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th class)• Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (5th and 6th Class) <i>The Language at taught at this level will be.....</i>• Reproductive system of male/female adults (5th and 6th class) <i>The Language at taught at this level will be.....</i>• Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship (5th, 6th class) <i>The Language taught at this level will be.....</i> |
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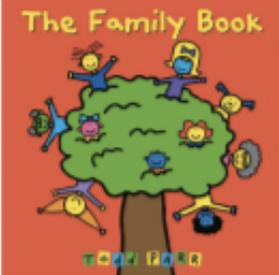
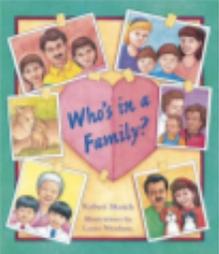
The class teacher will send home appropriate home school links pages from the Relationships and Sexuality manual which outline the material that will be covered in class and encourage further discussion on the topics at home.

If you have any concerns please make an appointment to see the class teacher.

Yours sincerely

All Families

| Strand | Myself and my family |
|---|---|
| Junior and Senior Infants First and Second class | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and name the people who constitute a family and appreciate that all family units are not the same Identify and talk about those who live at home and recognise that homes and families can vary |
| Third and Fourth class | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore and discuss different kinds of families, recognising that families vary in structure, in the way they communicate and in the way family members spend their time |
| Fifth and Sixth class | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore and discuss families and homes and how they can vary in many ways single-parent, two-parent, step-parents, adoptive parents, foster-parents, group homes, hostels |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> These picture books present a variety of family types in a sensitive and inclusive way You can use the picture books as a 'way in' and starting point, to discussions and critical thinking around different family types or the books can be used to make all families visible so they are appreciated and accepted in an informal way These picture books can be used to expose children to a variety of families which will help affirm and create respect for difference Use of Socratic questioning will help when using these books Having some short factual responses prepared will also be useful too. | | |
| <p>Sample Responses</p> <p>A child can't have two mums or two dads! A child can't just a mum or just a dad! "Some families have a Mom and a Dad, or just a Mum or just a Dad and some have two moms and two dads, but what is most important is that a family is a place where there is love" That's weird! "Sometimes we think things are weird when they are different, or haven't seen them before, but it's not nice to call families weird" That's not a real family! Families come in all shapes and sizes, and what's most important about a family is that children have adults and parents who care and look after them, and that's what makes a family"</p> | | |
| <p>Talking about home</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When asking the children about their homes ensure that all children can discuss their family types Represent all family types when doing family trees or examples of families | <p>Asking questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If children, ask questions about all families always talk about what makes families special regardless of who are the parents Age appropriate definitions for the terms gay or lesbian can be given from Stay Safe lessons | |
| <p>Improper Language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't let children use words inappropriately either intentionally or innocently especially referring to people or things as gay | <p>Special occasions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage all children to discuss their special day and be sensitive on days when mother's day or father's day might mean something different | |

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