



RELATIONSHIP AND SEXUALITY POLICY

DESCRIPTION OF SCHOOL:

St. Paul's Special school is a Catholic School under the trusteeship of the Sisters of Mercy. This school caters for pupils on the Autistic Spectrum, boys and girls, ranging in age from 3 to 18 years.

RESPONSIBILITY OF SCHOOLS (as outlined on circular 0022/2010 – DES)

The Education Act (1998) states that:

A recognized school shall promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school.

School management, principals and teachers have a duty to provide the best quality and most appropriate social, personal and health education for their pupils. They also have a duty to protect pupils in their care at all times from any potentially harmful, inappropriate or misguided resources, interventions or programmes.

DEFINITION OF RELATIONSHIP AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE)

Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy.

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
- Sexuality in context – part of a loving relationship.

RELATIONSHIP OF RSE TO SOCIAL PERSONAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION:

RSE is taught in school as part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum. RSE begins long before a child attends school and continues after the child has left primary school. Parents therefore, as the primary educators of children, have a significant role to play in this part of their child's development.

RSE is a partnership involving parents, teachers and management. The DES materials for RSE point out that schools support families so that children develop as well-rounded individuals. The RSE curriculum aims to provide structured opportunities for young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way. This work will be based on developing a good image, promoting respect for themselves and others, and providing them with appropriate information for their age-group and ability.

AIMS OF THE RSE PROGRAMME:

- provide accurate information
- enhance children's self esteem
- encourage children to respect and care for their bodies
- prepare children for the changes that will occur
- help young people understand and develop friendships and relationships

SUMMARY OF RSE IN ST. PAUL'S SPECIAL SCHOOL:

Knowledge	Attitudes and Values	Personal Skills
Healthy relationships	Positive attitude to sexuality	Self-esteem /Confidence
Puberty	Love and respect for self/others	Communication
Healthy lifestyle	Appreciation of family values	Feelings and emotions
Parenthood		Making decisions and
Growth and development		Choices

The approach to teaching any of the topics in RSE will involve giving pupils clear information, building up their self-esteem, helping them to communicate, make decisions and express feelings in an appropriate way. The objectives for the programme are outlined in Appendix 1.

RSE AND STAY SAFE PROGRAMME

RSE and Stay Safe are addressed in the context of SPHE. The content objectives that will be addressed in discrete time for the sensitive areas of the RSE and Stay Safe elements of SPHE are listed in Appendix 1 and it is agreed that these objectives will be addressed throughout the student's educational life in St. Paul's Special School as appropriate to their needs. Stay Safe shall be explicitly taught to all students on an annual basis. The Stay Safe Resources may be supplemented with additional resources, however the aims and objectives of the lessons must not deviate from those provided for by the Stay Safe Programme.

MASTURBATION:

Masturbation (self-stimulation) is an expression of sexual needs and desires and occurs in the normal development of sexual behaviour. It is necessary to educate students that masturbation is private and personal. Guidelines are in the staff Handbook and the original copies are available from the Principal's office. (see resources in Appendix I)

GUEST SPEAKERS: (relevant to school leaver 16 - 18yrs)

The principal and teachers involved will consult with Accord or other suitable agencies to arrange guest speakers to deal with certain RSE issues eg. relationships and sexual responsibility, prior to graduating from St. Paul's Special School. The following guidelines will then apply:

- the teacher/teachers concerned will make the guest speaker aware of the individual needs of the students, the policy and ethos within which they will be discussed
- the class teacher and special needs assistants will remain with the class group while the guest speaker is present

CHILD PROTECTION:

This school follows the Department of Education and Science Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and the Mercy Sisters Guidelines, which are based on Children First, National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children. The Principal is the designated liaison person (DLP). Teachers, Special Needs Assistants and all relevant staff are reminded of the school's Child Protection Policy and the procedures to be followed in dealing with incidents related to child protection, annually.

Policies within the school to support the delivery of RSE and SPHE

*Child protection policy

*Code of behaviour

*Anti-Bullying policy

*Toileting/intimate care policy

RESOURCES:

We will select resources/materials that are:

- reflective of our school's ethos
- in line with the principles of the SPHE Curriculum
- appropriate to individual needs of each pupil (**TEACHER TO DISCUSS WITH FAMILY WHICH VOCABULARY IS USED IN THE HOME TO IDENTIFY BODY PARTS- BOTH PRIVATE & PUBLIC**)
- autism specific
- variety of teaching aids e.g. games, dolls, puzzles, pictures, Cd's, Curriculum SPHE Package and a wide selection of relevant books
- community links e.g. Northside Partnership

RSE

"The Girls Group" facilitated and led by a Teacher with the assistance of SNA's to provide students with information on the following topics:

- Naming of body parts
- Dealing with menstruation- Visual Resources
- Care of the body around menstruation- Visual Resources
- General care of the body and private parts- Visual Resources
- Stranger Danger- Stay Safe Programme
- Teenage hormonal difficulties
- Shower/Hygiene Programme
- **CLEAR DEFINITIONS OF PUBLIC & PRIVATE BEHAVIOURS**
- **CLEAR DEFINITIONS OF PUBLIC & PRIVATE SPACES**

"The Boys Group" facilitated and led Class Teachers with the assistance of SNA's, to provide students with information on the following topics:

- Naming of body parts
- Teenage hormonal difficulties
- General care of the body and private parts- Visual Resources
- Stranger Danger- Stay Safe Programme
- Shower / Hygiene Programme
- **CLEAR DEFINITIONS OF PUBLIC & PRIVATE BEHAVIOURS**
- **CLEAR DEFINITIONS OF PUBLIC & PRIVATE SPACES**

This policy was reviewed and ratified at Board of Management Meeting on 25th March 2021

Signed: Paul Burke
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: Adrian Harkin
(Principal)

Date: 25th March 2021

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APPENDIX 1
OBJECTIVES - RSE AND STAY SAFE PROGRAMMES

The following objectives cover the 'sensitive' areas in the RSE and Stay Safe programmes and will be taught at a level appropriate to the needs of each individual student.

PRIMARY 1 – PRIMARY 4

Strand unit: Taking care of my body

Knowing about my body

- name part of the male and female body, using appropriate anatomical terms

Strand unit: Safety and protection:

Personal Safety

- identify situations and places that are safe and those where personal safety might be at risk

Strand unit: Taking care of my body

Knowing about my body

- name part of the male and female body, using appropriate anatomical terms. And identify some of their functions

Strand unit: Safety and protection

Personal safety

- recognise and explore situations where children feel safe and those where safety might be at risk

POST-PRIMARY 1 – POST-PRIMARY 4

Strand unit: Taking care of my body:

Knowing about my body

- realise the importance of caring for and treating his/her own body, and that of others, with dignity and respect
- understand the physical changes taking part in both the male and female body
- realise that these changes do not occur at the same time but nonetheless are predictable and natural and that being different is normal

Strand unit: Growing and changing:

As I grow I change

- recognise and discuss how feelings and emotions are affected by the physical changes that take place at puberty

Birth and new life

- discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby, from conception to birth

Strand unit: Safety and protection:

Personal Safety

- Identify people, places and situations that may threaten personal safety
- Identify situations and places where personal hygiene is required e.g. shower appropriately for their age e.g. teenagers

Strand unit: Taking care of my body

Knowing about my body

- recognise the importance of treating his/her body and others with dignity and respect
- identify and discuss the physical and other changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty and understand that these take place at different rates for everyone
- understand the reproductive system of both male and female adults
- become aware of some communicable diseases and explore how diseases and infections spread

Strand unit: Growing and changing:

As I grow I change

- explore patterns of development and growth, comparing present development with that of earlier stages; physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual

Birth and new life:

- understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within a context of a committed, loving relationship
- discuss and explore the responsibilities involved in being a parent and the emotional and physical maturity required to be a parent

Strand unit: Safety and protection:

Personal Safety

- Identify situations and places that may threaten personal safety

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Resources:

Text Resources:

- 'Boy Talk' and 'Girl Talk' Lucienne Pickering, published by Geoffrey Chapman.
- 'Girlfacts/Boyfacts' Aidan Herron (Ed.) published by Poolbeg Press.

Digital Resources:

- TWINKL.IE (SCHOOL MEMBERSHIP)
- https://www.pdst.ie/sites/default/files/RSE%20Resource%20List%20for%20students%20with%20learning%20difficulties_1.pdf

Physical Resources:

- Anatomically Correct Dolls ordered by post from Findel Education Limited, Unit 11, Naas Road Business Park, Dublin 12. Tel: 01 427 3100.