

# RSE POLICY



Updated February 2006

## **INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT**

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This policy was formulated by the following parties throughout 2005 and January / February 2006 -

- Teaching Staff
- SNA Staff
- Policy committee - with members from the Board of Management, teachers and parents
- Board of Management
- Parents

This policy has been circulated to all parents, teachers and members of the Board of Management for comment.

## **RATIONALE**

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### **RSE - Relationships and Sexuality Education**

RSE will be part of an overall ongoing programme of social, personal and health education which includes a wide range of topics such as healthy eating, abuse of alcohol/drugs, environmental and political issues, safety and social responsibility.

“RSE encompasses the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, sexual identity and intimacy.....

RSE seeks to provide children with opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of relationships and human sexuality, through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework.....

RSE encourages children to examine and explore the various relationships in their lives and to learn how to develop and enjoy friendships which are based on responsibility and mutual respect. Children build the

**foundation** for developing more intimate relationships in later life. They learn about themselves as sexual human beings, about their spiritual, social, emotional and physical growth and about the various changes that occur as they progress towards adolescence and adulthood.....

A responsible, mature and positive attitude is required for the enjoyment and appreciation of relationships and one’s own sexuality.....

The development of particular skills and abilities will be essential to help children understand themselves, communicate with others, make decisions, deal with conflict and, more importantly, develop a positive self-concept. **Promoting confidence and fostering self-esteem are particularly important in enabling children to cope with changes that take place in their lives as they grow.....**

Many people experience unease and embarrassment when discussing feelings, emotions and bodily functions..... The RSE programme should equip children with the appropriate language to talk about themselves, their feelings, their development and their relationships with others.....

RSE is intrinsically linked to the atmosphere of the home, school and classroom. The cultivation of a supportive climate and culture in the home and school, the collaborative and positive approach of the parent and teacher and the use of appropriate methodologies will be central to the success of the RSE programme.”

*- Taken from the Introduction to the Guidelines for Primary Schools for the RSE Programme*

## **RELATIONSHIP TO CHARACTERISTIC SPIRIT OF THE SCHOOL**

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Our mission statement

1. Scoil na mBuachaillí, Cloich na Coillte has a Catholic Ethos, pro-

notes Irish language and culture, is caring-centred and respects different colours, creeds and intellect.

2. Every pupil is encouraged to achieve his full potential – socially, personally and intellectually – in a happy, secure learning environment.
3. The discipline in our school encourages and fosters respect and self-esteem among the pupils.
4. We endeavour to develop supportive and open communication among pupils, teachers, parents, Board of Management and the community.
5. We aim to have a staff that will continue to be committed, progressive and creative.

## **AIMS / PURPOSES**

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- a. To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well being of the child.
- b. To enable the child to develop healthy relationships and friendships.
- c. To foster an understanding of, and develop a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- d. To enable the child to acquire an understanding of, and respect for, human love and reproduction.
- e. To develop and promote in the child a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life.
- f. To enable the child to be comfortable with the sexuality of oneself and that of others while growing and developing.

**These are the overall aims of the programme to be met in ways appropriate to the age and stage of development of the children.**

## PROCEDURES/GUIDELINES

### **Delivery of Programme**

- The programme will be delivered throughout the school year.
- RSE will be provided throughout the school from infants to sixth class. It will be a spiral curriculum - this means that children will return to similar topics each year. These topics are developed to suit the age and maturity of the children.

### **The Programme**

Topics for pupils from Junior Infants to second class will include:

- *expressing opinions and listening to the opinions of others*
- *the different changes taking place in the children's bodies as they grow and develop*
- *caring for themselves regarding hygiene, exercise and sleep*
- *keeping safe, knowing what to do if they get lost*
- *recognizing and expressing feelings like happiness and sadness*
- *appreciating and understanding family life*
- *making and having friends*
- *coping with "falling out" with friends*
- *making responsible choices appropriate to their age*

Topics for pupils from third to sixth class will include:

- *caring for themselves regarding hygiene, exercise and sleep*
- *keeping themselves safe*
- *changes in their bodies as they mature and develop*
- *how babies are conceived and born (5th/6th class programme)*
- *their feelings and the appropriate expression of these feelings*
- *extended family relationships*
- *making healthy and responsible decisions*

- *the nature of friendship*
- *handling conflict in friendships*
- *evaluating the portrayal of relationships and sexuality in the media*

Occasionally, if appropriate, outside professionals may be asked to help out with the sensitive areas of the programme. Teachers will be present at all times as they know the children in their care best and are sensitive to their needs.

### **Parents right to choose**

- Each family will get a copy of this policy.
- A permission note will be sent to all parents at the start of each year - this will allow parents, if they wish to withdraw their child from the programme. If parents are unsure they may if they wish speak to Ms. Orla O’Keeffe (Post of Responsibility Holder for this area).
- Children who are withdrawn will be sent to another classroom.
- Literature and educational resources in use in the classroom will be available for viewing.

### **Teachers right to choose**

- It is hoped that the entire programme would be delivered by class teachers. If teachers are uncomfortable with any part of the programme an outside professional may be asked to assist - however as stated above it will always be in the presence of the class teacher.
- Before an outside professional is engaged they will be given a copy of our policy by the teacher concerned.

### **Puberty**

- Pubertal issues (for boys and girls) will be dealt with in Rang 5, when the teacher deems it appropriate to do so.

## **Dealing with Questions**

- The material discussed in class will always be “class appropriate”.
- Factual Questions and / or moral questions will be dealt with in a “class appropriate” manner in line with the ethos of the school.
- Question Boxes will **not** be used.
- If a particular question from a child falls within the agreed programme for that class group, the teacher will answer the question in the class setting. If the question falls outside the agreed programme and may be unsuitable for the class level as laid down and agreed, the teacher may suggest that the child discuss that particular question with his parent/guardian outside of school.
- If a question asked concerns a moral issue, the answer given will be consistent with the ethos of the school.
- The child's right to privacy will be respected at all times. Teachers, in their capacity as professional educators, will neither answer nor allow questions which may invade the children's privacy.

## **Confidentiality**

- Before any discussion begins ground rules will be established by the teacher with the class.
- Children will be encouraged to discuss issues that are brought up in class at home with their parents/guardians.
- However it will be explained that whatever is discussed in the classroom must **not** be spoken about in the schoolyard / in the presence of younger children.

## **Guest Speakers**

- The class teacher will always be present to ensure that our school policy is adhered to.
- A copy of this policy will be given to Guest Speakers.
- The class teacher will monitor questions asked and answered.

## **Assessment of materials/videos etc**

- Class teachers will assess videos/posters/worksheets prior to their

use in the classroom to ensure their suitability.

### **Roles and Responsibility**

- Post of Responsibility holder, Ms. O’Keeffe will coordinate the progress of the policy.
- She will encourage and accept feedback on its implementation and report back to staff and if necessary to the Policy Committee / Board of Management / Parents.

### **Timeframe for Implementation**

- The RSE Programme will be implemented in full in late February 2006.

### **Timeframe for Review**

- This policy and the programme will be reviewed initially in June 2006 and thereafter at staff meetings / Board of Management meetings / Policy Committee meetings where appropriate.

## **RESOURCES/IMPLICATIONS**

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- Copies of this policy will be sent to all families in the school and thereafter will be available for any parent/guardian who may want it.
- Permission note will be sent home each year - different note for each class (each one outlining the Class Curriculum).
- The Board of Management will be asked to cover the cost of outside professionals (if necessary).
- Copies of this policy will be given to all outside professionals.

## **MONITORING/EVALUATION/REVIEW**

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- This policy to be reviewed at intervals to assess its effectiveness.
- Parents/pupils will be consulted occasionally for feedback on the programme.

**February 2006**