



CASTLEBAR EDUCATE TOGETHER
NATIONAL SCHOOL

Castlebar Educate Together National School

Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy

Introductory Statement and Rationale

This plan was formulated by the teaching staff of Castlebar Educate Together National School, in consultation with the Board of Management and the parent body (represented by the Home/School Association), in conjunction with a whole-school plan for S.P.H.E., as we believe that S.P.H.E. and R.S.E. is a shared responsibility and their contributions and involvement are essential to the effective implementation of the R.S.E and S.P.H.E. programmes in the school. Training in RSE was attended in May 2022 and this policy was drafted to reflect that and to include relevant information and resources following such. This policy should also be read in conjunction with the school's Whole-School S.P.H.E policy.

R.S.E. has been taught in our school, in line with the Primary School Curriculum, through the Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme. All staff members acknowledge the importance of S.P.H.E. in our school, and the need for a whole-school approach to the teaching of R.S.E., and this policy was therefore prioritised in order to formalise and further enhance the teaching and learning of S.P.H.E., and to plan for it on a whole-school basis.

Our school's ethos

The R.S.E. Programme of Castlebar Educate Together National School is developed in the context of the core values that inform the ethos of the school: child-centred, co- educational, equality-based and democratically run. Honesty, respect, justice, integrity, trust and responsibility should emanate from a basic sense of social, ethical and moral standards. Castlebar ETNS wishes to encourage children to base relationships with others on friendship and understanding, and to be sensitive to difference and variety among people, including developing sensitivity to people's various strengths and vulnerabilities. The ethos of the school provides a supportive climate to help children understand themselves, communicate with others, make decisions, deal with conflict, and develop a positive self-concept. The working partnership of parent and teacher, and the inclusive nature of the ethos of our school, enables our children to develop the aspects of their personality that will help to make them a rounded balanced person.

Definition of RSE

R.S.E. is an active, collaborative and positive process, using appropriate methodologies, whereby the child acquires a knowledge and understanding of:

1. Self, friendships and relationships
2. The moral, spiritual and social framework of human sexuality
3. A respect for love, sexual intercourse and reproduction
4. A sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life

Through this process the child is enabled to continue developing a mature sexuality for him/herself and in relation to others, while growing and developing throughout their lives. The programme will be taught in the context of the philosophy and ethos of the school, and using the R.S.E. curriculum as set out by the Department of Education.



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Relationship of R.S.E. to S.P.H.E.

Castlebar ETNS believes that it is important to teach R.S.E. in the context of Social Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E.). The S.P.H.E. programme provides opportunities for children to learn basic personal and social skills which foster integrity, self-confidence, and self-esteem. It also allows opportunities to nurture sensitivity to the feelings and rights of others. Central to relationships and sexuality education is the fostering of self-esteem, through which the children become more responsible in making choices and decisions in all aspects of life. R.S.E. is an integral part of S.P.H.E. It also shares content with language, the arts, physical education, the Ethical Education curriculum (Learn Together Programme) and with Social Environmental and Scientific Education (S.E.S.E.). Many of the personal and social skills which we hope to develop in R.S.E. e.g. safety, communication, understanding cause and effect are explored in subject areas like the Ethical Education programme, English, History, Geography and Science. Giving children the opportunities to role-play feelings and situations can develop the personal and social skills through music, dance and the arts in. An integrative approach is very significant for R.S.E., and the R.S.E. lessons will be integrated into various subject areas as outlined above, thus ensuring that the pupils encounter R.S.E. in a holistic manner rather than in isolation.

What the School currently provides

Provision for R.S.E. is made through some aspects of SPHE. Social Personal and Health Education is already provided through the informal activities of the school. Provision is also made for S.P.H.E. in the discrete timetable. Formal activities vary and include the use of the following programmes:

- Walk Tall
- The Stay Safe Programme
- Be Safe
- R.S.E. Books
- Making the Link and Beyond
- Fundamental Movement Skills
- Lift Off
- Learn Together Programme (Ethical Education)

Resources also include library books and DVDs for pupils, staff and parents. (Please refer to Whole School S.P.H.E. Plan for detailed outline of the S.P.H.E. plan, as well as an extensive list of the resources used in the teaching of S.P.H.E. in our school).

Aims of the R.S.E. programme

The aims of the R.S.E. programme are to:

- enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being 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



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Management & Organisation of RSE in our school

- The RSE policy will first be introduced to parents/carers at enrolment meetings, where all relevant school policies are highlighted and explained.
- The children will be taught the R.S.E. programme in their class group, by their class teacher or another teacher in the school, where relevant.
- In general, the RSE lessons will be co-educational, with the exception of fifth and sixth classes. In this circumstance, boys and girls may initially be given separate classes but will come together for further discussion. Where possible, the teaching of some of the lessons on sensitive issues will be done by either a male and/or female teacher.
- The content of the curriculum will be adhered to at all times, and the Department of Education and Skills RSE programme will be used as a core resource in all classes.
- Sensitive Issues: By its nature, R.S.E. explores issues which give rise to different views and sensitivities. The teachers, in their professional capacity, will use their training and the R.S.E. guidelines in dealing with these issues with due regard for the ethos of the school. (See *Appendix 1* for Sensitive Issues Vocabulary)
- Many of the objectives of R.S.E. are similar to those in other curriculum areas and will be treated in a cross curricular manner. Some aspects of R.S.E. will be taught within a specific delineated time in the school timetable and it is the parents/carers right to withdraw their child from these R.S.E. and classes, should they wish (see role of the parents/carers).
- All issues discussed in class will be dealt with in a sensitive and confidential manner. Disclosures causing concern will be handled in accordance with the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 2017 (DES) and the Children First Act, 2015 (ref. Child Protection Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment).

Role of the Teacher

- Teachers have a right to training in the delivery of the R.S.E. programme.
- Teachers have a right to have adequate resources to teach the programme.
- The teachers' role must be considered to be complementary to that of the parents/carer, taking cognisance of the individual needs, stage of development and family backgrounds of the children.
- It is the teachers' responsibility to create a climate where mutual respect is promoted and practiced and the dignity of each individual is respected.
- It is the teachers' responsibility to provide the relevant information for parents (in the form of notes home) 2 weeks in advance of their child engaging with the 'sensitive issues' topics of the R.S.E. programme.
- Teachers will teach only the topics laid down for the class and will answer only those questions on the programme for that year. RSE will be taught in Junior Infants to Sixth Class. All information delivered will be informed by the content objectives of the SPHE Curriculum (see SPHE Curriculum Statement, page 10).
- The teachers will be responsible for the delivery of the R.S.E. programme in their class, with the assistance of support staff (S.E.T and/or E.A.L.), or other staff where necessary.
- Teachers are also responsible for integrating R.S.E. into other areas of the curriculum.
- The teachers will encourage the children to use the R.S.E. information appropriately.
- The teachers will use their professional judgement and the RSE training guidelines in dealing with information or enquiries made by children all topics. Children will be given opportunities to ask questions. Questions and answers are governed by the context of the S.P.H.E. programme. The teacher will answer questions in a neutral and factual manner. If a question is inappropriate to a particular stage, the teacher may explain that this will be discussed at another class level, or may refer it back to the parents.
- It is the teachers' responsibility to evaluate the programme, and to assess the progress of the pupils in their class.



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Role of the parents/carers

In S.P.H.E. and R.S.E., parents are acknowledged as the primary educators of their children, and the school will work in partnership with them in a supportive role. On enrolment in Castlebar ETNS parents will be provided with an overview of the S.P.H.E./R.S.E. programme. This will also be highlighted at class meetings at the start of Term 1 each year. (Additional information is available for parents/carers through the parents' booklets, which are available from healthpromotion.ie)

Taking into account the independent needs and family background of the children, it is the parents/carers responsibility to impart their own chosen values and beliefs.

The school will allocate a set 2 weeks per year whereby the 'sensitive issues' of the R.S.E. curriculum are taught. Parents will be provided with an outline of the lessons/sensitive issues before they are taught, so that they can prepare the child before they are dealt with in school, if they so wish. This information will be in the form of handouts for parents from the R.S.E. programme. As part of the second class curriculum, a HSE document will be distributed to assist parents if they so wish called 'Talking to your child about Relationships, Sexuality and Growing Up' accompanied by a story 'Tom's Flower Power; A gentle explanation of how babies are made'.

A parent's right to withdraw a pupil from the sensitive lessons of the R.S.E. programme will be honoured, on the understanding that the parent is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education. A minimum of fourteen days notice is given to parents in relation to the teaching of 'sensitive issues' in the R.S.E. curriculum. It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the school in writing a minimum of 7 days before such lessons commence of their decision to withdraw their child, and of their willingness to cover sensitive issues with their child outside of school hours (see Appendix 2).

Guidelines for when children are withdrawn from the R.S.E. programme:

For a child who is being withdrawn from class for the duration of a discrete SPHE lesson, the following options are available to the parents/carers to choose from:

- (a) The child may be withdrawn from school and supervised by their parent/ carer pending the completion of the R.S.E. lesson (approx 30/40 minutes). The child will then return to class for the continuation of his/her school day, or
- (b) The child may go to another classroom under the supervision of another member of staff for the duration of time that the R.S.E. lesson is being taught. They may read their library book during this time, or may engage in another activity, as decided upon by their class teacher.

If a child is withdrawn from the class for the teaching of sensitive issues, the school cannot guarantee that the other children will not inform them about the content discussed. The teacher may also need to make incidental reference to the issue at another time while that child is present. Although we aim to set specific times for the teachings of R.S.E., parents/carers must be aware that these times can change at short notice. The school will notify parents as soon as possible of these time changes.

The school ethos of inclusion must prevail at all times in this regard.

If a parent/carers has any queries or difficulties regarding the above guidelines, they should refer to the Principal or the Deputy Principal for clarification.



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Special Educational Needs Provision

The RSE programme will be adapted and implemented in co-operation with teachers, parents and the child, where relevant to ensure that key messages are taught to and understood by all pupils.

Provision for ongoing support, development and review

- The RSE programme will reflect this policy document.
- The BOM and school will encourage staff to avail of in-service development in RSE, and will endeavour to provide up-to-date school resources.

Implementation

A. Roles and Responsibilities

The Principal, Deputy Principal and APII (overseen by the BOM) are responsible for overseeing and supporting the implementation of the S.P.H.E. Programme.

Class teachers are responsible for the implementation of R.S.E Programme in their classes, including the distribution of relevant information and notes to parents/carers.

B. Timeframe

This whole-school policy will be implemented from 2022-2023 school year.

Review

Prior to the launch of this RSE policy, a draft policy was reviewed by staff members and by the Parent Teacher Association.

This policy will be reviewed during the 2024-2025 school year, when we have completed a full school cycle of Junior Infants – Sixth Class.

The policy will be reviewed before then, should a need arise.

Ratification and Communication

The attention of all newly appointed staff will be drawn to this whole-school plan upon their appointment to the school by the Principal.

This policy will be published on the school website, and a copy of it will be provided to the Home/School Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and the Patron, if requested. Hard copies of this, and all school policies, are available at the school upon request.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management September 2022.

Signed: _____ (Chairperson, BOM)



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Signed: _____ (Principal)

Date: 29th September 2022

Date of next review: June 2024



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Appendix 1: Sensitive Issues Key Vocabulary

Junior Infants

| | |
|--|---|
| Strand | Myself |
| Strand Unit | Growing and Changing Objective: The child should be enabled to develop an awareness of human birth – that a baby grows and is nurtured in the mother’s womb until ready to be born |
| Language (RSE programme pgs. 68-76, 158-167) | Born, womb, breastfed, little seed, nine months in the womb |

Senior Infants

| | |
|---|--|
| Strand | Myself |
| Strand Unit | Taking Care of my Body Objective: The child should be enabled to name the parts of the male and female body, using appropriate anatomical terms |
| Language (RSE programme pgs. 148-156) | Penis, vulva/vagina, breasts |

1st Class

| | |
|---|--|
| Strand | Myself |
| Strand Unit | Growing and Changing Objective: The child should be enabled to appreciate what is necessary in order to provide and care for new-born babies, in both animal and human world- <i>love, regular feeding, nappy changing, careful bathing and regular check-ups</i> |
| Language (RSE programme pgs.162-169) | Vagina, anus |



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2nd Class

| | |
|---|---|
| Strand | Myself |
| Strand Unit | Taking Care of my Body Objective: The child should be enabled to name body parts of the male and female body, using appropriate anatomical terms, and identify some of their functions |
| Language (RSE programme pgs. 68-75) | Vulva, urine, urethra |

3rd Class

| | |
|---|--|
| Strand | Myself |
| Strand Unit | Growing and Changing Objective: The child should be enabled to discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human body, from conception to birth |
| Language (RSE programme pgs. 70-79) | Pregnancy, umbilical cord, navel (belly button) |

4th Class

| | |
|---|--|
| Strand | Myself |
| Strand Unit | Taking Care of my Body Objective: The child should be enabled to understand the physical changes taking place in both the male and the female body – <i>growing height and weight, increasing strength, growing from boy to man, growing from girl to woman</i> |
| Language (RSE programme pgs. 170-205) | Fertilized egg, scan, hormones, cells, menstruations, periods, pubic hair, pubic areas, perspiration |



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5th Class

| | |
|---|--|
| Strand | Myself |
| Strand Unit | <p>Growing and Changing</p> <p>Objective 1: The child should be enabled to 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.</p> <p><u>Female</u>: hormonal changes, changing body shape, development of breasts, appearance of pubic hair, onset of menstruation (periods) <u>Male</u>: physical growth, enlargement of testicles and penis, appearance of pubic underarm and facial hair, breaking of the voice, beginning of sperm production, onset of nocturnal omissions</p> <p>Objective 2: The child should be enabled to understand the reproductive system of both male and female adults</p> |
| Language (RSE programme pgs. 82-92, 94-101) | Ovaries, fallopian tubes, uterus, cervix, testicle, scrotum, sperm production, erection, wet dreams/ejaculation, conception |

6th Class

| | |
|---|---|
| Strand | Myself |
| Strand Unit | <p>Growing and Changing</p> <p>Objective 1: The child should be enabled to understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed and loving relationship</p> <p>Objective 2: The child should be enabled to discuss and explore the responsibilities involved in being a parent and the emotional and physical maturity required to be a parent (Preparing for the birth of a baby, taking care of offspring from birth onwards, emotional, psychological and practical provisions)</p> |
| Language (RSE programme pgs. 184-197) | Adolescence, responsibilities, intercourse |



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Appendix 2: Letter of withdrawal of pupil from sensitive lessons in R.S.E. programme

Child's Name: _____

Child's Class: _____

Teacher: _____

I wish to withdraw my child from the sensitive issues taught in the Relationship and Sexuality Education Curriculum, and I understand the alternative arrangements that may be made in the school's whole-school R.S.E. policy.

I am taking responsibility to cover the sensitive issues with my child outside of school hours.

I understand that the school cannot guarantee that the other children will not inform my child about the content of these sensitive lessons. I am aware that the teacher may also need to make incidental reference to the sensitive issues at another time while my child is present.

Parent/Carer Signature: _____ Date: _____

A COPY OF THIS LETTER SHOULD BE KEPT ON THE CHILD'S FILE.

A COPY OF THIS LETTER SHOULD BE SCANNED AND UPLOADED TO THE CHILD'S ALADDIN PROFILE.

A COPY OF THIS LETTER SHOULD BE GIVE TO THE CHILD'S PARENT/CARER FOR THEIR RECORDS.