**Policy Document on Relationships and Sexuality Education**

**St. Colman’s B.N.S, Kanturk, Co. Cork**

This Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy statement has been reviewed by Parents’ Representative, Teachers and the Board of Management of St Colman’s BNS.

**Our School’s Philosophy / Mission Statement**

Our mission statement states that we value and respect each member of the school community , and that we will endeavour to enhance the self-esteem of everyone in that community, to permeate in the pupils respect for themselves and for people and property and to encourage in them the idea of being responsible

The Department of Education and Skills recognises R.S.E. as part of the Social, Physical and Health Education Programme. It recognises the role of education in the holistic development of the child, while taking into account the roles of the partners in education – parents/school/Department of Education and Skills in this process.

R.S.E. , as part of the S.P.H.E. programme provides children with structured opportunities to develop knowledge, attitudes, values, beliefs and practical skills necessary to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships as children and subsequently, as adults.

This R.S.E. policy is in keeping with the Catholic Ethos of our school. The moral values, the spiritual development and the personal growth of every individual pupil are of primary importance.

**RSE in the context of our SPHE Programme**

Throughout the school year, Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is taught as a subject from 1st class to 6th class. A wide variety of topics is included on this programme, at age-appropriate levels. RSE forms a part of this programme; it is a spiral curriculum which ensures that topics are taught in a developmental manner throughout a child’s primary school years.

The Aims of R.S.E. are as follows:

* To enhance the personal development, the self- esteem and the well-being 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 area.
* The process will be graded in accordance with age and development of the child.
* To enable the child to be comfortable with his/her own sexuality and the sexuality of others while growing and developing.

**Broad objectives of the RSE Programme**

The RSE programme should enable the child;

* To acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self.
* To develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth.
* To develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well-being of others.
* To understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and in wider contexts.
* To develop an awareness of differing family patterns and to create a sensitive environment towards these structures
* To come to value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood.
* To develop strategies to make decisions, solve problems and implement actions in various personal, social and health contexts.
* To become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change, and to understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self- identity.
* To develop personal skills which will help them to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships.
* To develop some coping strategies to protect themselves and others from various forms of abuse.
* To acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction.
* To acquire and use an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development.
* To develop in the child a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making.

**Guidelines for the management and organisation of RSE in**

**St Colman’s BNS, Kanturk, Co. Cork**

This graded programme will be taught in all classes from First to Sixth Class. It will be integrated very closely with other programmes / initiatives used within the school.

E.g. Religion, Health Education, Stay Safe, Bí Folláin, Walk Tall, Language, Art and P.E. Individual teachers will have the freedom to bring in an expert to deal with any area of the programme where they feel this is necessary, especially at senior level. We invite our Health Board Nurse to work with 6th class for one day annually to speak on the topic of Growing & Changing. ( The Busy Bodies Programme)

The Principal Teacher will support the implementation of the programme and will facilitate the appropriate communication structures between teachers, parents and members of the B.O. M. She will facilitate such discussion for members of staff as is necessary. The Principal Teacher together with the staff will strive to create an environment where every child’s self- esteem is fostered.

Answering Questions:

Should a pupil require information that is not in line with the curriculum content and not considered to be age appropriate for the general body of pupils -

The teacher

* Will not give such information as not age appropriate
* Refer him to his parents

Ground rules are set as to the seriousness of the issues and children are encouraged to ask responsible questions

Privacy:

Everyone has the right to privacy (Universal Declaration of Human Rights and UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child). Teachers will not answer personal questions about themselves nor require the child to give information of a personal nature which they do not wish to share.

Rights/ Responsibilities of Parents/ Guardians

* Since the parents/guardians are the primary educators, the implementation of the programme depends on their approval.
* On Enrolment, parents will be provided with an overview of the SPHE / RSE programme. They can view the content of RSE online at

<https://ecdrumcondra.ie/35-programmes/graphic-design/229-rse-prim>

and the list of possible sensitive issues .They will have access to lesson plans at any particular stage and will be notified in advance of any sensitive theme to be taught and discussed .

* A parent’s wish to withdraw from the process will be honoured on the understanding that the parent is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education. It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the school in writing of this decision .Any queries or objections parents/guardians may have will be dealt with as in B below.

Rights and responsibilities of teachers:

* Each teacher will teach SPHE programme including the sensitive issues.
* A teacher’s right to opt out from teaching the sensitive issues will be honoured. Provision will be made for these issues
* Guest speakers: The school nurse will talk to 6th class and deliver the Busy Bodies programme – All information delivered by the school nurse will be informed by the content objectives of the SPHE curriculum. Teachers will be present when the talk takes place during school hours.
* Teachers have undergone In-service in RSE . Ongoing and appropriate education will be provided as the need arises.

The procedures for review and evaluation will be as follows;

A Progress

Consultation and discussion at Staff level

* Feedback from parents
* Reaction and feedback from children

B Complaints/Clarification

* Consultation with class teacher
* Consultation with Principal
* Consultation with B.O.M.

**Confidentiality**

Where there is disclosure by a child of abuse, or a teacher has any concerns about a child, the school authorities will follow our Child Protection Policy. The Principal Eilish Finnegan is our Designated Liaison Person. Mary Boyce is the Deputy Designated Liaison Person.

If a child is withdrawn from the teaching of sensitive issues, we cannot guarantee that the other children will not tell him about what happened.

**Ongoing support, development and review**

The Board of Management of St. Colman’s BNS supports the implementation of the RSE Programme. We recognise that our school has a supportive role to that of the home and we have a commitment to ensuring that:

* Our teachers have access to in-career development opportunities.
* Relevant teaching materials are provided.

This policy was reviewed in 2019 following a staff meeting and communication with Parents Association, and BOM. It is ratified by the BOM and is being implemented by teachers. It will be reviewed informally at planning meetings.

As with all our plans and policies, parents have access to this policy on request.

**The child with special needs:**

Sexuality affects friendships and the quality of social interactions and it lies at the core of personal fulfilment as individuals. The approach to RSE in the school will take cognisance of this understanding of sexuality when dealing with children with special needs. RSE provides opportunities for all children to learn to accept each other, and to recognise and promote the dignity of each human being. However, where severe learning difficulties occur some adaptations will be made to the programme to suit ability and rates of physical growth. Those with special needs will be enabled to cope with their emerging sexuality and their consequences as they grow and develop. Many programmes of this nature are already in place, and for the child’s protection, it is important that these programmes would begin at an early age. The content will be negotiated with pupils’ own parents/carers in conjunction with the SEN Teacher. St Colman’s BNS is cognisant of the fact that children with Special Educational Needs can be especially vulnerable in terms of Child Protection

**Provision for on-going support, development and review:**

- Where necessary or if opportunities arise, the BOM may be requested to fund/support:

- In career development for teachers

- This policy and the RSE programme will be reviewed after two years and every 2 years thereafter. RSE resources will also be reviewed to ensure that they are kept up to date.

**The Board of Management is ultimately responsible for the implementation, reviewing and evaluation of this policy.**

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Chairperson\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 1**

**Objectives that cover RSE and Stay Safe Programmes**

The following objectives cover the ‘sensitive’ areas in the RSE and Stay Safe programmes. They will be addressed in both classes at each level, year two serving to revise the content objectives covered in year one.

**1st and 2nd:**

*Strand Unit: Taking care of my body*

*Knowing about my body*

* Name parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms, and identify some of their functions – Bottom, Penis , Vagina, Urethra, Womb, Breast, Breastfeeding.

*Strand Unit: Safety and protection:*

*Personal safety*

* Recognise and explore situations where children feel safe and those where safety might be at risk.

**3rd and 4th:**

*Strand Unit: Taking Care of my body*

*Knowing about my body*

* Revision of the appropriate Anatomical term covered in 1st & 2nd.
* Realise the importance of caring for and treating his/her own body, and that of others, with dignity and respect

*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

**5th and 6th:**

*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

*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
* Discus 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.

***The 5th & 6th Class Content as outlined above is covered by the Public Health Nurse annually with 6th Class only. The Nurse follows the age appropriate HSE Busy Bodies Programme. Parents can request a copy of this programme from the HSE.***