

R.S.E. Policy

One of the subjects of the revised curriculum is SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education). This includes a module on Relationships and Sexuality Education for all mainstream classes in Primary school which must be delivered on an annual basis. Our school aims to develop a policy on RSE which reflects our ethos and vision and is in accordance with the National Curriculum and Guidelines for RSE as prepared by the NCCA.

School Ethos

Nicker National School is a Catholic primary school. We aim to foster the values of respect, honesty, courtesy, responsibility, tolerance, and consideration for others. We cherish each child as an individual and we strive to develop his spiritual, intellectual, artistic, physical, emotional and social potential. We hope each pupil can live life as a child and we aim to equip him to live a responsible life as an adult. We have a committed staff that strives to create an atmosphere where cultural and religious diversity is respected. We recognise parents as the first and most important educators of their own child. We encourage communication and parental involvement, based on mutual trust and understanding. We aim to enable children to work together in a supportive, respectful partnership within an inclusive school environment, to respect themselves and others and to become an active citizen in society.

Definition of RSE

Relationships 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. This education is delivered consciously and unconsciously by parents, teachers, peers, adults and the media. In school, RSE will provide structured opportunities for pupils to acquire a knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework.

This approach gives opportunities for children and young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible manner. In Nicker National School, RSE aims to help children learn, at home and in school, about their friendships and relationships with others. This work will be based on developing a good self-image, promoting respect for themselves and for others, and providing them with appropriate information. RSE is an integral part of Social, Personal and Health Education and must be taught in this context.

R.S.E. 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. (p. 5 NCCA curriculum and guidelines for RSE). 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
- Parenting, personal and social skills and relationships
- Sexuality in context – part of a loving relationship.

Relationship of RSE to SPHE

RSE is an integral part of Social, Personal and Health Education and must be taught in this context. SPHE and RSE will be taught throughout the school from infants to sixth class in a spiral curriculum, and will be formally timetabled. RSE is also offered informally to pupils through a caring and supportive school atmosphere. It is fostered in positive relationships between home, school and community.

Policies which support SPHE/RSE

- Nicker N.S. Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child protection policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- School Visitors Policy
- Internet Safety Policy
- Anti-Cyber-Bullying Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Administration of Medicines Policy.

In keeping with the sentiment and spirit of these policies, we informally support many of 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 well-being of all of the members of the school community.

Existing Provision for RSE

Prior to the current RSE Policy being in place, Nicker N.S. provided RSE through the formal and informal activities of the school, which include:

1. The SPHE Programme. (Walk Tall etc.)
2. The promotion of a caring atmosphere on a daily basis.
3. Lessons dealing with enhancement of self-esteem (Friends for Life, Zippy's Friends).
4. The Stay Safe Programme.
5. Health Education lessons.
6. The SESE Programme.

Aims of our RSE programme

When due account is taken of intrinsic abilities and varying circumstances, the Relationships and Sexuality Education curriculum should enable the child to:

- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth
- To assist parents in their role as primary educators, so that they may guide their child's physical, social and emotional development.
- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and 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, relationships and sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- To develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well-being of others.
- To acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self.
- To understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and in wider contexts
- To acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction.
- To develop and promote in the child a sense of understanding of and respect for the process of birth and new life.
- To develop some coping strategies to protect oneself and others from various forms of abuse.
- Acquire and use an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development
- To develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making.
- To become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow, change and understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity
- To develop an awareness of differing family patterns
- To come to value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood

Curriculum Content for RSE :

The programme will be available in the school in order that parents may familiarise themselves with the contents. The R.S.E. policy of the school is obliged to indicate the biological terms for the body that will be used and the ages they will be introduced:

Junior and Senior Infants:

head, eye, ear, nose, breast (in the context of feeding), skin, hips, navel (where baby is joined to mother), bottom, penis and vagina (in context of going to the toilet), knee, leg, foot.

1st and 2nd Classes:

- Revision of infant terminology.
- Pupils are expected to be able to name parts of the male and female body using appropriate names and identify some of their functions e.g.
 - Mouth – swallowing, chewing food, breathing
 - Vagina – opening where a baby leaves a mother's womb
 - Penis – passing urine
 - Breasts – feeding a baby
 - Naval – where baby was joined to mother before being born

3rd Class and 4th Classes:

- Revision of terms previously introduced.
- Pupils are expected to be able to discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby from conception to birth

5th and 6th Classes:

- Revision of terms previously introduced.
- Identify and explore physical changes at the onset of puberty.
- Understand how conception to birth takes place.
- Building on the programme already covered. The manner in which all issues are discussed will be with sensitivity, professionalism and an awareness of varying group dynamics within a class.
- Pupils are expected to be able to identify and discuss physical and other changes that occur in boys and girls during puberty and to understand the reproductive systems of male and female adults. Again, boys and girls will be taught separately as deemed appropriate by the teacher.
 - Female: a) Hormonal changes b) Changing body shapes c) Development of breasts d) Appearance of pubic hair e) Onset of menstruation (periods) f) Beginning of ovulation.
 - Male: a) Hormonal changes b) Physical growth c) Growth of testicles and penis d) Appearance of pubic hair, underarm and facial hair e) Breaking of the voice f) Beginning of sperm production g) Onset of nocturnal emissions (wet dreams)

Pupils are expected to be able to understand conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship. Children will understand that there are many different types of relationships and family units.

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School

The RSE programme will be delivered as follows:

- General Management and Organisation
Parents are the primary educators of their child. The school has a role to play in supporting and complementing parents in this work, helping to communicate the Christian visions of human life and relationships through the RSE programme. It is the policy of our school to nurture Catholic values in relation to love, marriage, parenthood and family life.
- RSE is an integral part of the SPHE programme and will be taught in this context. The curriculum is spiral in nature and all content will be delivered developmentally throughout the child's time in Nicker N.S. RSE will be taught in the normal classroom situation by the class teacher. All information delivered will be informed by the content objectives of the SPHE Curriculum.

- RSE specific education will be covered in,
 - a) Strand: Myself Strand Units: Self Identity, Taking Care of My Body, Growing and Changing, Safety and protection
 - b) Strand: Myself and Others Strand Units: Myself and My Family My Friends and Other People, Relating to Others
- The content of the RSE programme will be covered in eight to ten lessons per year.

Sensitive Issues

- Sensitive issues include lessons on naming the body parts (Senior Infants) and their functions (2nd Class); changes in their bodies as they grow and develop and lessons on conception and birth (5th and 6th Class). An outline of the content of lessons specific to each class level will be available to parents before they are taught, so that they can prepare the child, if they so wish. The home-school links letters from the DES RSE Resource Books may be sent home upon completion of lessons.
- A parent's right to withdraw a pupil 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 their decision to withdraw and their willingness to cover sensitive issues with their child outside of school hours. A child who has been withdrawn from class for the duration of a discrete RSE lesson will be accommodated in another classroom under the supervision of another teacher. The teacher may need to make incidental reference to the issue at another time while that child is present.
- Each class teacher will teach the RSE programme including the sensitive issues unless they choose to opt out. A teacher's right to opt out from teaching the sensitive issues will be honoured. In this case, arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme will be made by the Principal.
- Teachers will teach only the topics laid down for the class and will only answer those questions which are relevant to the programme for that year. Questions arising from curriculum content will be addressed in a sensible, sensitive and age-appropriate manner. Should a pupil require information that is not in line with the curriculum content and not considered to be age-appropriate, the school will not give such information and will refer the question back to the parents. Teachers will not answer personal questions about themselves nor require the child to give information of a personal nature which he does not wish to share.
- Language will, at all times, reflect respect for those involved and for educational content. In Nicker N.S. we will give children the correct and appropriate language to communicate confidently about themselves, their sexuality and their relationships,
- The school holds no responsibility for any information which the pupil may receive outside the direct teaching of the RSE lessons.

Outside Speakers

As in the case with all subjects, outside speakers may sometimes be invited to speak to the children on some aspects of R.S.E. The policy of this school will be outlined and care taken to ensure that the guest speaker is aware of the content which would be covered by the class teacher in the areas of growth and development and reproduction. The guest speaker would be required to only cover matters which are currently in our agreed policy. The class teacher would remain with the class group while the guest speaker is present.

Child Protection

The school follows the 'Children First Child Protection Guidelines' and has a Child Protection Policy, with the Principal, Karen Franklin, as Designated Liaison Person. In cases of disclosure; the D.L.P. will follow the procedures as set out in Children First. The Deputy DLP is Siobhán English. Followin training in Child Protection

Evaluation

- Teacher observation.
- Inventory of what needs to be changed.
- Ensuring all strands are covered.
- Teacher designed tasks and tests and self-evaluation.

Roles and Responsibilities

The whole school community of B.O.M., staff, pupils and parents play a key role in the formulation and implementation of the plan.

Provision for ongoing support and development

Nicker N.S. will offer ongoing training for teachers where necessary to help them implement the RSE programme. Information regarding courses or training for parents will be offered and may be organised by the Parents' Association/BOM/school.

Relevant RSE school resources will be sourced, stored and updated.