

# Scoil Ursula

## ■ Title

### **POLICY ON RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE)**

## ■ Introductory Statement

*This policy was initially drafted in line with the DES Policy Guidelines for RSE, 1997 by a subcommittee of teachers, parents and Board members. It was reviewed and updated in accordance with current guidelines and best practice in 2011/2012. Following consultation with the Partners in Education it was disseminated to the wider school community through the Board of Management and re-ratified by the board on \_\_\_\_\_. It was further reviewed by PDST Advisor, Ciara Delaney, in December, 2015 and amended accordingly.*

## ■ Rationale

The provision of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is obligatory in primary schools as part of the Primary School Curriculum. As such we felt it necessary to update our previous policy in line with current guidelines as advised by the School Development Planning Service.

## ■ Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

The Ursuline education aims at the development of the pupil in a spiritual, moral and intellectual way. Spiritual development of the children consists in teaching them the Christian faith and inspiring in them a love for God and a love and respect for each other. Moral development runs parallel to the spiritual development of the child.

While the ethos of the school is essentially Catholic, the views of the minority religious and non-believers are accommodated and respected by teachers and pupil.

A positive climate is used to motivate the pupil. Every effort is made to enhance the child's self image and to foster a friendly and supportive atmosphere, conducive to learning.

## ■ Aims

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child
- To help the child 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 framework
- To enable the child to acquire an understanding of and a respect for human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction
- To develop and promote in the child a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life
- To enable the child to be comfortable with the sexuality of oneself and others while growing and developing

Through the achievement of the above aims we hope that our pupils will be enabled to:

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

## ■ Content of the Plan

### **Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education :**

Relationships and sexuality education seeks to provide children with structured 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 addresses the meaning of human sexuality, relationships, growth and development, relevant personal and social skills and aspects of parenting. Central to RSE is the fostering of self-esteem, through which the pupil becomes more responsible in making choices and decisions in all aspects of life, and particularly in those relating to sexuality and relationships.

### **RSE in relation to SPHE :**

RSE is an integral part of SPHE and must be taught in this context. SPHE contributes to developing the work of the school in promoting the health and well-being of children and young people. SPHE provides opportunities for pupils to learn basic personal and social skills which foster integrity, self-confidence and self esteem while nurturing sensitivity to the feelings and rights of others.

All of the Relationship and Sexuality content will be taught in the context of our SPHE curriculum (See School's SPHE Policy), particularly in the units "*Taking care of the body*" and "*Growing and Changing*". These units will include the following sensitive content:

#### **Infants**

##### ***Strand unit: Knowing about my body:***

- Name parts of the male and female body, using appropriate anatomical terms.

##### ***Strand unit: Personal Safety:***

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

##### ***Strand unit: New Life***

- Develop an awareness of human birth and celebrating the joy and wonder of new life.

#### **1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup>**

##### ***Strand unit: Knowing about my body:***

- Name parts of the male and female body, using appropriate anatomical terms, and identify some of their functions.

##### ***Strand unit: Personal Safety:***

- Recognise and explore situations where children feel safe and those where safety might be at risk and make age appropriate choices.

***Stand unit: New Life***

- Understand that reproduction, birth, life, growth & death are all part of a life cycle and appreciate family life.

**3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup>**

***Strand unit: 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 place 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.
- Be able to make healthy and responsible decisions.

***Strand unit: As I grow I change:***

- Recognise and discuss how feelings and emotions are affected by the physical changes that take place at puberty (*See note above in strand unit Knowing about my body and section below on dealing with puberty*)

***Strand unit: Birth and new life:***

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

***Strand unit: Personal Safety***

- Identify people, places and situations that may threaten personal safety.
- Be able to make healthy and responsible decisions.

**5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>**

***Strand unit: Knowing about my body:***

- Recognise the importance of treating his/her body and that of 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: 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.

***Strand unit: Birth and new life:***

- Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within a context of a committed, loving relationship such as marriage.
- Discuss and explore the responsibilities involved in being a parent and the emotional and physical maturity required to be a parent.

***Strand unit: Personal Safety:***

- Identify situations and places that may threaten personal safety

It will be left to the discretion of the principal and class teachers to modify this content to meet the needs of pupils in multi-class situations.

\* Note: Further Detail is available in “**Making the Links**”, **A Practical Guide to SPHE from the DES**.

## ■ **Management and Organisation of RSE in our School**

- Parents are acknowledged as primary educators of their children and the school staff works in a supportive role.
- All content objectives will be covered by the time the children leave 6<sup>th</sup> class.
- Teachers’ right to opt out from teaching the sensitive issues will be honoured (See Teachers’ Concerns)
- If no teacher is available to teach this content, a trained visitor approach may be used. This approach is used for the delivery of the sensitive content in 6<sup>th</sup> Class. Trained diocesan facilitators deliver workshops to both 6<sup>th</sup> Classes in the Summer term. The teachers remain present during the teaching of the 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 himself or herself. Parents are free to discuss any concerns with their children’s teacher. Any parent who wishes to withdraw their child from these lessons must do so in writing. All written withdrawal requests will be kept on file. Lessons will be timetabled in such a way that children who are not participating can be accommodated in partner classes.
- Parents will be informed when lessons dealing with sensitive material will be timetabled and will be given the option to download the introductory booklet entitled ‘**RSE Going Forward Together**’ at <http://goo.gl/oQSbQy>
- The school accepts no responsibility for any information which the pupil may receive outside the direct teaching of these lessons.

### **Dealing with Questions**

- In so far as possible all children’s questions are answered in a factual and age appropriate manner.
- Children anonymously write their questions and those deemed appropriate are dealt with by the medical professional and the class teacher.
- Ground rules are set as to the seriousness of the issues and children are encouraged to ask responsible questions. (see Appendix)
- Children, whose questions have not been deemed age appropriate and/or within the parameters of the content, are referred to their parents for answers on those issues.

### **Parental Concerns**

- If parents are concerned about any aspect of the school's programme for the RSE elements of SPHE they can discuss their concerns with their child's class teacher or the principal.
- Parents must provide a written request to the school if they do not wish their children to participate in these lessons.

### **Teachers' Concerns**

- If teachers are concerned about any aspect of the school's programme for the RSE elements of SPHE they can discuss this with the principal.
- Teachers have the right to withdraw from teaching RSE elements of SPHE, which deal with Human Reproduction and related matters.
- In these circumstances, they may be asked to take class for another teacher while he/she manages these sessions or a trained visitor may give these lessons.

### **Children with Special Needs**

- RSE provision for Pupils with Special needs will be based on what the pupils need to know within the parameters of the curriculum.
- The content will be negotiated with pupils' own parents/carers in conjunction with the SEN Teacher.
- Scoil Ursula is cognisant of the fact that children with Special Educational Needs can be especially vulnerable in terms of Child Protection.

### **Stay Safe Programme**

- The Stay Safe Programme is provided every year.
- The content of this programme is in accordance with the school's ethos and Mission Statement.
- When children are withdrawn for these lessons, cover is provided by other staff members in so far as is practicable.
- Lessons are timetabled during the Spring Term.

### **Dealing with questions**

- In so far as possible all children's questions are answered in a factual and age appropriate manner.

- Ground rules are set as to the seriousness of the issues and children are encouraged to ask responsible questions.
- Children, whose questions have not been deemed age appropriate and/or within the parameters of the content, are referred to their parents for answers on those issues.

### **Confidentiality**

- *Confidentiality is of paramount importance during these lessons and children are encouraged to talk to their teacher privately regarding sensitive issues.*

### **Parental concerns**

- If parents are concerned about any aspect of the Stay Safe Programme they discuss their concerns with their child's class teacher or the principal. Parents who do not wish their children to take part in the more sensitive lessons of the programme must provide the school with a written request.

### **Child Protection** (See Child Protection Policy)

This school follows the Department of Education and Science Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, which are based on Children First, National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children. (*Reference: Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, 2011, DES*)

- The Board of Management has designated the school principal to have specific responsibility for child protection acting as Designated Liaison Person. The Deputy Principal acts as Deputy Designated Liaison Person.
- All staff members have access to a copy of the Child Protection Policy.
- All staff are familiar with the procedures for dealing with incidents relating to child protection and are familiar with signs and symptoms pertaining to all categories of child abuse and neglect.
- All parents have access to the Child Protection Policy through their representatives on the Board of Management and the school website.
- The Child Protection Policy is reviewed on an annual basis by the Scoil Ursula Board of Management.

### **Resources**

The staff will draw from the following resources for the delivery of the RSE content as appropriate:

- ❖ SPHE Curriculum Plan
- ❖ SPHE Teacher Guidelines
- ❖ DES Resource Materials for RSE
- ❖ RSE in Catholic Schools
- ❖ Busy Bodies Video
- ❖ Stay Safe Programme
- ❖ Children First Guidelines

- ❖ Making the Links, DES
- ❖ RSE: Going Forward Together

## ■ Methodologies

As all of the RSE content will be taught in the context of our SPHE curriculum, the methodologies used will be those of the SPHE programme (See School's SPHE Plan).

## ■ Success Criteria

Our success criteria will be based on the achievement of our objectives. We will use staff observation and parental feedback as our benchmark for success or otherwise of the policy.

## ■ Roles and Responsibilities

The school principal and staff will be responsible for the implementation and evaluation of the policy. Any feedback received will be recorded and any problems that arise will be taken into account for the purposes of evaluation and review.

## ■ Timeframe for Implementation

The policy was implemented from the school year 2012-2013.

## ■ Timeframe for Review

This policy was reviewed in 2014

## ■ Responsibility for Review

The school principal will be responsible for reviewing the policy.

## ■ Ratification and Communication

The Board of Management ratified this policy on the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_, (Chairperson, BOM)

**Scoil Ursula does not have adequate resources to disseminate all of its policies to all the concerned members of the wider school community. The policy is communicated to the members of the BOM and is available to the wider school community through the parents' representatives on the BOM. All Scoil Ursula policies are available for inspection in the school and on the Scoil Ursula Website [www.scoilursula.com](http://www.scoilursula.com)**



## APPENDIX

### Ground Rules:

- ❖ Respect For ALL
- ❖ Laughter is allowed but no Laughing at  
Anybody
- ❖ No Personal Questions
- ❖ We don't name or talk about anybody during  
these lessons
- ❖ Discuss all content with Mum or Dad/  
guardian, granny, granddad or teacher, but not  
with anyone younger or not here today.