

St Felim's National School

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Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

This policy statement is an approved approach to teaching Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) in St Felim's NS. Its purpose is to inform teachers and parents of the material taught in Relationship and Sexuality Education as part of Social, Personal and Health Education. Hitherto, our approach to teaching RSE was documented within our Social, Personal and Health Education School Plan and was agreed upon in partnership with the school community. Our RSE policy, first drafted in April 2019, was circulated to the parent body via our school website. Parents were invited to submit a response to the policy in advance of its ratification. The policy was revised in May 2022.

School Philosophy

St Felim's National School is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Bishop of Kilmore. It is managed by a Board of Management, elected according to the procedures agreed by the partners in Education. The school has a Catholic ethos, and this ethos is a guiding principle in the formulation and implementation of this policy. Our ethos recognises the value and dignity of each pupil and all those working in the school community. We aim to promote our pupils' full and harmonious development: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual, including a living relationship with God and others.

This ethos also acknowledges the cultural and religious values of all the pupils attending our school. St Felim's NS. recognises the central role of the family as the child's primary educator, and we support them in that regard. Parents have the primary role in their children's social, personal, and health education, so their involvement is encouraged as much as possible.

Definition of RSE

Relationships and Sexuality Education is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding, and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, sexual identity and intimacy. In a school situation, RSE provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire a knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality through processes that enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual, and social framework appropriate to their age.

Relationship of RSE to SPHE

Social, Personal and Health Education contributes to developing the work of the school in promoting the health and well-being of children and young people. This happens in the context of their emotional, moral, social and spiritual growth, as well as their intellectual, physical, political, religious and creative development. (p.5 Going Forward Together Parents Information Booklet).

Social, Personal and Health Education is a lifelong process and is a shared responsibility between family, school, health professionals and the community. The main strands of the SPHE programme are:

- Myself
- Myself and Others
- Myself and the Wider World

It is clear that the Relationships and Sexuality Programme is correctly defined as being an integral part of the programme outlined above. RSE will be taught in accordance with the Department's directives and within the philosophy framework of our school.

Aims of RSE

The aims of RSE are:

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

Broad Objectives:

When due account is taken of intrinsic abilities and varying circumstances, the Relationships and Sexuality Education curriculum should enable the child 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, change and understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity
- Develop personal skills, which will help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships
- Develop some coping strategies to protect themselves 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.

Policies which support SPHE/RSE

- Child Safeguarding Documents
- Substance Use Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy

- Enrolment Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- Code of Behaviour

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 our school community.

Management and Organisation of RSE in our School

We teach RSE as part of our SPHE curriculum. The SPHE curriculum is delineated at four levels—infant classes, first and second classes, third and fourth classes, and fifth and sixth classes—and is divided into three strands:

- Myself
- Myself and others
- Myself and the wider world

Each of these strands is further subdivided into strand units containing particular objectives.

St Felim's NS will teach aspects of all three central strand units each year. Strand units will be chosen so that the child will receive a comprehensive programme in SPHE over two years.

The strands and strand units and the timing of lessons are outlined by class in Appendix One of this document.

Teachers will follow the curriculum as published by the NCCA. All content objectives will be covered by the time each pupil leaves sixth class. The teaching staff will ideally teach RSE lessons. However, the school may engage the services of an outside speaker if deemed appropriate.

Sensitive parts of RSE

RSE incorporates content that parents may consider sensitive. Sexually sensitive issues will be covered within the strand units:

- Taking Care of my body
- Growing and changing
- Safety and protection

The following table outlines the sensitive learning objectives from the curriculum:

Junior Infants January & February each year	
Myself Taking Care of my body	❖ Name parts of the male and female body parts using appropriate anatomical terms
Myself Growing and Changing	❖ Become aware of new life and birth in the world <i>e.g. new growth in springtime, signs of new life in spring</i> ❖ Develop an awareness of human birth <i>i.e. that a baby grows and is nurtured in the mother's womb until ready to be born</i>
Language	Womb, penis, vulva, breastfeeding,

<u>Senior Infants</u> <u>October & November each year</u>	
Myself Safety & Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Identify situations and places that are safe and those where personal safety might be threatened ❖ Realise how other people can persuade him/her to engage in unsafe behaviour <i>Note: anatomically correct terms for male and female body parts are used in parts of these lessons</i>
Language	penis, vulva,
<u>First Class</u> <u>January & February each year</u>	
Myself Taking Care of my body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Name parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms and some of their functions <i>e.g. eyes can see, ears can hear,</i>
Myself Growing & Changing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Begin to understand that reproduction, birth, growth and death are all part of a life cycle
Language	Womb, penis, vulva, breastfeeding,
<u>Second Class</u> <u>October & November each year</u>	
Myself Safety & Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Recognise and explore situations where children feel safe and those where safety might be at risk ❖ Discuss and practise appropriate strategies for dealing with these situations ❖ explore how other people can persuade him/her to engage in unsafe behaviour and how this may be counteracted <i>Note: anatomically correct terms for male and female body parts are used in parts of these lessons</i>
Language	penis, vulva, breastfeeding,
<u>Third Class</u> <u>January & February each year</u>	
Myself Taking Care of my body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Understand the physical changes that take place in both the male and female body, e.g. growing height, increasing strength, boy, man, girl, woman, <i>Please note: we do not refer to puberty</i> ❖ Explore the relationship between health and hygiene
Myself Growing and changing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby from conception to birth <i>Please note: conception is not explained.</i>
Language	Womb, breastfeeding, umbilical cord, fertilised egg, (penis, vulva, <i>These terms are used in the context of identifying the sex of the baby</i>)
<u>Fourth Class</u> <u>October & November each year</u>	
Myself Safety & Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Identify people, places and situations that may threaten personal safety

	<i>Bullies, large gatherings, being touched inappropriately, being asked to keep a difficult secret</i>
Language	penis, vulva, breast,
<u>Fifth Class</u> <u>January & February each year</u>	
Myself Taking Care of my body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ 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 everybody ❖ Recognise the importance of treating his/her body and that of others with dignity and respect
Myself Growing & changing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Identify and discuss the changes that are experienced in growing from child to adult.
Language	Womb, penis, vulva, puberty, menstruation, periods, pubic hair, breasts, vagina, ovaries, fallopian tubes, womb/uterus, penis, testicles, scrotum,
<u>Sixth Class</u> <u>October & November each year</u>	
Myself Safety & Protection	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify situations and places that may threaten personal safety <i>bullying, inappropriate touches</i> 2. Discuss a variety of risky situations and behaviour and assess and evaluate how these risks may be avoided or minimised and the implications of taking risks 3. Identify situations and places that may threaten personal safety <i>bullying, inappropriate touches</i> 4. Discuss a variety of risky situations and behaviour and assess and evaluate how these risks may be avoided or minimised and the implications of taking risks
<u>Sixth Class</u> <u>January & February each year</u>	
<p>The school may engage the services of an outside speaker to address sexually sensitive issues for 6th class. When an outside speaker is used, the Principal will make them fully aware of our school policy. Parents/guardians will be notified of the name of this speaker in advance of the lessons. There may be the option of a meeting with parents on the content of the lessons, in advance of them taking place, should there be sufficient interest. The class teacher will remain with the class during the lessons.</p>	
Myself Taking Care of my body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ 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 everybody ❖ Recognise the importance of treating his/her body and that of others with dignity and respect ❖ Understand the reproductive system of both male and female adults
Myself Growing & changing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Identify and discuss the changes that are experienced in growing from child to adult. ❖ Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship such as marriage

	❖ Discuss the different types of love that exist and explore how love is portrayed and defined in music, films, books, magazines and other media
Language	Womb, penis, vulva, breastfeeding, umbilical cord, fertilised egg, puberty, menstruation, periods, pubic hair, breasts, vagina, ovaries, fallopian tubes, womb/uterus, penis, testicles, scrotum, sperm, urethra, wet dreams/nocturnal emissions, semen, erection,

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE

- Parents are informed on enrolment that we teach the Stay Safe Programme and the Relationships and Sexuality Programme, both of which are part of the Department of Education & Skills Social and Personal Health Education curriculum.
- Parents will be informed in advance of lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme by letter. Content information taught at each class level will be provided.
- This letter will be issued in advance, allowing parents to contact the school and meet with relevant class teachers if they wish to discuss or clarify what is covered and prepare their children. It also allows parents to become involved, inform themselves of the programme content, and prepare their children for the information about the sensitive areas.
- If parents are concerned about the sensitive aspects of RSE, they are welcome to examine the content of the programme and discuss their concerns with the Principal and class teacher. The school acknowledges that parents are primarily responsible for educating their children about growing and changing.
- Following this discussion, if a parent wishes to withdraw their child from the sensitive lessons, they may request this in writing, stating their reasons for doing so, and this letter will be centrally filed. *Parents who wish to withdraw their child from RSE lessons are expected to make their wishes known each year to their child's/children's teacher/s.*
Stay Safe lessons are taught simultaneously in Senior Infants, Second, Fourth and Sixth classes. RSE lessons under the strand Myself (Growing and Changing, Taking care of my body) are taught simultaneously in Junior Infants, First, Third, Fifth and Sixth classes. Parents and guardians who wish to withdraw their child from these lessons must make arrangements for their child to be collected from and returned to school as it will not be possible to accommodate the child in another classroom.
- If a child is withdrawn from sensitive RSE lessons, the school cannot take any responsibility for what the child may hear following the lesson content. Should a child who is removed from the sexually sensitive classes receive inappropriate information from others outside of these classes, it will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian to address these issues.

Dealing with Questions

Naturally, children should wish to ask questions in the area of RSE. However, this is treated somewhat differently from other subjects due to its sensitivity.

The teacher will answer questions in line with this school policy and our school ethos. Questions to the teacher may be written or oral within the group setting and answered within the curriculum and school policy boundaries. The teacher will be mindful of their reaction to any questions. If any questions asked by the children are judged to be inappropriate, the teacher will refer the child to their parents or state that this information may be available later in the curriculum. Questions do not have to be answered straight away. The school cannot guarantee confidentiality if a child asks a question of a personal nature or discloses personal information. The school may also use a question box if deemed appropriate.

Sample responses that teachers may use are:

- I'll do my best to answer your questions, but I may not be able to answer all of them.

- That's something you will learn about as you get older.
- Is that something you could talk to your parents/guardians/family about?
- Somebody asked a question, and the language that was used was slang language, what they meant to ask was.....

Language

The SPHE curriculum provides a context in which children are given opportunities to develop and enhance their language skills and increase their vocabulary related to SPHE. Children should become aware of the power and influence of language. When positively used, language can build-up, affirm, and show respect to another human being but language can hurt, diminish, and demean if used negatively.

There are two areas where the use of language is applied in RSE lessons:

- The formal use of teaching and language generally throughout the school.
- The use of language and discussion through formal RSE lessons

Appropriate vocabulary will be used at all times in formal teaching relating to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, parts of the body and feelings. Slang will be discouraged. The anatomical language used will be consistent with RSE material books and curriculum guidance.

Approaches and Methodologies

The curriculum will be taught in an age-appropriate manner at all times. The resources chosen will be appropriate to the needs of the children and the lesson's content and will be in keeping with the philosophy framework of our school.

Differentiation

Teachers will:

- Ensure that the objectives are realistic for the students
- Ensure that the learning tasks are compatible with prior learning
- Organise the learning task into small stages and ensure that the language used is pitched at the student's level of understanding
- Use higher and lower order questions in groups
- Facilitate group work and discussion
- Moderate whole class discussions to ensure content is age-appropriate

Pupils with Special Educational Needs

We will adapt our style of delivery for pupils with Special Educational Needs. Consultation with parents in advance and anticipation of the children's needs will be essential to ensure learning is meaningful.

- Children may be pre-taught language or concepts in anticipation of the whole class work.
- Children may work in smaller groups or 1:1 on adapted and suitable material.
- Any different or specific objectives related to a pupil's own learning needs should be detailed on their IEP or IPLP in consultation with parents/guardians.

Assessment

The teacher will use:

- Observation and questioning to assess the children's engagement and interest
- Teacher designed tasks such as worksheets, quizzes, games

Confidentiality

The school follows the Children's First Guidelines 2017 and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017. If a child is withdrawn from teaching sensitive issues, the school is not responsible for what that child may hear outside of the classroom.

Resources

Each teacher has a copy of the Relationship and Sexuality Resource Manuals (DES). Other resources that support the broader aims of RSE include:

- Stay Safe Programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Anatomical Dolls and Story Books
- Busy Bodies booklet. This booklet was developed to support teaching the 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th class components of RSE within the context of SPHE.
- Grow in Love Programme

Provision for Ongoing support

The Principal will provide opportunities for staff members to avail of training supplied by our Education Centres. Teachers will be encouraged to attend CPD in RSE. Staff meetings will be used as a platform for discussion around RSE. We will seek support from PDST advisors if necessary.

Implementation

Roles and Responsibilities

The teaching staff will implement this policy with the support of the Principal, Board of Management, parents and the local community.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years as part of the school's three-year review cycle or earlier if the need arises.

Ratification and Communication

The Board of Management of St Felim's NS. ratified this policy at a meeting on _____.

This policy will come into effect at the beginning of the academic year 2022/2023.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Gerry Sheanon- Chairperson B.O.M

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Eilís Keegan - Principal

Appendix One: Plan of Social, Personal and Health Education Strands and Strand Units by class

Junior & Senior Infants

	<u>Junior Infants</u>		<u>Senior Infants</u>
September	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Identity Self-Awareness Developing Self Confidence • Growing and Changing <i>As I grow I change</i> 	September	Myself and the Wider World <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing Citizenship <i>My School Community</i> <i>Living in the Local Community</i> <i>Environmental Care</i>
October	Myself & Others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My Friends and Other People • Relating to Others ** Friendship Fortnight activities in October, Anti Bullying Awareness Month in November**	October & November	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety & Protection <i>Personal Safety</i> **Stay Safe Programme**
November		December	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking Care of My Body <i>Food and Nutrition</i>
December		January	Fun Friends Programme will be taught in Senior Infants between January and May.
January	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing and Changing <i>New Life</i> • Taking Care of my Body <i>Knowing about my body</i> 	February	
February	Myself & Others/Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myself & My Family/Making Decisions 	March	
March	Myself and the Wider World <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media Education 	April	
April	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety and Protection Safety issues (Road Safety, Farm Safety Farm Safety - Infants, Safety around medicines) 	May	
May		June	
June			

First & Second Class

<u>First Class</u>		<u>Second Class</u>	
September	Zippy's Friends Module One: Feelings	September	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Identity <i>Self-Awareness</i> <i>Developing Self Confidence</i> • Growing and Changing <i>As I grow I change</i>
October	Zippy's Friends Module Two: Communication	October & November	Myself/Myself and Others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety & Protection <i>Personal Safety</i> • My Friends and other people <p style="text-align: right;">**Stay Safe Programme**</p>
November	Zippy's Friends Module Three: Making & Breaking Relationships		
December	Zippy's Friends Module Four: Bullying and Conflict	December	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking Care of My Body <i>Food and Nutrition</i>
January	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing and Changing <i>As I grow I Change</i> <i>New Life</i> • Taking Care of my Body <i>Knowing about my body</i> 	January	Myself and Others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myself and my Family
February		February	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making decisions
March & April	Zippy's Friends Module Five: Change and Loss	March	Myself and others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relating to others
May	Zippys' Friends Module Six: We Cope	April & May	Myself & The Wider World <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media Education <p style="text-align: right;">**HTML HEROES 1st & 2nd Class**</p>
June	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety & Protection <i>Safety Issues (Water Safety, Farm Safety, Safety with medicines)</i> 	June	Myself & The Wider World <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing Citizenship <i>My School Community</i> <i>Living in the Local Community</i> <i>Environmental Care</i>

Third & Fourth Class

Third Class		Fourth Class	
September	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Identity <i>Self-Awareness</i> <i>Developing self-confidence</i> 	September	Myself and the Wider World <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing Citizenship <i>My School Community</i> <i>Local and Wider Communities</i>
October	Myself and others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My Friends & Other People 	October & November	Myself/Myself and Others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety & Protection <i>Personal Safety</i> • My Friends and other people <p style="text-align: center;">**Stay Safe Programme**</p>
November	Myself and others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relating to Others <i>Communicating</i> <i>Resolving Conflict</i> 		
December	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making Decisions 	December	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking Care of My Body <i>Food and Nutrition</i> <i>Health & Wellbeing</i>
January	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing and Changing <i>As I grow I Change</i> <i>Birth & New Life</i> <i>Feelings and emotions</i> • Taking Care of my Body <i>Knowing about my body</i> 	January	Friends for Life Programme will be taught in Fourth Class in Term 2 & 3
February		February	
March	Myself & The Wider World <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media Education 	March	
April	**HTML HEROES 3 rd & 4 th Class**	April	
May		May	
June		June	

Fifth & Sixth Class

Fifth Class		Sixth Class	
September	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Identity <i>Self Awareness</i> <i>Developing self-confidence</i> 	September	Myself & Others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myself & my family
October	Myself and others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My Friends & Other People 	October & November	Myself/Myself and Others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety & Protection <i>Personal Safety</i> • My Friends and other people
November	Myself and others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relating to Others <i>Communicating</i> <i>Resolving Conflict</i> 		**Stay Safe Programme**
December	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Making Decisions</i> 	December	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking Care of My Body <i>Health & Wellbeing- legal & illegal substances</i>
January	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing and Changing <i>As I grow I Change</i> <i>Feelings and emotions</i> • Taking Care of my Body <i>Food and Nutrition</i> <i>Knowing about my body</i> 	January	Myself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing and Changing <i>As I grow I Change</i> <i>Birth & New Life</i> <i>Feelings and emotions</i> • Taking Care of my Body <i>Knowing about my body</i>
February		February	
March	Myself & The Wider World <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media Education 	March	Myself and the Wider World <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing Citizenship <i>National, European and wider communities</i>
April	**My Selfie & The Wider World**	April	
May	Myself and the Wider World <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing Citizenship <i>Living in the Local Community</i> 	May	Get Up, Stand Up Social Skills Programme
June		June	