

**Scoil Naomh Bríde,
Baile on Bhóthair,
Áth Troim,
Co. na Mí.**



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SPHE and RSE Policy

Introduction:

Scoil Naomh Bríde aims to provide a comprehensive SPHE programme to all pupils in the school. “*Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*” requires all primary schools to fully implement the Stay Safe Programme in their school. The staff of Scoil Naomh Bríde formulated this policy in consultation with our Board of Management and our Parents Association. We believe that SPHE and RSE is a shared responsibility and the contributions and involvement of parents will be essential to the effective implementation of the SPHE and RSE programmes in the school.

We endorse the aims and objectives of the primary curriculum for SPHE:

- To promote the personal development and well-being of the child
- To foster in the child a sense of care and respect for himself/herself and others and an appreciation of the dignity of every human being
- To promote the health of the child and provide a foundation for healthy living in all its aspects
- To enable the child to make informed decisions and choices about the social, personal and health dimensions of life, both now and in the future
- To develop in the child a sense of social responsibility, a commitment to active and participative citizenship, and an appreciation of the democratic way of life
- To enable the child to respect human and cultural diversity, and to appreciate and understand the interdependent nature of the world.

Contexts for SPHE:

1. Positive School Climate

- Every child is regarded as unique, is valued and treated with respect.
- Each family enrolling their child in the school is given an Enrolment Handbook, outlining the ethos of the school.
- All policies are available in the school and all staff members have access to them.
- Each teacher develops a positive classroom climate where pupils are listened to, feel safe to talk, and which offers many opportunities for the development of the child.
- All activities within the school are promoted to our parents and the wider community through our monthly Scéalta Scoile, our school website and in regular letters to parents from the school.
- All pupils attend assembly once a week where personal and class achievements are acknowledged and celebrated and topical themes are addressed. REF (Respect, Education and Friendship) Awards are handed out during our assemblies. Children in each class get a number of opportunities during the year to perform at an assembly which helps develop their confidence and self-esteem.
- Pupils’ work and achievements are displayed on the notice boards throughout the school.
- Our school has a Parents’ Association who are actively involved in all school activities.

2. Discrete Time

30 minutes per week is set aside as discrete time for the teaching of SPHE. No child is withdrawn during the teaching of the Stay Safe Programme.

3. Integration

We recognise that SPHE spans the entire curriculum. Class teachers will endeavour to integrate SPHE themes throughout the curriculum.

Teaching Methodologies:

Various teaching methodologies will be employed throughout the delivery of the programme. Teachers will select the most suitable methodologies for each given topic. The following is a list of some of the methodologies which will be utilised in this school:

1. Talk & Discussion

2. Collaborative & Co operative Learning

3. Active Learning

- **Drama** involves pupils in a process which is both fun and active. It also pupils to take risk and explore issues concerning their family life, community life and the wider community. Activities may involve paired work, group work or whole class work. Poetry and stories as a stimulus for improvisation, role play, acting or mime will be utilised where necessary.
- **Co-operative Games** are a valuable method to involve pupils in working together and understanding the importance of negotiation, taking responsibility and showing respect to individual contributions. Examples of such games include: Pattern Ball, Leader of the Band, Sunshine & Rain etc.
- **Pictures, Photographs and Visual Images** all provide opportunities for pupils to explore bias, to question content of images and examine stereotyping. Activities may involve pupils:

Reading a photo

Ranking pictures based on topics

Writing captions

Filling in speech bubbles

Classifying and setting

Exploring TV advertisement as a stimulus for discussion

- **Discussion** may be used to introduce a topic or as a principle activity:

Open ended statements

Brainstorm

Circle Time

Stories

Poems

Agree/ Disagree debates etc.

- **Written Activities** such as surveys, project work and worksheets will be employed.

4. Use of the school including the local & national environments

5. Problem Solving

6. Guest speaker's may be invited to the school to assist re-enforce or develop knowledge of aspects of the S.P.H.E. curriculum. A member of Accord visits the school annually to talk to 6th class about particular aspects of the RSE programme. The class teachers will act as host and will monitor and evaluate the presentation. Parents will be made aware of and may be invited to some talks when appropriate.

Assessment: A number of techniques shall be used in recording information about pupil's progress in SPHE. Assessment will be used to relate to parent the pupil's progress and also plan for the future in the classroom:

A) Teacher Observation B) Teacher Designed Tasks C) Portfolio and Projects

Policies and Programmes that Support SPHE:

There are a number of school policies that assist in supporting a successful SPHE programme within the school including;

- RSE
- Enrolment
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying
- Health & Safety
- Healthy Eating
- Child Protection

Children with Different Needs:

Teachers use the following strategies to ensure the participation of pupils with special needs in relation to SPHE:

- Oral exposition and discussion to ensure pupils with literacy difficulties can participate in the SPHE class.
- Direct teaching, demonstration and exposition by the class teacher.
- Teaching of the language associated with SPHE
- Discussion between the teacher and pupils.

Homework:

Homework may take the format of handouts and materials from various programmes e.g. Stay Safe, Walk Tall, RSE etc. The purpose of such homework is to provide a platform for a balanced approach to discussing with parents knowledge of topics taught in school.

Relationships and Sexual Education (RSE)

Relationships and Sexuality Education seeks to provide children with 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 aims to help children learn, at home and in school, about their own development and about their friendships and relationships with others. This work will be based on developing a good self-image and promoting respect for themselves and others.

In Scoil Naomh Bríde, RSE will be taught in the context of Social, Personal and Health Education. Relationships and Sexuality Education (R.S.E.) is an important part of the S.P.H.E. curriculum encompassing the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, sexual identity and intimacy. In Scoil Naomh Bríde we seek to promote the overall development of the child which involves the integration of Relationships and Sexuality into personal understanding, growth and development within the context of our Catholic ethos.

RSE is a lifelong process that involves the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills, and the development of attitudes, beliefs, morals and values. *While the primary responsibility for addressing these issues rests with parents/guardians*, we acknowledge the role the school can play a role in supporting and complementing this learning.

The RSE Curriculum is a spiral curriculum. This involves revisiting key topics in a developmental manner at regular intervals. *All content objectives will be taught by the time the children leave Sixth Class.*

Aims of the RSE Programme

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of each child.
- To help children 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 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.

Withdrawal from RSE:

Since RSE is an obligatory requirement of the Department of Education and Science, it should be inclusive. Scoil Naomh Bríde actively promotes the implementation of RSE and strongly discourages withdrawal from lessons. The school will, however, take account of parental concerns and a parent's right to withdraw a pupil from themes pertaining to sensitive issues will be honoured on the understanding that the parent(s) is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves. Parents are obliged to inform the school in writing of their decision to withdraw the child from the sensitive issues classes. Any parent who wishes to withdraw their child should make arrangements for the supervision of the child while the RSE class is in progress. The school can take no responsibility for any information which the pupil may receive outside the direct teaching of the RSE lessons.

Content:

All the content objectives of the RSE Programme will be covered by the time children leave sixth class.

It is school policy that the content objectives are covered with each class level as outlined in the SPHE curriculum statement, within the context of the school's Catholic ethos. The approach to the teaching of RSE will be kept as normal as possible and will usually be delivered within the child's class by the class teacher.

Teachers will be encouraged and supported to teach the sensitive issues to their own class. Possible sensitive issues such as naming the body parts and sexual intercourse will be covered within the SPHE strand units "Taking care of my Body", "Growing and Changing" and "Safety and Protection".

In 6th Class the "Busy Bee Booklet and DVD" are sent home in a sealed envelope to parents/guardians. A member from ACCORD will visit 6th class as well during the school year to speak to the children about Relationships and Sexual Education. Parents are informed prior to the visit of the content of this talk and written consent from parents is required for each child to participate.

Rights and responsibilities of teachers:

- Each class teacher will teach the SPHE programme. This can be done through formal or informal lessons. It is recommended that some of the more sensitive aspects of the curriculum, particularly in the younger classes, are taught incidentally through a sensible, sensitive and age-appropriate manner.
- A teachers' right to **opt out** from teaching the sensitive issues will be honoured. Provision will then be made for these issues to be taught by another staff member and/or trained outside personnel.

All information delivered will be informed by the content objectives of the SPHE Curriculum. We will require the said personnel to keep within the school guidelines, and to furnish the school with an outline of the talk beforehand. The Class teacher will be present when this takes place.

Mixed Groups:

If there is a **multi-class situation** with children of different class levels and abilities, the younger age group may be withdrawn if the information is deemed to be inappropriate for that age group.

If the class teacher feels that a particular class is not ready for parts of the prescribed programme, he/she may defer those areas for the following year. This decision will be passed on to relevant teacher.

Children with Special Needs:

Children with special needs will receive the same content objectives as other children, but the teacher may have to differentiate the information and use more active learning methodology i.e. make it more child specific. The Special Education teachers will assist to achieve this.

Terminology:

The acquisition of appropriate language in RSE is crucially important to enable children to communicate confidently about themselves, their sexuality and their relationships. We will give the children the correct and appropriate language as outlined in the RSE materials.

- *Junior Infants: womb, breast feeding*
- *Senior Infants: womb, breast feeding, penis and vagina.*
- *1st class: urine passes through the penis in boys and the urethra in girls. Baby is in womb for 9 months and may be breast or bottle-fed.*
- *2nd class: penis and urethra, vagina (to be revised), navel and breast.*
- *3rd class: puberty, the womb, breast feeding, umbilical cord.*
- *4th class: developing foetus, changes in puberty – body shape, menstruation, voice changes, mood changes, skin changes, increases in body hair*
- *5th class: puberty (to be revised); physical changes in boys and girls*
- *6th class: reproduction and sexual intercourse in the context of a loving committed relationship in marriage.*

Questions:

Questions arising from curriculum content will be addressed by the teacher or by the visitor in a sensible, sensitive and age-appropriate manner. The class teacher cannot answer questions which do not relate to the particular curriculum objectives for a class. Pupils will be informed that that question/issue is not on the programme and they will be referred back to the parent(s). Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents themselves if they feel that a question is very inappropriate.

Confidentiality and Child Protection:

Where there is disclosure by a child of abuse, the school will follow the Department of Education and Science child protection guidelines and guidelines as set out in 'Children First'.

Family Status:

As a catholic school pupils will be encouraged to appreciate the value of a stable family life and the importance of marriage as the ideal context for rearing children. However, we also acknowledge the different family units that may be represented in school and will endeavor to treat all situations sensitively.

Resources:

- Curriculum Documents for SPHE
- Making the Links – A Practical Guide for teachers
- Walk Tall, Programme for the Prevention of Substance Misuse
- Stay Safe Programme, Health Promotion Unit, Dublin
- RSE Programme
- Busy Bee
- Action for Life, Irish Heart Foundation
- Be Safe - Road, Fire and Water Safety
- Values Education: Developing Self Esteem & Citizenship - Prim-ed
- Health 3 & 4: Developing Awareness of Social, Emotional & Sexual Health - Prim-ed
- First Steps NWHB Programme

Staff Development:

An atmosphere of open communication exists between all staff members and skills, expertise and experience in teaching SPHE are shared. Teachers are informed of SPHE-related courses available, and are encouraged to attend. Guest speakers may also be invited in to speak to the staff as a whole on a given subject. Information acquired at these courses is made available to other staff members, e.g. photocopying worksheets, access to SPHE packages in staff room, etc. Time is allocated at staff meetings for the discussion of all subjects, including SPHE.

Community Links:

We believe that the local community has a very important role to play in supporting the programme in SPHE and endeavour to liaise with the members such as the new parent, Dental Hygienist, Health Nurse, Fireman, Vet, Sports clubs etc.

Success Criteria:

The success of this plan will be evaluated through teacher's planning and preparation and if the procedures outlined in this plan have been consistently followed. We will also judge its success if the children have been enabled to achieve the aims outlined in this plan. We will know it has achieved its aims if the pupils:

- have increased knowledge, understanding and skills.
- are more aware of their attitudes and values.
- are more respectful of themselves and others.
- relate to others in a positive way.
- are more actively involved in the school and possibly local community.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The role of the Board of Management: It is the responsibility of the Board of Management to support and facilitate the school approach to SPHE as it is being developed and to approve and review this approach within the context of the overall school plan.

The Role of Parents: Since parents have the primary role in the education of and in particular in the social, personal and health education of their children, the school provides them with opportunities to contribute to the development and implementation of SPHE in the school through

- supporting the SPHE programme
- the school's many SPHE initiatives.
- homework
- parents' association
- board of management
- parent/ teacher meetings

The Role of the Principal: The principal has a central role in ensuring that the SPHE curriculum is effectively implemented in the school in accordance with the school plan. The principal will need to encourage and enable staff to adopt and apply some of the new strategies and take a different perspective on what is happening in the class. In many instances the principal will be the liaison person between the Board of Management and the Staff, and between members of the community and the Staff.

The Role of the Teacher: Children are more likely to gain from a curriculum where there is consistency in the approach taken by all teachers in the school. Some teachers may have developed skills in the use of various approaches in SPHE or may have had previous experience of using materials in this area, while others may have a keen interest in health issues. Sharing this expertise and encouraging each other will be significant elements in the implementation of a comprehensive SPHE programme.

The Role of ancillary and support staff: The wider school community will have an important role to play in supporting the social, personal and health development of the children. In their interactions with both teachers and children they can reflect the principles promoted by the SPHE programme. It will be important that they are involved in the consultation process and are aware of the various policies that exist in the school.

