



St. Brigid's GNS, Palmerstown, Dublin 20.
RSE Policy

School Details

St. Brigid's GNS, Palmerstown, Dublin 20.

Introductory Statement

St. Brigid's GNS is a primary school under Catholic Patronage. It is an all-girl school with classes from Junior Infants to sixth class with a current enrolment of 378 pupils. This policy is an approved approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in St. Brigid's GNS. The staff and BOM of St. Brigid's GNS revised the school plan for RSE in May 2019 to reflect current educational thinking, recent initiatives and updated SPHE resources and to inform teachers and parents/guardians as to what material is covered in the RSE programme with SPHE. It replaces the previous school plan for RSE and is effective from the school year 2019/2020.

Definition of RSE

Relationship and Sexuality education (RSE) aims to provide 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 way (Going Forward Together Parent's Information Booklet, page 4).

Relationship of RSE to SPHE

Social, Personal and Health Education (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.

Current Provision Included in the school curriculum is:

- SPHE lessons (provided through curricular time and integration)
- Use of the RSE Manuals and Busy Body resources
- Stay safe Programme / Walk Tall Programme
- Religious Education

Aims of our RSE programme

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and wellbeing of the child
- To help the child to develop healthy friends 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 whole growing and developing

Broad Objectives

When due account is taken of intrinsic abilities and varying circumstances the RSE education curriculum should enable the child to (in conjunction with the SPHE curriculum)

- Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self
- Develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well-being of others
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-worth
- Understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and 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 aspect of self-identity
- Develop personal skills which help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships
- Develop coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse
- Acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction
- Acquire the use of appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development
- Develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making

We support 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 wellbeing of all of the members of the school community.

Policies which support SPHE/RSE

- Child Protection Policy
- Code of Behaviour and discipline
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School Curriculum Matters

Curriculum Content –The curriculum by NCCA will be followed as published, and will be taught from infants to 6th class. All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school, the whole school plan for SPHE and the RSE policy. Each class teacher will teach the content for their class level each year as laid out in the curriculum, and utilizing the RSE manuals to complement their teaching.

- The sensitive lessons are covered as part of the broad topics as outlined in the table at point B below.
- Special arrangements exist for the delivery of the sensitive elements from 5th class up as outlined in the table at point B below.
- Special consideration will be taken to ensure that the needs of children with SEN are met. Taking into account the pupil’s social and emotional development, instruction will be based on individual needs where possible. Parents will be consulted around sensitive issues.
- When an outside speaker is used, circular 22/10 is followed, whereby the teacher ensures the speakers materials is in line with the school curriculum and ethos, and stays in the room during the presentation.

Curriculum Planning

RSE forms part of the national curriculum for SPHE by NCCA and will be taught from infants to 6th class. RSE will be covered under the following strands and strand units of the SPHE curriculum:

Myself
Growing and changing Taking care of my body

The RSE programme is divided into two main parts:

- A. The general programme which contains content such as: covered through SPHE and RSE strands and strand units and compliment the aims and objectives of RSE
 - Friendship
 - Self-identity
 - Family
 - Self-esteem
 - Growing up

- B. The second section will deal with any sensitive / specific content covered through RSE strands and strand units. Content is covered at each class level.

Topics covered up to 2 nd include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping Safe • Bodily changes during growing and birth (birth-9) • Making age appropriate choices • Appreciating the variety of family types and an 	Topics from 3 rd to 6 th include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bodily changes • Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise • Keeping Safe • Expressing Feelings • Appreciating the variety of family types within our
---	---

<p>variety of family life that exists in our school and community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognising and expressing feelings • Self-care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep • Expressing opinions and listening to others • Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms (Junior/ Senior Infants) • Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions (1st/2nd) 	<p>school and community and how we these family relationships shape us</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making healthy and responsible decisions • Forming Friendships • Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb(6th class – Busy Bodies DVD) • Introduction to puberty and changes (5th class – Accord visit) • Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (5th Class – Accord visit) • Reproductive system of male/female adults (5th class – Accord visit & 6th class - Busy Bodies DVD) • Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship (Sixth Class – Busy Bodies DVD)
--	--

Approaches & Methodologies

When implementing the programme, staff at St Brigid’s Girls National School will endeavor to display respect for and sensitivity towards the different cultural family backgrounds experienced by the children. The curriculum will be taught in an age-appropriate manner at all times. The curriculum will be taught from Junior Infants to 6th class. It will be taught through a spiral curriculum (key topics will be revisited in a developmental manner at regular intervals). The materials taught will reflect the needs of the children.

The RSE curriculum will be taught through:

- Stories and poems, classroom discussion, group work, games, art activities, reflection, circle time, guest speakers

The approach in school is child-centered and will always take the age and stage of development of the children into account.

Language

SPHE curriculum provides a context in which children are given opportunities to develop and enhance their language skills and to increase their vocabulary related to SPHE. Children should become aware of the power and influence of language. When used positively, language can build up, affirm and show respect to another human being but if used in a negative manner can hurt, diminish and demean. Children need to recognise and become sensitive to the ways in which they themselves use language in their relationship and their everyday interactions. Language is a powerful tool and should be used with respect and integrity for the dignity of each person. There are two areas where the use language is applied in RSE lessons

- The formal use and teaching of language through RSE lessons
- The use of language in discussion generally through question / answers discussions

Appropriate vocabulary in formal teaching

- Relating to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, parts of the body and feeling will be used. The use of slang will be discouraged.

Questions / Answers framework

- Questions arising from lesson content will be answered in an 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 if a question/issue is not on the programme and they will be advised to talk with their parents/guardians.
- Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents themselves if they feel that a question is very inappropriate or needs to be communicated with home because of other reasons
- No personal questions will be answered and children will be reminded not to share personal information about their families or others – but can share with teacher after the lessons

Staff should not invalidate questions but use limits.

Invariably some questions may not be covered by the curriculum and any decisions to answer particular questions should take the following into account. If any staff member is unsure, they should explain to the child they will find out if they can give or answer their particular question, after chatting with the principal.

The main aim of talk and discussion is to create an atmosphere where children feel comfortable to ask important questions and that the relationship fostered in these sessions is open, controlled and safe for all pupils. While staff members may not be able to answer all questions, the hope is that children will not be put off seeking answers in the school setting, but will also talk to their parents/guardians and are not put off asking questions because they perceived the topics or questions to be embarrassing.

When deciding whether it is appropriate to answer a question or not the teacher should consider:

- If the question is a moral one, while being sensitive of different religious and non-religious backgrounds will refer the child to speak to their parents or guardians or to the Catholic teaching
- The context of the school and lived experiences of the families and children of the school
- A question is an opportunity to clarify, to teach and to reassure and in line with the SPHE curriculum which aims to equip children with attributes and skills necessary to live a democratic way of live with individual and group rights and responsibilities

Sample responses;

- I'll do my best to answer your questions but I may not be able to answer all of them
- That's something you'll learn about as you get older
- Is that something you could talk to your parents / guardians / family
- We agreed in our contract that we wouldn't ask anyone personal questions.
- Somebody asked a question and the language they used was slang language, what they meant to ask was....
- A question was asked, and we cannot talk about that particular topic but I think that question was about.....

For older children a ‘question box’ could be used as part of a structured RSE lesson. Teachers can follow up on the written questions at a later date, thus allowing time to prepare suitable answers, consult with colleagues, etc.

If issues arise which might be seen to contravene Children’s First Guidelines, the teacher will notify the designated liaison person in the school.

Parental Involvement

- Parents/guardians will be informed that the school fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE programme including sensitive aspects of the programme at enrollment
- Parents are encouraged to view the RSE programme online www.pdst.ie and may make an appointment to speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns at any time during the year. The school acknowledges that parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children about growing and changing.

Confidentiality

- If a child is withdrawn from the teaching of sensitive issues we cannot guarantee that the other children will not tell or inform her about what happened or what was discussed.

Resources

Relationships and Sexuality Education Manuals (DES). Each class teacher has a copy of the appropriate manual or access to it in online / pdf format. Other resources that support the broader aims of RSE include:

- Stay Safe programme
- Walk Tall Programme.
- Anatomical Dolls, story books and What a Wonderful World text book.
- Busy Bodies DVD and booklet. This DVD and booklet were developed to support the teaching of the 5th and 6th class component of RSE within the context of SPHE and are used in 6th class in St. Brigid’s GNS.

Provision of Ongoing Support

- Opportunities provided by our Education Centre will be brought to the attention of staff members. Teachers will be encouraged to attend CPD in RSE.
- Staff meetings utilised as a platform for discussion and development of RSE materials.

Review

- The policy will be reviewed after every two years. The policy may also be reviewed at an earlier time should a need arise.
- This plan was ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting on 20th June 2019