



SAINT FINIAN'S NATIONAL
SCHOOL

RSE Policy

2023

St Finian's N.S. RSE Policy

This policy was drawn up by a committee involving staff/parents/guardians/carers on 20.2.2018. It was reviewed in February 2023. This policy is an agreed approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education

(RSE). It was developed to inform teachers and parents/guardians/carers about the provision of RSE in School

Context

- Saint Finian's N.S. is a mixed DEIS Band 1 primary school situated in Glenties Park in Finglas South, Dublin 11. The school has twelve mainstream classroom teachers, six SET teachers, one part time SET teacher (3 hours) shared with another local school, one Home School Community Liaison Co-ordinator and one Early Start Teacher, two job share Child Care Workers and eight Special Needs Assistants.
- We have 6 SEN support rooms, one Nurture Room, one Early Start room, one sensory room and sensory spaces on both corridors.
- We value and respect the uniqueness of each child in our school community. We strive to empower pupils with diverse needs to reach their fullest potential as individuals and as members of the school and wider community.
- We are a trauma informed/nurturing school/creative school. Some children are identified with disability, with additional educational needs and may also present with additional care or behavioural needs. Our goal as a school staff is to meet the needs of all children, including children with learning difficulties, disabilities or children who have experienced adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

Introductory Statement

St Finian's N.S. recognises that SPHE is intrinsic to the teaching and learning that occurs both formally and informally in our school. Through our SPHE/RSE programme we wish to assist children to develop feelings of self-worth and self-confidence, while encouraging their ability to relate to others in a positive way. The curriculum encourages children to be aware of their rights as an individual, while at the same time accepting responsibility for their actions as members of the school and wider community.

School Philosophy

Our school values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. As a Catholic school our ethos values respect, inclusion and diversity of all members of our school community. Our school acknowledges that parents/guardians/carers have the primary role in the social, personal and health education of their children and as such, their involvement will be encouraged. SPHE/RSE is a key component in supporting our pupils to develop into healthy young adults.

Mission Statement

St Finian's N.S. is situated in the parish of Rivermount, in Finglas South. We are guided by the Catholic ethos of our school which we have summed up for wellbeing with one sentence from the gospel;

“Love one another as I have loved you”

In this context, our mission is to provide a safe, secure, happy learning environment for the entire school community.

Philosophy

The St. Finian's school motto is ‘mol an oige agus tìochfáidh sí’. Our school is a trauma informed/nurturing/creative school and commits to using its resources to ensure and promote the care and wellbeing of our children. We strive to develop and maintain ...

- Courteous relationships within the school
- A well-chosen curriculum, appropriate for our context
- Understanding of our particular context
- After school activities
- Thoughtfully crafted systems, structures and policies
- Good Communications
- Interest and concern for the children
- Gratitude, for our parents, our children, our talented staff and the support of the wider community (The Primary Care Teams, Better Finglas, Barnardos, The Lions Club, St Joseph the Helper, The Peter McVerry Trust)

The eight points above are central to how our school operates. They are also central to ensuring the wellbeing of the whole school community. We measure the wellbeing of our pupils using the following indicators; being physically active, being responsible, being connected, being resilient, being respected and being aware.

Definition of RSE

The following definition of RSE is referenced from the Interim curriculum and guidelines for primary schools (DE 1996, p.5)

“Relationships and Sexuality Education is an integral part of SPHE and must be taught in this context. It 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. In particular, it addresses the meaning of human sexuality, relationships, growth and

development, relevant to personal and social skills.”

SPHE Curriculum

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.

SPHE/RSE

- A lifelong and continual process throughout primary school and should not be confined to once off inputs or solitary lessons
- A shared responsibility and collaboration between family, school, health professionals and the community
- A subject which develops a child’s skills, attitudes, values and understanding relevant to a range of social, personal and health issues
- Child-centered. RSE education should prioritise the needs of the child and his/her environment, with appropriate adaptations made to suit individual requirements and individual school situations
- Spiral in nature. SPHE/RSE formally begins in Junior Infants and is developed throughout the child’s time in school. This will provide opportunities to consolidate and build on previous learning in developmentally appropriate manner.
- Taught through active learning methodologies. RSE provides a range of learning opportunities that requires children to actively participate in their learning in a wide variety of ways e.g. discussion, circle time, role play.
- Free of bias. Lessons, language and resources selected by the school should reflect this. SPHE/RSE encourages children to be inclusive with each other, challenge prejudice and learn how to live together in an intercultural society

RSE is part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).

Through SPHE and RSE, pupils are enabled to enhance their self-esteem and wellbeing through:

- A sense of identity
- A sense of purpose
- A sense of belonging
- A sense of security
- A sense of competence

Aims of RSE

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and wellbeing of the child
- To help the child to 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

Aims taken from the Interim curriculum and guidelines for primary schools (DE 1996, p.9)

Broad Objectives of RSE

When due account is taken of abilities and varying circumstances, the RSE education curriculum

should enable the child (in conjunction with the SPHE curriculum) to:

- Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self
- Develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and wellbeing 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

Objectives are taken from the Interim curriculum and guidelines for primary schools (DE 1996, p.9)

Policies that support SPHE/RSE

- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Substance Use Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- GDPR Policy

Curriculum Planning for SPHE/RSE

Month	Year 1	Year 2
September – October	Self-Identity (Myself)	Myself and my Family (Myself and Others)
November -December	My Friends and Other People (Myself and Others)	Relating to Others (Myself and Others)
January-February	Safety and Protection (Myself)	Growing and Changing (Myself)
March-April	Making Decisions (3 rd to 6 th Myself)	Taking Care of my Body (Myself)
May-June	Media Education (Myself and the Wider World)	Developing Citizenship (Myself and the Wider World)

RSE, which largely looks at the development of relationships, is interwoven through all strands and strand units of the SPHE curriculum. The more sensitive aspects of RSE will be covered under the strand ‘Myself ’and strand units ‘Growing and changing’ and ‘Taking care

of my body'. Teachers will refer to the resource Making the Links to support their planning for the delivery of these strand units.

Suggested resources are listed under the Resources Section of this policy.

Guidelines for the Implementation of RSE

The SPHE curriculum will underpin all teaching and learning of RSE in St. Finian's N.S.

The SPHE curriculum 1999 is allocated 30 minutes of discrete teaching time by the Department of Education. Teachers can use their professional discernment if extra time is required, this can be taken discretionary time.

Teachers are encouraged to use an integrated approach for the delivery of SPHE. All resources used will be in keeping with this RSE policy and will take into consideration the sample criteria for choosing resources, as outlined in the SPHE Teacher Guidelines p.103.

Information pertinent to the implementation of RSE in St Finian's N.S.

- The strands units 'Growing and changing' and 'Taking care of my body' are covered in one year of a 2 year plan
- Lessons containing sensitive material are covered as part of these strand units
- Special consideration will be taken to ensure that the needs of children with SEN, including using the recommended content in PDST website for children with SEN and linking in with parents and SEN teachers of individual children are met
- Taking into account the pupils' social and emotional development, instruction will be based on individual needs where possible
- Parents will be informed as to the timing of the teaching of sensitive lessons.
- All Parents will be provided with links to all of the lesson content in advance of this teaching.
- All parents will be advised as to their right to remove their child from these sensitive lessons. They are further advised that if they wish to do so they must let the school know in writing.
- Lastly parents will be reminded that the school cannot be responsible for misinformation their child (if removed) hears from other children, on the road, at their sports and hobbies, on the yard.

Pupil Voice

In our school the voice of our pupils is acknowledged, valued and respected. Children are given opportunities to reflect and feedback on SPHE/RSE provision via a focus group, our pupil council.

This information will be used to inform school improvement in relation to future RSE provision.

Children with Additional Needs

Teachers will endeavour to adapt and modify activities and methodologies in SPHE to encourage participation by children with special needs. The Special Education Needs Teachers in the SEN Team will supplement the work of the class teachers where necessary. St Finian's N.S. will liaise with trained professionals/appropriate agencies eg. NEPS when dealing with sensitive issues to ensure that the children involved are fully supported.

Approaches and Methodologies

Active learning is the principal learning and teaching approach recommended for SPHE. It requires children to actively participate in their learning in a wide variety of ways, thereby increasing the possibility of internalising what they have explored and of being able to use this learning in their everyday lives. Active learning contributes significantly to fostering their self-confidence, self-discipline and self-control in the learner. Active learning methodologies are an integral part of teaching and learning in SPHE and RSE. The PDST have developed a suite of resources to support

St Finian's N.S. commits to implement active learning methodologies in SPHE which are available on <https://www.pdst.ie/SPHE-Approaches-and-Methodologies>

Any or all of the following techniques will allow the child to play an active part in the learning process:

- Discussion
- Use of Circles/Circle Time
- Role play
- Interviewing friends, or other school pupils, family members
- Surveys of attitudes
- Analysing and evaluating media
- Hosting visitors
- Engagement with Restorative Practices
- Modelling
- Designing advertisements
- Writing captions
- Ranking statements
- Describing photographs
- Viewing and discussing videos
- Projects

The curriculum will be taught in a developmentally-appropriate manner at all times. The teaching materials and methodologies used will reflect the needs of the children.

Resources

In St Finian's National School our staff may consult any of the following teaching resources when teaching RSE in addition to the DE Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme:

- PDST Health and Wellbeing RSE
- NCCA SPHE/RSE Toolkit
- DE Walk Tall Manuals
- Making the Links and Beyond
- Stay Safe programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Anatomical Dolls
- HSE publications (www.healthpromotion.ie)
- Busy Bodies Booklet/ Videos/ Workbook (PDST)
- Inclusive picture and story books
- INTO Different Families, Same Love Poster
- INTO Different Families, Same Love Lesson Ideas
- INTO Different Families Same Love Online Presentation JI – 2nd
- INTO Different Families Same Love Online Presentation 3rd – 6th
- RESPECT guidelines
- Gender Equality Matters (GEM)
- All Together Now
- We All Belong
- PDST Education and Transgender Information
- PDST Identity Based Bullying Information
- RSE related educational websites

The resources chosen will be

- In line with the principles of the SPHE curriculum
- Free of bias
- Demonstrates equality
- Up to date

- Devoid of racial or sexual stereotyping

Parental Involvement

Going Forward Together (Parents Booklet) states – “As a parent, you are the first teacher of your child. You hand on values and attitudes to each new generation of children”.

In St Finian’s National School parents/guardians/carers will be informed at enrolment that the school fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE curriculum. Parents/guardians/carers will be informed in advance of the teaching of the formal RSE lessons. (See Appendix 1).

This will offer parents/guardians/carers an opportunity to meet with relevant teachers to discuss/view the material that will be covered and share any personal details they feel the teacher should be aware of prior to their child engaging in RSE lessons. If they wish to withdraw their child from specific formal RSE lessons, this should be provided in writing to the school and kept on file. Alternative arrangements will be considered and agreed upon by the relevant parties. The school cannot accept responsibility for indirect RSE related information delivered to the child outside of formal RSE lessons i.e. on yard, school bus etc.

Parents may be signposted to developmentally –appropriate resources to support them in speaking with their child about relationships, sexuality and growing up.

Differentiation

The age and stage of development in a class can vary widely and strategies for differentiation can support gradual and appropriate learning. In St Finian’s National School, teachers use assessment and professional judgment to differentiate the curricular objectives and content to best suit the needs of all pupils.

Adaptations to the way in which the content is delivered will be made for children with special and additional educational needs. Both consultation with parents/guardians/carers in advance of lessons and the anticipation of the pupil's needs will be central to ensuring learning is meaningful. This may be reflected in the student’s support file.

Useful Resources

- Middletown Centre for Autism
- PDST RSE
- Stay Safe for Children with SEN

Language

Language reflects values, attitudes, beliefs, prejudices and principles and can inform behaviour. It not only helps to express a culture, but influences and shapes that culture as well. It is essential that children are enabled to use language in a precise and appropriate manner. The language that is promoted in our school nurtures both children and adults as

unique and valuable human beings. Our use of language shows our respect cultural and other differences and be used in a way that encourages inclusiveness.

Language is a powerful tool and is used in St Finian's to show respect and integrity for the dignity of each person. In the course of our teaching and all interactions, children will become aware of the power and influence of language. When used positively, language can build up, affirm and show respect to another human being.

Questions

In St. Finian's N.S teachers may use a variety of methodologies to create a safe, open space where pupils feel comfortable to ask RSE related questions. It is important that the teacher creates a safe, open space where pupils feel comfortable to ask RSE related questions. Teachers will not invalidate a pupil's question, but rather set boundaries and manage expectations around questions. This can be done using a variety of strategies; question box, open forum questions, online questioning tools. In the instance that the teacher may not be able to answer a specific question, it is important that the child will be signposted towards another adult who they trust for an answer.

In answering questions teachers may refer to HSE website:

<https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/for-parents/sample-questions-and-answers/> to support teachers in formulating agreed, appropriate responses..

Question Box

For older pupils a 'question box' is one methodology that may be used as part of the formal RSE lessons.

Teachers can follow up on the written questions at a later date, thus allowing time to prepare suitable answers, consult with colleagues/RSE policy to formulate an appropriate response.

During the delivery of each RSE lesson, pupils can be encouraged to place their questions into a box.

These questions can be reviewed and the following may be taken into account:

- All pupils are encouraged to write on the question sheet. If they don't have a question ask them to write something interesting they learned in the lesson
- Questions arising from lesson content will be answered in an age-appropriate manner.
- The 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 curriculum and they will be advised to talk with their parents/guardians/carers
- Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents if a need arises

- No personal questions will be answered and children will be reminded not to share inappropriate personal information about their families or others

Open Forum Questions

Teachers give pupils an opportunity to ask questions at various times throughout the RSE lesson.

Questions will be answered in an age and developmentally appropriate way. Children will be made aware that the class teacher may not be able to answer their question and they will be signposted to ask an adult they trust at home.

Possible 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 about?
- We agreed that we wouldn't ask anyone personal questions ...
- Somebody asked a question and the language that was used was slang language. I think what they meant to ask was....

Online Audience Engagement Platform

Teachers may use an online audience engagement platform where children can submit their questions digitally.

If a perceived child protection matter arises throughout RSE lessons or indeed otherwise, the teacher, as a mandated person, will refer to the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.

Assessment

St Finian's National School will employ the following methods for assessment in SPHE/RSE:

- Observation and questions to assess the pupils' engagement and interest
- Use of teacher-designed tasks such as worksheets, quizzes or games
- Use of reflection or learning log
- Pupil Portfolio

Confidentiality

St Finian's National School follows the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017.

If a child is withdrawn from specific RSE lessons, the school cannot guarantee that the withdrawn child will not hear the information from another source.

Parents are invited to share any changes in circumstances with the school as necessary e.g. changes in family structures etc. For the welfare of some children, this information may be important for a teacher to know prior to engaging in specific topics on family/relationships

Provision of Ongoing Support

St Finian's National School ensures the provision of ongoing support by the following:

- Encouraging teachers to attend RSE CPD
- Utilising staff meetings as a platform for discussion and development of RSE
- Seeking the support from a PDST Advisor
- Create a mentor system amongst to support the teaching RSE
- Budgeting for the updating and development of RSE materials
- Reviewing RSE policy on a regular basis
- Ensure special education teachers have adequate training opportunities
- Staff will reflect on information gathered from pupil questionnaires and focus groups. This will be used to inform future developments regarding RSE.
- Signposting staff to resources available from PDST and other sources

Review

St Finian's National School will review this policy every three years. The policy may also be reviewed at an earlier time should a need arise. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made.

This plan was ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting in March 2023.

Appendix 1

Dear Parents/Guardians/Carers,

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is an integral part of the Social, Personal and Health.

Education curriculum. We will be commencing formal RSE lessons in Term 2, March 2024. RSE predominantly lies within the strand units ‘ Taking care of my body’ and ‘Growing and changing’ which can be viewed at

<https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/462570f8-27cc-4f5b-a13e->

[d1e2de8c18d2/PSEC06_SPHE_curriculum.pdf](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/462570f8-27cc-4f5b-a13e-d1e2de8c18d2/PSEC06_SPHE_curriculum.pdf)

INFANTS - 2nd CLASS	3rd CLASS - 6th CLASS
Strand Unit - <u>Growing and Changing</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> As I grow I change<input type="checkbox"/> New life<input type="checkbox"/> Feelings and emotions	Strand Unit - <u>Growing and Changing</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> As I grow I change<input type="checkbox"/> Birth and New Life<input type="checkbox"/> Feelings and emotions
Strand Unit - <u>Taking care of my body</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Knowing about my body<input type="checkbox"/> Food and nutrition<input type="checkbox"/> Making decisions	Strand Unit - <u>Taking care of my body</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Knowing about my body<input type="checkbox"/> Health and wellbeing<input type="checkbox"/> Health and Wellbeing

Our school’s RSE policy is available to view on our school website www.saintfinians.ie. It outlines our agreed approach to achieve the objectives of the aforementioned strand units.

If you wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to arrange an appointment to meet with your child’s class teacher. If you do not wish for your child to participate in this programme we will need a signed letter from you stating that.

Yours sincerely,

School Principal

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