

R.S.E. Policy for St Thomas the Apostle N.S.

▪ Introduction

St Thomas the Apostle Primary School is a co-ed mainstream Primary School. The school is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Cashel & Emly diocese. The ethos of our school is founded on Christian principles where tolerance and respect for others is paramount. RSE encompasses the acquisition of knowledge and understanding and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, sexual identity and intimacy. In St Thomas the Apostle Primary School we seek to promote the overall development of the child which involves the integration of RSE into personal understanding, growth and development within the context of our Catholic ethos.

▪ Development of this Policy

This policy was devised by all members of staff on the 9th December 2015. This was informed by much discussion during planning development meetings. Two members of staff received RSE training in both Waterford and Limerick Education centres. It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE.

▪ Rationale

St Thomas the Apostle N.S is committed to the education of all the children in their care. Relationships and Sexuality are integral parts of the human personality and impact them biologically, culturally, socially and spiritually. The ethos of the school is the cornerstone of our RSE Policy. RSE is a lifelong process that involves the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills and the development of attitudes, beliefs, morals and values. While we believe that the primary responsibility for addressing these issues rests with parents, we acknowledge the vital part the school can play in supporting and complementing this.

▪ School Philosophy

St Thomas the Apostle N.S. is a Catholic school and therefore all policies developed are implemented in ways which are in keeping with the ethos of the school. The ethos of the school is characterised by the following:

- *Sensitivity to the reality of our children's lives in a changing world*
- *Mutual respect between all partners in education*
- *Being child-centred*
- *Aiming to ensure each child reaches full potential in the holistic sense*
- *Hoping that children are equipped with high self-esteem to enable them to go to live happy and fulfilled lives*

▪ Definition of RSE

RSE 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, promoting respect for themselves and others and providing them with appropriate information.

▪ **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. (p. 5 NCCA interim curriculum and guidelines for RSE)

▪ **Current Provision** Included in the school curriculum is:

Throughout the school year, Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) will be taught as a subject from Junior Infants to 6th class. A wide variety of topics is included on this programme, at age appropriate levels. RSE forms a part of this programme; it is a spiral curriculum which ensures that topics are taught in a developmental manner throughout a child's primary school years.

If an outside speaker visits the school for RSE, parents will be invited to attend with their children. In line with Child Protection guidelines, teachers will remain in the class with an external speaker to the school.

▪ **Aims of our RSE programme**

- *To help young people develop healthy friendships and relationships*
- *To promote a healthy attitude to sexuality and to relationships*
- *To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child*
- *To foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude towards 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- Fifth and Sixth Class*
- *To understand the physical changes taking place with the onset of puberty- Senior Classes*
- *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*

▪ **Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School**

Curriculum Matters:

- Curriculum Content –The curriculum by National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (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 and the policy. Each class teacher will teach the content for their class level.
- If an outside speaker is used, the class teacher is responsible for making them aware of school policy and that teacher will sit in during the lesson.

Topics covered up to 2nd class include:

- Keeping Safe
- Bodily changes during growth and birth (birth to 9)
- Making age appropriate choices
- Appreciating family life
- 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)*

Topics from 3rd to Sixth include:

- Bodily changes
- Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise
- Keeping Safe
- Expressing Feelings
- Family relationships
- Making healthy and responsible decisions
- Forming Friendships
- *Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (Fourth class)*
- *Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (Fifth and Sixth Class)*
- *Reproductive system of male/female adults (Fifth and Sixth Class)*
- *Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship.(Fifth and Sixth Class)*

Organisational Matters:

- If parents/guardians request the child to be removed from RSE lessons, provisions will be made for the child to leave the classroom at that time. With regard to matters of a sensitive nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom.
- Our RSE programme is inclusive and so we actively discourage withdrawal. Should a parent seek to have their child withdrawn from the RSE lessons the school will take account of parental concerns, and parents right to withdraw their child from themes pertaining to sensitive issues will be honoured on the understanding that the parents are taking full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves. Should a child who is withdrawn from the class receive inappropriate information from others outside of these classes it will be the responsibility of parent or guardian to address the issues.
- Any teacher has the right to opt-out from teaching the sexually sensitive issues in RSE. It is the responsibility of Board of Management to ensure that the curriculum will be delivered to the children, by another teacher, or an outside speaker.
- Parents are welcome to view the curriculum.

➤ Dealing with Questions:

All questions answered will reflect the parameters of the curriculum. Certain topics will not be discussed i.e. abortion, masturbation, homosexuality, contraception. Questions to the teacher may be written within the group setting and answered within the boundaries of the curriculum and policy. Any questions asked by the children that are judged to be inappropriate, the teacher will refer the child to their parents or will explain that this will be covered at second level.

Provision for Ongoing Support

- Parents welcome to view curriculum if they wish
- Parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children in sexual matters. The school RSE programme acts as a support only to parents, and parents retain the right to withdraw their children from classes.

Links to other policy areas

- Child Protection Policy
- SPHE Policy

Child Protection

The school follows the DES child protection guidelines and has a child protection policy with the Principal as Designated Liaison Person. In cases of disclosure, the DLP will follow the procedures as set out in Children First.

The RSE and STAY SAFE programme and other resources that are deemed suitable will primarily be used for the delivery of the RSE themes.

▪ **Review**

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years or if the need arises in between. Parents will be informed of any amendments made to the RSE policy.

Notes:

R.S.E.	Relationship and Sexuality Education.
S.P.H.E	Social, Personal, Health Education.
N.C.C.A	National Council for Curriculum Assessment.
D.E.S.	Department of Education and Skills

Ratified by _____

Date: _____