

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION

Enable Ireland Sandymount school is designated by the Department of Education and Skills as a Special school for pupils with physical and multiple disabilities including pupils with high physical care needs. As a school we support the principles of:

- inclusiveness,
- equality of access and participation in the school,
- a safe and secure environment for learning, and
- respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life in society

Our school is nondenominational and we welcome and accept children and families from all faiths and none. Children are nurtured and offered education in a positive atmosphere that promotes spiritual, moral, intellectual, social and physical growth. The child is the centre of all our work.

Enable Ireland Special School is committed to enriching, through education, the lives of the people in its care and encouraging them, in turn, to bring life to others. This school community commits itself to maintaining a safe, positive, structured, caring environment where the spiritual, moral, intellectual, physical, social, personal and aesthetic development of the school community is fostered. It recognises that parents/guardians are the primary educators and home is the natural environment in which Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) will take place.

Pupil learning needs are at the centre of all planning, and the focus of our school plan is the teaching and learning that takes place at the school. Enable Ireland Sandymount School promotes the 24 hour curriculum and our school day is a small part of what pupils learn throughout their lives. The school work in partnership with parents to ensure a quality education for our pupils. The RSE programme is taught throughout the school in the formal classroom setting but also caught by pupils through our staff's interaction throughout the school day.

Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a developmental process through experiential learning in which pupils participate to cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships.

RSE is the formal approach to educating children in:

- **relationships with others-parents, siblings, friends, and the community in general**
- **Respect for themselves and others**
- **Physical development-bodily functions and changes and personal hygiene**
- **Emotional development-maturing in society**
- **Sexuality in context-part of a loving relationship**

Parents are the primary educators of their children and their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality is seen by the school as very important. Being part of a family and having friends give us opportunities to love and be loved, to share thoughts, feelings and to belong. Enable Ireland Sandymount School RSE policy provides structured opportunities for students with special needs to acquire greater knowledge of human sexuality and relationships in the home and in the school setting, in a manner which is appropriate for their level of development. It addresses the



meaning of relationships, growth and development; relevant personal, social skills and sexuality. It necessitates that parents and schools work in partnership and understanding of the nature of our student cohort with special needs.

The school may seek assistance from Enable Ireland psychology and social work departments with the delivery of the RSE programme and information evenings for parents.

The processes through which we learn about RSE are the same as those involved in all teaching and learning and they are bound up with personal and social development. A supportive home/school environment marked by gender equity is essential if RSE is to be effective. Similarly the principles of fair play, respect, tolerance, and reward for effort must permeate the climate of the home and school. Central to RSE too is the fostering of self-esteem through which our pupils can be guided in making appropriate choices and decisions in all aspects of life including those relating to relationships and sexuality. Every parent and every member of school staff has a role to play in the delivery of the RSE programme.

A copy of this policy will be made available to any parent on request to the school Office.

Note: The [Education Act, 1998](#) (section 30, subsection (2)(e)) provides that a student is not required to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parent or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student. Hence, parents have a right to opt their child out of the sensitive issues in RSE if they wish to do so. It is the responsibility of the school to make alternative arrangements for the student in this situation. The school may wish to ask the parents to put their request in writing.

RSE and SPHE

RSE is an integral part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and must be taught in this context. SPHE contributes to developing the work of the school on promoting the health and well-being of children and young people through their physical, emotional and moral development.

The key characteristics of this programme are that SPHE 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

Sexually sensitive issues will be covered within the strands units:

A successful programme, firmly embedded in SPHE, will help young people to learn to respect themselves and others and to move more confidently from childhood through adolescence and into adulthood.

To what will this policy apply?

This policy will apply to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality. Discussion about relationships and sexuality also takes place outside of classrooms, it is therefore important that all staff are familiar with RSE policy.

To whom will this policy apply?

This policy will apply to school staff, students, Board of Management, parents/guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators and will be freely available to all personnel.



Aims of the RSE Programme

- To help young people understand and develop friendships and relationships.
- To promote an understanding of sexuality.
- To promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's relationship with others.
- To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction.
- To enable pupils to develop attitudes and values toward their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework in keeping with the policy of the school.
- To provide opportunities for pupils to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that may help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

It is acknowledged that with a full curriculum and our pupils with additional learning needs these aims are aspirational. Children with special needs may need more help than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up; they may also need more help in learning what sorts of behaviour are and are not acceptable, and in being warned and prepared against abuse by others.

Current Provision

The educational and emotional needs of the children in our care are central to our planning and policy making processes. We have always, and will always continue to put the welfare of the children first. Enable Ireland Special School provides Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) formally through the teaching of:

- SPHE
- Stay Safe Programme
- Walk Tall
- Junior Cert Level 1 and Level 2
- Physical Education
- Social Programme
- Life Skills Training
- Music Therapy

and informally through the supportive school environment where:

- Pupils feel valued
- Pupils are safe and secure
- Self-esteem is fostered
- Respect, tolerance and fairness are evident
- Open communication is promoted
- Effort is recognised and rewarded
- Conflict is managed constructively
- Social, moral and civic values are promoted

RSE is an integral part of SPHE and must be taught in this context. RSE draws on the assertiveness and decision-making skills acquired in the SPHE programme and through this programme we promote a healthy and normal attitude to relationship issues.

At all times the student's stage of development and maturity will be of prime consideration and students will be introduced to those topics in a manner that is appropriate and meaningful to them.



In addition, all teaching is supported by implementing school rules around appropriate physical interactions between staff and students. These rules are established for the pupil on his/her enrolment in the school to ensure that awareness of appropriate/inappropriate behaviours is fostered from the beginning.

These include:

- No hugging or kissing.
- Horse play involving physical contact is not allowed. This excludes tickles and squeezes as specified in a student's behaviour or OT plan.
- Students are not allowed to climb on staff in the swimming pool.
- Students are not allowed to climb on staff in ball pool or in soft play room.
- Teaching appropriate public/private behaviours.

Decreasing Behaviours & RSE

There may at some point be a need to input goals aimed at decreasing behaviours that are occurring in excess. Any intervention aimed at decreasing sexualised behaviours will be approached in the same way as other behaviours we try to decrease.

Sexualised Behaviour

While recognising that sexual behaviours are a natural part of maturation, it is important that the school adopts a general procedure to address these behaviours during school hours. Some of these behaviours include but are not limited to:

- Masturbation
- Exposing genitals
- Inappropriate touching of peers or staff
- Attempted kissing peers or staff

Procedure

- Interrupt the behaviour
- Redirect the student to an activity that involves high concentration
- Provide reinforcement for staying on the assigned task
- Inform the class teacher
- Keep a record of instances
- Inform parents
- Design a support plan

Why do we need RSE?

It is essential to allow for differences between the physical and emotional development of pupils with special needs in the teaching of RSE. Children get information and misinformation about sexuality from television, in the playground, from the older friends and in many other ways that children or parents cannot control. Lack of correct and appropriate information can leave our pupils vulnerable, confused and anxious. It is important that children learn the appropriate language (verbal or otherwise) for discussing aspects of life related to sexuality so they can communicate confidently about themselves.

Specifically the RSE programme as taught in Enable Ireland Sandymount School aims

- to enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child
- to help young people 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 (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 enhance the capacity of the child to resist sexual exploitation and abuse

Learning about Sexuality and Relationships is a lifelong process. Children learn about relationships and sexuality primarily from their families. The school based RSE programme complements and supports what children are learning at home. The Department of Education requires all schools to teach RSE and to have an RSE policy. The school policy will ensure that RSE is taught in a way that reflects the core values and ethos of the school.

RSE-specific education belongs to the strand units 'Taking Care of My Body' and 'Growing and Changing'.

RSE and 'Appropriate Language'

"Many children are unable to communicate about themselves, their feelings and bodily functions due to inadequacy of language, acute embarrassment or other factors." "One of the primary objectives of the RSE programme is to provide children with language through which they may seek clarification, ask questions and discuss all aspects of their growth and development" DES Interim RSE Guidelines (1996)

It is important that children are taught the appropriate language in Relationships & Sexuality Education to enable them to communicate confidently about themselves, their sexuality and their relationships.

- Factual language is neutral and non-discriminatory
- As children get older they will not be embarrassed to use or hear these words
- Children will be less likely to use crude or abusive language

Confidentiality and Child Protection

Where there is disclosure by a child of a welfare concern, all staff will follow the Enable Ireland Sandymount School Child protection policy and the School's confidentiality policy.

Provision for Ongoing Support, Development and Review.

The school will make a commitment to:

- Ensure access to in-career development for teachers
- Provide relevant RSE resources
- Parent Education programmes shall be encouraged through the informal Parent's Association.
- Collaborate with Enable Ireland Clinical services.
- Continue to share resources and expertise with psychologists, nurses, social workers and other therapists interested in developing RSE and programmes about adolescence.



School Planning for RSE

It is often said that if we fail to plan then we plan to fail. Teachers and parents engage in planning for the children's learning throughout the year. Long term planning is facilitated by an annual Individual Education Planning meeting and review. Teachers also engage in monthly and weekly lesson planning and evaluation to ensure that learning is on task. RSE as a part of the curriculum is included in long term, monthly and weekly planning. Teachers are encouraged to offer specific lessons on topics below but also to use a cross curricula approach to ensure learning and reinforcement.

Sources and Resources

The school will use the RSE and Stay Safe Programme Resources. We may also use other resources materials which have been identified by staff as useful and approved as suitable by the school.

RSE Programme Junior School

Topic: Myself

Self-awareness

1. Develop an awareness of the 5 senses through a range of sensory experiences.
2. Develop an awareness of body parts through games rhymes and songs
3. Develop an awareness of unique features such as fingerprints, weight, shoe-size, clothes size.
4. Recognise how he/she has changed: examine old photography/videos
5. Develop a positive self-image and present him/herself confidently in a range of situations: have opportunities to feel positive about him/herself – taking part in public performance, helping younger children at playtime/with class work.
6. Express personal opinions and preferences with growing confidence and listen to and respect the views of others.
7. Develop an awareness of own skills and abilities: choose a game or activity during free play.
8. Develop self-confidence and positive self-image: have opportunities to feel positive about him/herself, take responsibility for own belongings, performance and role-play in drama, self-expression through art and music.
9. Become more self-reliant and have opportunities to take increasing personal responsibility of him/herself.
10. Make real choices: pupils are encouraged to make choices and decisions formally and informally throughout the school day.

Taking care of my body

1. Develop strategies to cope with various changes as they occur: pupils making transition from Class to Class, changing teacher, SNA and sometimes friends.
2. Show awareness of the basic needs of his/her body: nutrition and healthy eating, personal hygiene and toilet training.
3. Explore and discuss the different things the body can do: explore the body through movement, art and craft.
4. Identify parts of the body and develop awareness of the private parts of his/her own body: Identification of body parts through action songs, games, jig-saws, computer games and naming games. Private body parts will be named informally during toilet training and un/dressing after swimming. Adults will refer to the private body parts using anatomically correct language.
5. Recognise and practice basic hygiene and social skills: Pupils will wash hands before eating, and after using the toilet. Pupils will take care of nasal discharge with as little adult



intervention as necessary. Pupils will be encouraged to behave appropriately when eating at the table and observe good table manners to the best of their abilities.

Knowing about my body

Recognise and practice good personal hygiene.

Developing Self-Confidence

1. Accept that making mistakes and trying again are part of the learning process
2. Persevere in difficult tasks.
3. Take responsibility for certain jobs around the home/at school.
4. Continue to develop skills for independent living
5. Tidying his/her own room.
6. Being able to make a complaint, knowing how/where to ask for assistance.
7. Become aware of and think about choices and decisions that he/she makes every day. What will I wear today? Which book will I choose from the library?

Growing and Changing

- a) Show pupil that he/she is growing: growth chart, comparing baby photographs to current photographs
- b) Identify things pupils can do now that a small baby cannot do.
- c) Become aware of new life and birth in the world: Baby animals in spring, name and match adult animals to their young.
- d) Identify and explore a range of feelings: Pupils explore and identify feelings of happy and sad, interpret facial expressions, photos and drawings.
- e) Identify the skills and abilities acquired and the interests/pursuits taken up in recent years.
- f) Begin to identify the main phases of the human cycle: sequence photographs/pictures of people of different ages: baby, young girl/boy, teenager, woman/man, old woman/man – know that granny/granddad is old and a baby is young

Feelings and Emotions

- a) Identify a range of facial expressions, give words for feelings.
- b) Develop awareness of feelings of others.
- c) Show awareness that the actions of one individual can affect the feelings of others.
- d) Express feelings in an appropriate way
- e) Identify people with whom it is appropriate to hug/kiss/shake hands.

Topic: Myself and Others

Myself and my Family

1. Communicate about his/her own family
2. Explore the things that families do together.

My Friends and Other People

1. Communicate about his/her friends. Name and identify class mates from photos.
2. Identify/Become aware of the importance of friendship through interactive activities and free play activities within a controlled setting.
3. Use verbal and non-verbal behaviour to perform social functions.
4. Work co-operatively with others.
5. Practice care and consideration, courtesy and good manners when interacting with others.
6. Resolve conflict with others.



7. Recognise his/her role and place in the family unit and the contribution made by each member to the family: identify jobs that Mammy/Daddy/ siblings/students do.
8. Recognise and explore bullying behaviour. Show awareness of wrongdoing if own bullying behaviour is identified: respond by repelling bully or by calling for help if bullied/another is being bullied.
9. Show understanding of the roles of familiar people: principal, school secretary, nurse, postman.
10. Demonstrate ability to take turns, share equipment and play safely and co-operatively with peers.
11. Practice care and consideration, courtesy and good manners when interacting with others.
12. Learn to apologise without prompting from adult and to accept apologies from others.
13. Identify those who have special responsibilities for looking after people in the community: Gardaí, life guard, Care assistants, nurse etc.

Safety and Protection

1. Identify familiar and unfamiliar people in his/her environment.
2. Communicate “no” independently and assertively. Get away from the person, get the attention of others.
3. Use role-play and drama to reinforce the concept of “no”, to practice assertiveness and ways of making safe choices.
4. Develop an awareness of safety in the school environment.
5. Develop an awareness of safety on the bus.
6. Develop an awareness of road safety.
7. Show an understanding of the school rules.
8. Develop awareness of basic safety with regard to medicine and unfamiliar substances.

Topic: Myself and the wider world: Developing citizenship

1. Identify the groups outside the family to which he/she belongs.
2. Identify familiar and unfamiliar people in his/her immediate environment.

RSE Programme for Upper Primary School

Topic: Self Identity

Develop body awareness

Identify or name parts of the body when requested: indicate parts of own body in response to action songs or games. Explore through play and drama activities various facial features: make happy, sad, funny, angry, frightened faces.

Become aware of the features that make a person special and unique.

- Recognise own name, gender, physical features
- Become aware of differences between and similarities with others in class.

Develop an awareness of personal abilities, skills and talents.

- Become aware of things he/she can do now.
- Begin to recognise own strengths and limitations.

Recognise and communicate personal preferences.

- Indicate personal preferences and make independent choices.



Develop awareness of routine activities.

- Act appropriately in familiar and unfamiliar situations

Become more self-reliant and independent

- Accept that making mistakes and trying again are part of the learning process.
- Have opportunities to take increasing personal responsibility for him/herself.

Begin to learn how to cope with various changes as they occur.

- Become more confident in coping with change and with situations that are unfamiliar. Explore changes from babyhood to old age. Puberty: how our bodies change. Relationships with others.

Make real choices

- Begin to develop some awareness of factors that may influence decisions or choices taken.

Topic: Taking care of my Body

Show awareness of the basic needs of his/her own body.

- Initiate activities for keeping the body healthy and well: seek out exercise and activity, choose a healthy lunch

Explore and discuss the different things the body can do.

- Show awareness of 'stuff my body can do': walk, sleep, swim etc.
- Show awareness of "when I need help"

Identify parts of the body and awareness of the private parts of own body.

- Identify independently, the private parts of his/her body. Show appropriate awareness of the need to cover parts of his/her body.
- Show awareness that some types of behaviour are not appropriate in public.

Recognise and practice basic hygiene and social skills.

- Recognize and practice good hygiene. Follow basic hygiene practices when eating or using the toilet.
- Develop personal hygiene routines regarding menstruation cycles and knowledge of the range of toiletries and products available: explore sanitary products during/following trip to chemist, listen to a simple account of what is happening.

Dressing

- Undress and dress his/herself with gradually fading physical, gestural, pictorial or verbal prompting; get dressed or undressed without help or direct personal care. Develop basic skills in caring for clothes.

Washing

- Respond to verbal prompts to shower and wash hair after swimming.

Self-care

- Participate with some help or respond to reminders to take care of his/her appearance: independently get and use a tissue.
- Take some responsibility for self-care.
- Become aware of the importance food for growth and development.



TOPIC: Growing and Changing

Develop awareness that he/she is growing

- Demonstrate understanding of the physical changes taking place in both the male and female body; growing height and weight, growing from boy to man, growing from girl to woman.
- Identify and discuss the physical and other changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty.

Identify new skills and abilities acquired

- Demonstrate awareness of own achievements and progress
- Develop increasing responsibility

Become aware of new life and birth in the world.

- Identify the main phases of the human cycle.
- Develop an awareness of human birth; that a baby grows and is nurtured in the mother's womb until ready to be born.

Identify and explore a range of feelings.

- Identify a range of facial expressions. Explore feelings through drama activities.
- Develop awareness of the feelings of others.

TOPIC: Safety and Protection

Develop awareness of people/places that are safe/unsafe

- Differentiate between familiar and unfamiliar places.
- Identify people in his/her close environment whom he/she can trust

Develop strategies for keeping safe

- Communicate 'no' independently and effectively, get away from the person, get the attention of others.
- Show understanding of safety rules within the school/workplace
- Develop awareness of possible dangers in the environment
- Develop awareness of basic safety with regard to medicine and unfamiliar substances.

TOPIC: Myself and my Family

Communicate about his/her own family

- Identify members from the wider family circle
- Explore the things that families do together
- Communicate about the ways in which families take care of, love and support each other.
- Realize that each person has a place and role within the family
- Recognize his/her role and place in the family unit and the contribution made to each member of the family.
- Identify behaviour that is important for harmony within families

My Friends and Other People

Communicate about his/her friends.

Identify/Become aware of the different aspects of friendship

- Identify, explore and discuss qualities skills associated with friendship



- Develop awareness that friends and other people must be treated with consideration and respect

Relating to Others

Form relationships with other students/adults

- Have opportunities to develop relationships with others. Show understanding of the roles of familiar people: principal, school secretary, nurse

Develop effective communication skills

- Use verbal and non-verbal behaviour to perform social functions
- Work co-operatively with others.
- Practice care and consideration, courtesy and good manners when interacting with others.
- Resolve conflicts with others.

RSE Programme for Senior School

Self Esteem

- Develop positive self-image and confidence. Pupils may identify areas of personal strengths and personal preferences. Pupils identify people who enhance their lives. Pupils identify ways in which they can enhance other people's lives.

Feelings

- Develop an awareness of different feelings. Recognize and identify a range of feelings using facial expressions and gestures: happy, sad, frightened, angry, romantic. Develop an understanding that feelings change as we grow up and mature.

Growing up

- Compile a life chart using personal photos. These life charts introduce pupils to the idea of growing and changing. Pupils develop an understanding of the physical, social and emotional changes that occur from babyhood to adulthood.
- Pupils will identify ways in which young boys and girls grow into men and women, taking into account body changes, height, weight, body hair, body size etc.

Body Parts

- Pupils use a body board to identify and locate body parts visually.
- Pupils name male and female body parts using commonly used words and 'words'. Pupils place pictures of male and female body parts on a body board.
- Pupils will identify differences between male and female bodies (height, shape, body hair, voice tone).

Public and Private

- Understanding the differences between what is public and what is private
- Awareness of appropriate behaviour in public and private places
- Stay-safe – Pupils identify safe and unsafe touches by others.

Relationships

- Family relationships
- Pupils identify their friends in school. Pupils identify characteristics of a good friend.
- Making new friends
- Resolving conflicts between friends.



- Relationships between boys and girls.
- Physical / Sexual relationships are not covered in school programme but requests to cover these areas can be referred to the Principal

Keeping safe

- Enable pupils to understand what to do in difficult or threatening situations
- When it is appropriate to say 'no'
- Making choices.

Links with other policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies which support RSE;

- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Code of Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Intimate Physical Care
- Administration of Medicines Policy
- Stay Safe Policy

Child Safeguarding

Where there is a disclosure by a child of abuse or reason to suspect abuse, the school will follow The Department of Education Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary School (2017) guidelines set out 'Children First' and the school's own Child Safeguarding Statement.

Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the RSE programme:

We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this programme. Specifically important to the RSE Programme are:

- Pupil's formal and informal feedback;
- Annual staff review and feedback;
- Parental feedback.

Review and Ratification

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management.

Signed:



Sé Goulding
Chairperson of Board of Management



Jennifer Doyle
Principal

Date: 16 October 2024

