

# R.S.E. Policy for St Tola's N.S.

## ▪ **School Details**

- *Name:* St Tola's National School
- *Address:* Shannon, Co. Clare
- *Phone Number:* 061 362894
- *Category:* Catholic, 13 teacher, urban
- *Enrolment Numbers:* 232 Approx

## ▪ **Introductory Statement & Rationale**

This policy statement is an approved approach to the teaching of RSE in St Tola's N.S., . It was developed by St Tola's N.S. R.S.E. Policy Committee which included two teachers, Mr David Quinn and Ms Edel Halliday two representatives of the Board of Management Mrs Mary Dunlea Fitzgerald and Sr Ena Quinlan and two parent representatives Mrs Valerie Hunt and Mr Tom Keane. It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the Relationship and Sexuality Education programme within the subject Social, Personal and Health Education.

## **School Philosophy**

- St Tolas NS is a Catholic school and therefore all policies developed are implemented in ways which are in keeping with the ethos of the school.
- Our Mission statement is as follows

The ethos of the school is characterised by the following:

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

## ▪ **Definition of RSE**

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 (p.4 Going Forward Together Parents Information Booklet)

▪ **Relationship of Relationship and Sexuality Education(RSE) to Social, Personal and Health Education**

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 in St Tola's N.S. is:

- SPHE
- Use of the RSE Manual and Busy Bodies DVD
- Religious Education through the Alive O Programme
- In the past the school used the services of an outside speaker for pupils in 6<sup>th</sup> class only but in developing this policy it was decided that it would be a more natural and holistic approach for this topic to be taught by the class teacher.

▪ **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 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- 4<sup>th</sup> class ( girls ) 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> 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 NCCA will be followed as published, and will be taught in Senior Infants to 6<sup>th</sup> 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. However, in fourth class the decision has been taken to cover physical changes with a particular focus on menstruation with girls only at fourth class. This will be covered with boys and girls in fifth and sixth class. Parents will be informed before the sensitive information is covered with the children. This will give parents the opportunity to discuss this area with their child before it is covered in school. Parents will be given the information covered in the programme and the Busy Bodies booklet before it is taught in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes.

- When an outside speaker is used, the class teacher is responsible for making them aware of school policy and that the teacher will sit in during the lesson.

Topics covered up to 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 At Senior Infants this is covered in the context of bathing a baby and how you would know it is a boy or a girl.*
- *Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions (1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>)*

Topics from 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 ( This is covered in Fourth class but how the baby was conceived is not. Menstruation is covered in simple terms for girls only in 4<sup>th</sup> class parents are informed BEFORE the lessons)*
- *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:

- Parents have the right to withdraw their child for these lessons. They must give a notice in writing to the school principal that they are withdrawing their child. The school will make arrangements for the child to attend another class while this lesson is on.
- With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom.

- Any teacher has the right to opt-out from teaching the sexually sensitive issues in RSE. It is responsibility of Board of Management to ensure that the curriculum will be taught to the children by another teacher or an outside speaker.
- Parents are invited/welcome to view the curriculum and may arrange to speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns.

➤ 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 or oral 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
- Regular contact with parents prior to the teaching of lessons involving “sensitive issues” in the form of the home/school link page accompanying such lessons in the RSE Resource Books and outline of sensitive areas **OR** Contact will be made with parents prior to the address by the outside speaker. 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. This policy may be viewed on the school website or a hard copy is available in the school office. In cases of disclosure, the DLP will follow the procedures as set out in Children First.

▪ **Review**

- This policy will be reviewed by the RSE Policy Committee and staff as required. This policy will also be reviewed should a need arise. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made by the RSE Policy Committee.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St. Tola’s N.S on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2011.

