



## **St. Theresa's Primary School, Glebe**

### **Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy**

#### **School Mission Statement:**

In St. Theresa's, we want each individual to reach their full potential, in a secure and happy environment.

Adopted by the Board of Governors of St Theresa's Primary School

(Signed): \_\_\_\_\_ Dated: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Head Teacher)

(Signed): \_\_\_\_\_ Dated: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Chair Board of Governors)

Ratified April 2025



## **Introduction**

### **Rationale:**

In St Theresa's Primary School, we consider Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) to be an important part of the School Curriculum which is taught within the context of our Catholic ethos and is rooted in the person of Jesus Christ:

"Jesus is the model for living an ethical life, and the moral teachings of the Church enable us to follow Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life".

We aim to help our pupils recognize that each person has an inherent dignity, is made in God's image and likeness, is precious in God's eyes and is indeed loved. Although it is a lifelong process, it includes the gaining of age-appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills whilst also developing important attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy.

Thus in our school the provision for RSE is understood and delivered within the context of our strong Catholic ethos, in keeping with the guidance provided by The Catholic Schools' Trustee Service (CSTS) which emphasizes the need for the values inherent in a school's RSE Programme to be consistent with the core values and ethos of the school. In keeping with our holistic vision for education, our specific task in RSE is to teach, nurture and advise our young people, made in the image and likeness of God, to recognise their own sacredness and the sacredness of others within the context of the Catholic faith and teaching. We recognise the dignity of the human person and believe that the dignity, privacy and modesty of each individual child should always be respected. RSE will be firmly embedded in the PDMU Curriculum and the school's RE Curriculum followed as it is wholly concerned with nurturing human wholeness and integral to the physical, spiritual, emotional, moral, social and intellectual development of pupils.

## **Our School Aims and Objectives:**

At St Theresa's Primary School, Christ is at the foundation of our whole educational enterprise. We develop attitudes and values based firmly on the Gospels, rooted within our strong Catholic Ethos. We view the development and implementation of a policy in Relationships and Sexuality (RSE) as an important step towards achieving our main aim to develop each child spiritually, morally, intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically in order that they may realise their full potential and have an appreciation of their own self-worth. The morals and values of our Catholic Ethos are the core principles that underpin the teaching of RSE. Sexuality includes all aspects of the human person that relate to being male and female and develops throughout life. It is a complex dimension of human life and relationships.

We firmly believe that the parents/carers are the primary educators of their children in the area of RSE, and thus have a key role to play in the education of their children with regards to Relationships and Sexual Education. The role of the Catholic School is subsidiary, and it supports and complements its role through partnership with those with parental responsibility and through assisting parents in their endeavour. Parents will be invited to gain information and become informed and fully involved in our school's RSE Programme and in the content and delivery of this policy. Through the delivery of its RSE Programme, the school will afford parents/carers the opportunity to initiate discussions with their children at home regarding important issues in this area, and ease any potential anxiety or embarrassment. Working together, the home as well as the school needs to be familiar with the Programme content and its delivery method to ensure success and value.

To reflect our school's ethos, our RSE Programme should provide opportunities that enable pupils to:

- a. Form values and establish behaviour within a moral, spiritual and social framework consistent with the Catholic ethos, enabling them to make positive, responsible choices about themselves and the way they live their lives.
- b. Learn how to develop and enjoy personal relationships and friendships which are based on responsibility and mutual respect.
- c. Build the foundations for developing more positive personal relationships in later life.
- d. Make positive, responsible choices about their relationships with others and the way they live their lives.

### **Consultation and Participation**

This RSE policy has been developed following the guidelines set out in the Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance Document for Primary Schools: Northern Ireland 2021, Catholic Preschool and Primary School Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland Curriculum Document and CCEA requirements.

It also has been guided by The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1989 which states in Articles 28 & 29 that children and young people are entitled to good quality education while at the same time acknowledging (Article 24e) that parents have the right to 'access education' for their children.

In drawing up this Policy, the:

- Principal, Senior Management Team and teaching staff have had the opportunity to discuss and contribute their views during the formulation of the policy. Staff Development time was assigned to facilitate this.
- Board of Governors met to express their opinions and were informed of our school's commitment to RSE.

- Staff were guided by the advice and support from Ms. Therese Ferry, Diocesan Advisor for Religious Education.
- A draft of the policy will be shared with parents, and any comments or suggestions will be welcomed via an online form.
- Permission forms sought prior to commencement of the RSE Programme from each Year Group and Information Booklets distributed.

### **Implementation and Review of Policy**

Implementation of the policy will take place after consultation with the Board of Governors during the third term of 2024.

The policy will be reviewed annually by the Principal and staff and any changes made in line with further guidance or instruction from the associated bodies.

### **Dissemination**

Parents/carers and pupils should be made aware of the school's policy from the time of enrolment of the pupil through the School Prospectus, school website and copies available from the School Office. The Principal will promptly answer any queries or requests for further information regarding our school's provision in this area.

### **The Centrality of Virtue**

Children will be taught RSE within a framework which models and encourages the following values:

- A respect for God and creation.
- To be able to distinguish between what is right and wrong.
- A respect for self.
- A respect for others.
- Self-discipline.

- A responsibility for one's own actions, and an understanding of the long term and short-term consequences of their actions.
- Non-exploitation in relationships.
- Commitment, trust and bonding within relationships.
- A development of critical self-awareness for themselves and others.
- Compassion, forgiveness, mercy and care when people do not conform to their way of life.

### **Aims and Objectives of our RSE Programme**

Our school is committed to the education of the whole child (spiritual, physical, intellectual, moral, social, cultural, emotional) and we believe that RSE is an integral part of this education. We will endeavour to raise pupils' self-esteem, help them to grow in knowledge and understanding, recognise the value of all persons and develop caring and sensitive attitudes. It is in this context that we commit ourselves, in partnership with parents, to present our pupils with the positive yet challenging Catholic vision for relationships which is appropriate to their age and stage of development, and rooted in a Catholic vision of education and the human person.

Our RSE programme aims to:

- Promote a Catholic vision of sexuality that reflects selfless love, respect and commitment within a moral, social, spiritual framework.
- Help all pupils to appreciate their worth, dignity and uniqueness as children of God.
- Enable young people to appreciate sexuality as a gift from God and that love is the central basis of all relationships.

- Enable children to form healthy and respectful friendships and 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 foster and develop mutual respect and understanding.
- To develop a respect for difference, gender and race within the school and community.
- To enable the children to identify and manage a range of feelings.
- To help all children to value family life in its diversity and the gift of marriage.
- To help young people recognise, understand and prepare for the body changes of puberty
- Promote respect for all individuals regardless of sexual orientation, race, gender or creed.

Our RSE programme enables pupils to:

- Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self
- Develop a positive sense of self awareness, self-esteem and self-worth.
- Develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well-being of others.
- Understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and in wider contexts.
- Develop an awareness of the diversity of family life and family patterns.
- Use decision making and problem-solving strategies.
- Acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction.
- Discuss their feelings, growth and development using an appropriate vocabulary.



- Develop coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse.

Through the RSE Programme, our pupils will develop:

- Communication skills - Listening to others' points of view, putting one's own view forward, dealing with conflict peacefully and being assertive.
- Decision making skills - Making good choices with the relevant information at hand, making moral judgements wisely in context and then putting them into practice, acting responsibly as an individual or as a member of a group.
- Interpersonal skills - Managing healthy relationships with confidence and with effectiveness.

### **Inclusion and Special Needs**

We will ensure RSE affirms the right of every child to be treated equally, preparing them for adult life, regardless of their level of maturity, gender, culture, sexual orientation, disability status, religion, or social class. Lessons will be sensitive to these differing needs and will also help children to realise the nature and consequences of discrimination, teasing, bullying and aggressive behaviours (including cyber-bullying), use of prejudice-based language and how to respond and ask for help.

## The RSE Curriculum

The themes are:

- Relationships;
- My Body and Development (Health, Growth and Change); and
- Safety and Wellbeing (Self-awareness, Feelings and Emotions).

### *Foundation and Key Stage 1*

#### *Myself:*

- How I grow, feed, move and use my senses; caring for myself, for example: hygiene, sleep, exercise.
- Their own and others' feelings/emotions and how their actions affect others.
- Naming parts of the body (basic) - developing an agreed language for our bodies.
- Being myself - I am unique, my self-esteem, self-confidence, independence, respect and caring for myself.
- Similarities and differences between myself and others, for example: uniqueness, fingerprints, gender issues, different rates of growth.
- An introduction to the stages of human development - changes as we grow, for example: baby, child, teenager, adult, mother/father, grandparents.
- Recognising moods, feelings and concerns and developing a language and an appropriate manner of expressing them, for example: what do I do if I feel sad or angry?
- Personal likes and dislikes.
- The importance of keeping healthy and safe.
- The importance of keeping healthy and strategies and skills for keeping healthy.

### My Relationships:

- My family, special people in my life - what they do for me and what I do for them.
- Friendships, getting on with each other for example: communicating, playing together, listening, co-operating and sharing.
- Ageing - how do we know that things are alive, dead, young and old.
- Loss and mourning - death of a person or a pet (Note: situations of the pupils should be considered prior to introducing this topic).
- Respect and caring for family members and friends, for example: caring for a new baby.
- Bullies and what to do about them.
- Personal safety - simple skills and practices to maintain personal safety.
- The difference between good and bad touches.
- Realise that adults and older children are not always friends; the potential danger of relationships with strangers or acquaintances.
- Strategies which pupils might use to protect themselves from potentially dangerous situations.

### My Community/Environment:

- Awareness of different types of families and the roles of individuals within families.
- Keeping safe, for example: dangerous places, dangerous situations, the adults who will help, how to get help from others.
- Rules at home, at school and in the community. Respect and caring for people in the community, e.g. elderly people.

### Key Stage 2:

#### Myself:

- The importance of keeping healthy and safe.
- My body, how it works and how to keep it healthy.
- The physical, social and emotional changes that occur during puberty (girls and boys).
- Myself and my peers - different rates of growth and physical development, maturity.

- Valuing and respecting myself, identifying personal strengths and weaknesses.
- Feelings for example: things that make me happy, sad, excited, embarrassed, angry, scared; expressing our feelings, showing love and affection.
- Gender roles.
- Making choices - the influences on me and the consequences of actions for oneself and others.
- Distinguishing between right and wrong.
- Secrets - knowing the difference between good and bad secrets, what to do about bad secrets.

#### My Relationships:

- Identifying the positive traits of friendship and their corresponding values.
- Differences and similarities in people; the need to respect other people's views, emotions, feelings, and relationships built on love, trust and respect.
- Families and how they behave - what family members expect of each other.
- The meaning of friendship and loyalty; making and maintaining friendships and social relationships for example: identifying and understanding pressures and influences, taking account of other people's points of view.
- Handling difficult situations for example: teasing, bullying, death of a family member.
- The meaning of relationships within families, between friends and in the community.
- Behaviour - what constitutes appropriate and non-appropriate physical contact.
- Identifying dangers and risks within relationships.
- Being assertive in defending individual rights and beliefs.
- People who can help pupils when they have anxieties, concerns or questions.

### **My Community/Environment:**

- Appreciation of the family in relation to the school and the wider community.
- Cultural differences in families and family relationships.
- Helping agencies who can support families and individuals in different circumstances.

### **Timetabling of the Programme**

Specific RSE lessons will usually be planned to take place in the third term with each teacher being responsible for delivery of the In The Beginning Programme to a specific Year group. These lessons will be planned for a particular day during the week at a designated time to aid delivery of the Programme. In the Summer Term of Year 7, Puberty Talks will also be planned for single gender groups with permission being sought from parents beforehand. These Talks will be delivered by both a male and female member of the teaching staff, and all information given in a sensitive, respectful and caring manner.

### **RSE Resources & Programmes**

- 'Grow in Love' Catechetical Series (P1-P7). (Veritas)
- 'In the Beginning' RSE Primary Programme
- Living Learning Together: PDMU Programme (CCEA)
- The Roots of Empathy Programme

Considering the RSE Policy, and in context of the ethos of the Catholic School, the statutory requirements for RSE are taught through the Religious Education Programme Grow in Love and also 'In the Beginning' while linking with the significant and relevant areas of the curriculum such as PDMU and Safeguarding. Teachers will cover the themes in Circle Time, R.E. and PDMU. We encourage active learning strategies e.g. mind mapping, discussion techniques, reporting back, listening

exercises, circle time, role-play, questionnaires and quizzes. All resources used should be age-appropriate, inclusive and sensitive to the pupils' needs and experiences. They should be factually accurate, up to date and make clear distinctions between fact and opinion.

### **Special Educational Needs**

Children with Special Needs are an important consideration in the delivery of our RSE Programme and classroom assistant support will be availed of to aid the delivery of the Programme content at an age-appropriate and stage of maturity level to promote knowledge and understanding of content. Parents will be encouraged to work in partnership with the child's class teacher, regarding the pace and content of the Programme.

### **Use of Outside Agencies**

Parents will be informed in advance should outside agencies be invited into the school to promote or support the teaching of the RSE Curriculum at any time during the school year.

### **Balanced Curriculum**

While promoting Catholic values and virtues, we will ensure that pupils are offered a balanced programme by providing an RSE programme that offers a range of viewpoints on important issues.

We will ensure that pupils have access to the learning they need to stay safe, healthy and understand their rights as individuals and how to relate to other individuals in a mature and respectful way.

### **Assessment of RSE**

The nature of RSE is strongly oriented towards Personal Development which does not necessarily lend itself to summative assessment. Knowledge in RSE is not easily measurable as it is qualitative rather than quantitative thus assessment will be informal through use of

appropriate questioning, completion of class activities, gauging level of engagement during discussions etc.

### **Parents and Carers**

Parents and carers will be informed of the content, timing and the delivery of the RSE programme throughout the various Year Groups in order to enable them to support the work of the school at home. Follow-up Home activities may be planned throughout the year to encourage and support involvement from parents and enable insight of topics discussed in school to further consider at home if relevant or needed.

A face-to-face meeting with parents will be arranged prior to the commencement of the Programme should any concerns need to be voiced or further information need to be given regarding the timing and delivery of the Programme.

### **Workbooks For Each Year Group**

- Primary 2: In The Beginning
- Primary 3: God Made Me
- Primary 4: God - The Master Designer (Flowers)
- Primary 5: God - The Caring Protector (Fish)
- Primary 6: God - The Great Provider (Birds)
- Primary 7: God - The Friend and Neighbour (Rabbits)

\*\*\*\*\* God - The Image Maker (Part 1 and Part 2 Humans) \*\*\*\*\*

The staff will introduce these specific workbooks when deemed appropriate in the delivery of the School's RSE Programme and be guided by current directives in this area of the curriculum.

## **Specific Issues**

### ➤ The Status of the Family:

The model of appreciating family life and the sanctity of marriage remain at the centre of the RSE policy, and sensitivity will be always shown to the variety of family situations nowadays and respect afforded to all pupils.

### ➤ Sacredness of Life:

Life from the very moment of conception is believed to be sacred and this is reflected in RSE and based upon moral and spiritual principles; in no way can that life ever be compromised.

### ➤ Sexual Orientation:

Bullying on the grounds of sexual orientation is as unacceptable as it is in any other situation where someone is mistreated or bullied because of their differences from those who are perceived to be the majority. All issues relating to bullying on the grounds of sexual orientation will be dealt with appropriately in line with the school's Anti-Bullying policy.

### ➤ Safeguarding:

The child's right to privacy must always be respected by both the teacher and all other pupils in the class. Teachers must not however promise confidentiality. A child does not have the right to expect that incidents in the classroom or in the wider context of the school will not be reported since any risks to a child's health, safety and wellbeing will be reported as appropriate and necessary in line with Child Protection guidance, and the principal or designated teacher must be informed of any disclosures, which might suggest that a pupil is at risk or that physical or sexual abuse is suspected.



## **Withdrawal from RSE**

The DENI Circular 2001 clearly stipulates the right to withdraw from RE lessons and children can be withdrawn from class during the RSE lessons by parents which thus may require additional supervision measures to be arranged by staff during this time.

## **Responsibility for Teaching the Programme**

Boards of Governors should ensure that their schools have a Relationships and Sexuality Education policy and a RSE Curriculum linked to their Pastoral Care and Child Protection Policy. This policy and the associated teaching should be the subject of consultation with staff and parents and endorsed by the Governors.

It is the role of the Principal alongside the teaching staff to make possible a coherent and co-ordinated approach to RSE in keeping with the Catholic ethos of the school. The Principal and Senior Management Team co-ordinate the school's approach to RSE and consults the Board of Governors, staff and parents as appropriate. They should be respectful and committed to the school's Catholic ethos and the aims and delivery of RSE within the school. A designated RSE Co-ordinator's role should be to uphold and ensure that the Programme is taught in accordance with the school's Catholic ethos and delivered effectively according to the age and maturity of the pupils. They should be encouraged and enabled to attend any INSET training and disseminate appropriate information to other staff members as and when required.

The Diocesan Advisor supports schools in the development and delivery of an RSE policy and programme which reflects the Catholic ethos and respects the wishes of parents.

## **Responding to Pupils' Questions and Sensitive Areas**

While it is important to create an environment in which pupils can contribute and discuss any issues of concern, teachers may not always feel comfortable in answering all questions raised and thus should set appropriate boundaries for themselves and the pupils. Teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the pupils and the content of the school's RSE curriculum. Any advice provided and the way teachers respond should support the role of the pupils, parents or carers and reflect the ethos of the school.

All staff teaching RSE related issues should use the proper recommended biological names for body parts and sexual acts where appropriate and relevant to the RSE programme.

Teachers should advise pupils to seek further advice from parents or carers and health professionals on any medical issues raised or issues not relevant or deemed appropriate for their age or stage of maturity.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The RSE programme will be regularly monitored and evaluated by all those involved and committed to the effective delivery of the school's RSE Programme including the Principal, teaching staff and Board of Governors.