

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

Coolderry Central School

Introduction

Coolderry Central School is a Co-Educational, Catholic Primary School. It has a full time teaching staff of 5 teachers and a part-time secretary.

Every school is different. A schools unique character is created by pupils/parents, staff and management. Our school strives to provide a well-ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere where the intellectual, spiritual, physical, moral and cultural needs of the pupil are identified and addressed. While our school has a catholic ethos, it also has due recognition for all other religions.

The philosophy of our school is based on the following aims:

- To provide a challenging yet supportive environment to stimulate, maintain and develop a lively enquiring mind.
- To encourage all pupils to reach their true potential and eventually become learners who value learning with and from others.
- To value application, perseverance, initiative, independence of thought and action and co-operative endeavours.
- To develop in pupils a sense of moral values which can form a framework for a sense of self-worth and relationships with others, so as pupils become responsible members of society.
- To develop in pupils a positive attitude towards themselves with a strong sense of self-respect.
- To develop a sense of respect for others, their property, ideas and beliefs irrespective of gender, race, disability, academic achievements and aspirations.
- To develop positive attitudes towards and concern for the environment.
- To develop a school community which affords equal value to all its members, to be just and encourage mutual respect, concern of others and truthfulness.
- To foster close relationships between the school, pupils, home and the local community.

Social, Personal & Health Education

S.P.H.E. provides opportunities to foster the personal development, health and well-being of the child and to help him/her to create and maintain supportive relationships and become an active and responsible citizen in society.

It allows children learn basic personal and social skills which foster integrity, self-confidence and self-esteem while nurturing sensitivity to the feelings and rights of others.

S.P.H.E. is a subject of the revised curriculum. The content of the curriculum includes such issues as healthy eating, alcohol, environmental issues, personal safety, drugs and social responsibility.

Relations & Sexuality Education (RSE)

RSE is an integral part of S.P.H.E. programme. It provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality and relationships through processes which 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 personal and social skills.

Aims of the RSE Programme

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being 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 procreation.
- 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.

Broad Objectives

The RSE curriculum should enable the child to:

- Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self.
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth.
- To 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 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 will help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships. Central to the RSE programme is the fostering of self-esteem through which the pupil becomes more responsible in making choices and decisions in all aspects of life and particularly in those relating to sexuality and relationships.

The NCCA curriculum guidelines provide the proposed content of the programme, but we have discretion in deciding how Coolderry Central Schools characteristic spirit will inform the teaching of the programme. RSE needs to be supported by a positive climate and culture within the school and by meaningful home-school relationships. Collaboration and the good will of all the partners will be needed for the benefit of the child.

The content is presented in two strands

1. Myself.
2. Myself and others.

These strands are subdivided into strand units, which cover areas such as self-esteem, self-confidence, physical and sexual development, safety & health etc.

In selecting content for the programme the following criteria will apply:

- Content be age-appropriate to the development of the class.
- Information be accurate and relevant.
- Be consistent with the ethos of the school.
- Be sensitive to the child's family and cultural background.
- Be free of sexual stereotyping and gender bias.

In selecting content for all classes, it is important that all children have the opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills included in earlier sections. Our policy advocates using the discretion of the teacher to determine if his/her class is ready for the content in the programme pertaining to that class.

There may be situations where the teacher judges that not all pupils are emotionally ready. It will not be compulsory to fulfill the provision but our policy does advocate that all areas of the programme are covered by the end of the child's primary schooling.

In senior classes the topic of sexual intercourse will be taught in the context of a committed, loving, caring, marital relationship and care will be taken to give a positive attitude towards sexuality by showing its 'important place in God's plan for human happiness.

The Teacher

The role of the teacher is to be complementary to that of the parent. The programme will be delivered by school staff with community resources being used to enhance the programme in accordance with the school policy.

A large degree of flexibility will be afforded to the teacher in assessing the readiness of the class for the content contained in the programme. The teacher must also keep in mind the varying home backgrounds and experiences the children have and a great degree of care is needed in dealing with the sensitive areas such as puberty, conception, intercourse etc.

Should a teacher have reservations in imparting any area? of the RSE programme his/her wishes will be respected. A qualified outside speaker of another member of the staff may deliver the programme in accordance with school policy.

The section dealing with sensitive areas will be delivered in the month of June to pupils in sixth class as it is part of a two year programme. The teacher will remain in the classroom during this section. All materials taught will be in accordance with the S.P.H.E. programme and will be informed by the content objectives of the S.P.H.E. curriculum.

Parents

Coolderry Central School has always considered the parent to be the primary educator of the child and the school supports them in this role by implementing the subject areas of the curriculum. Many of the topics covered in the S.P.H.E and RSE programmes are already being covered in a cross-curricular and formal way through such subjects as religion (Grow in Love series), Stay Safe and SSE. Many other areas (friendship, working together, respecting ourselves and others) are covered informally during the course of school life.

Our policy makes provision for parents who may wish to withdraw their children from any sensitive areas of the programme.

A parent's right to exclude their child from the process will be honoured on the understanding that the parent is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education.

It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the school in writing of their decision to take their child out of class for the teaching of sensitive areas. If a child is removed from the class for the teaching of the sensitive areas, we cannot guarantee that other pupils will not inform the child of what was taught.

The school takes not responsibility for any information which a pupil may receive outside of the direct teaching of the programme.

Regarding the sensitive areas, the guest speaker/leader will initially inform girls and boys separately of the areas affecting each sex.

Strategies for Dealing with Questions from Pupils

To cater for individual differences and levels of maturity within a class, we have devised the following strategies to be used by teachers/facilitators:

- If the question is related to an area on the syllabus for that class (age-group) the teacher will answer the question.
- If the question is of a moral nature and is age/class appropriate, the teacher will answer it adhering to the catholic ethos of the school.
- If the teacher feels that a question is genuine but the subject matter is not age/class appropriate the pupil may be advised to ask at home.
- In answering any question, we ask that pupils be responsible with the information they are given. As a result we hope to discourage playground gossip.
- It will be part of our methodology to allow pupils to write down questions.
- It will be our policy not to answer any personal questions about ourselves.

Support, Development and Review

Support for all the partners in RSE is essential if the programme is to be successful. This support may include:

- Dissemination of information.
- Organizing training (teachers/parents).
- Provision of relevant school resources.
- Use of community resources, Health Board, Education Centre, qualified speakers, Doctors, Nurses etc.
- Teacher training will be in the wider context of S.P.H.E to enable all concerned to acquire knowledge and skills necessary to teach the programme.
- Our policy advocates training for parents/teachers. This training would greatly complement the school based programme as we would be very supportive of parents undertaking such endeavours.
- Evaluation and review are an essential element in the RSE programme.

This policy will be reviewed by each new Board of Management or as recommended by Department of Education curricular changes.

This policy was ratified by the B.O.M

Signed: _____

Date: _____