Scoil an Chlochair
Convent Primary School

RSE Policy

Contents

1.0 Introductory Statement 2
2.0 School Philosophy 2
3.0 Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) 2
4.0 SPHE/RSE Curriculum 2
5.0 The Aims of the R.S.E. Programme 3
6.0 Broad Objectives of RSE 3
7.0 School Policies and Curricular Plans which support our RSE 3
8.0 Implementing the R.S.E. Programme 4
9.0 Sensitive Language: 6
10.0 Busy Bodies Programme 6
11.0 Confidentiality 6
12.0 Pupil Voice 7
13.0 Teaching Methodologies/Approaches 7
14.0 Resources 7
15.0 Parental Involvement 8
16.0 Differentiation 8
17.0 Assessment 8
18.0 Review 8
19.0 Communication and Ratification 9
Appendix 1: Correspondence to Parents/Guardians of Pupils in SEN Classes 10
Appendix 2: Letter to Parents/Guardians 11

RSE POLICY

1.0 Introductory Statement

This policy was originally formulated by a committee involving staff/parents/guardians in May 2019. It was reviewed in September 2026. This policy is an agreed approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). It was developed to inform teachers and parents/guardians about the provision of RSE in Convent Primary School, Mallow.

2.0 School Philosophy

The Convent Primary School promotes values in a Christian learning community where children can grow in knowledge and understanding in the acquisition of skills, attitudes and values. We recognise that Social Health and Health Education (SPHE) is intrinsic to the teaching and learning that occurs both formally and informally in school. Through our SPHE/RSE programme we wish to assist children to develop feelings of self-worth and self-confidence, while encouraging their ability to relate to others in a positive way. The curriculum encourages children to be aware of their rights as an individual, while at the same time accepting responsibility for their actions as members of the school and wider community. Our school values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. Our ethos values respect, inclusion and diversity of all members of our school community. Our school acknowledges that Parents and guardians have the primary role in the social, personal and health education of their children and their involvement will be encouraged. SPHE/RSE is a key component in supporting our pupils to develop into healthy young adults.

3.0 Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

"Relationships and Sexuality Education is an integral part of SPHE and must be taught in this context. It provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality and relationships through processes which will 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 to personal and social skills".
Referenced from The Interim Curriculum and Guidelines for Primary Schools (DE 1996, p.5).
At primary level, R.S.E. aims to help children learn at home and at school about their own development and about their friendships with others. Learning will be based on developing a positive self-image, promoting respect for themselves & others and providing children with appropriate information for their age group.

4.0 SPHE/RSE Curriculum

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.

SPHE/RSE is

- **A lifelong and continual process** throughout primary school and should not be confined to once off inputs or solitary lessons
- a **shared responsibility** and collaboration between family, school, health professionals and the community
- a subject which develops a child's **skills, attitudes, values and understanding** relevant to a range of social, personal and health issues
- **child-centered**- RSE education should prioritise the needs of the child and his/her environment, with appropriate adaptations made to suit individual requirements and individual school situations
- **spiral in nature-**SPHE/RSE formally begins in Junior Infants and is developed throughout the child's time in school. This will provide opportunities to consolidate and build on previous learning in developmentally appropriate manner.
- taught through **active learning methodologies**. RSE provides a range of learning opportunities that requires children to actively participate in their learning in a wide variety of ways e.g. discussion, circle time, role play.
- **free of bias-**Lessons, language and resources selected by the school should reflect this. SPHE/RSE encourages children to be inclusive with each other, challenge prejudice and learn how to live together in an intercultural society

5.0 The Aims of the R.S.E. Programme

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and wellbeing 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 frame of work.
- To enable the child to acquire an understanding of, and respect for, human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction.
- To develop and promote in the child a sense of wonder and awe at the process at birth and new life.
- To enable the child to be comfortable with the sexuality of oneself and others while growing and developing.

6.0 Broad Objectives of RSE

When due account is taken of abilities and varying circumstances, the R.S.E. curriculum should enable the child (in conjunction with the S.P.H.E. curriculum) to:

- Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self
- Develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and wellbeing of others
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth
- Understand the nature, growth and development of relationships with families, in friendships and wider contexts
- Develop and 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 help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships
- Develop coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse
- Acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction
- Acquire the use of appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development
- Develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making

7.0 School Policies and Curricular Plans which support our RSE

Traditionally, we are a child centred school. The educational and emotional needs of the children in our care are central to our curricular planning and policy making processes. The policies and curricular areas below support our teaching of RSE:

- Grow in Love
- SPHE Curriculum
- Child Protection Policy
- Stay Safe Programme (taught in 1st/3rd/5th)
- Walk Tall Programme (taught in 2nd/4th/6th)
- School's Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy.
- Admissions Policy.
- Internet Safety Policy

In keeping with the sentiment and spirit of these policies we informally support many of the aims on which RSE is modelled:

- We encourage good behaviour, open communication, understanding and tolerance of differences, and respect for staff and others.
- We recognise that both pupils and staff have rights and responsibilities in our school.
- A sense of responsibility is fostered, and attention is paid to the wellbeing of all the members of our school community.

8.0 Implementing the R.S.E. Programme

- Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are the primary educators of their children. The role of the school, therefore, is seen as one of support for the work of the home in this area. The successful implementation of the programme will depend on parental/guardian(s) co-operation and contribution.
- The approach in school is child-centred and will always take the age and stage of development of the children into account. Appropriate vocabulary relating to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, parts of the body and feelings will be used. Questions arising from lessons' content will be answered in an age-appropriate manner. The class teacher cannot answer questions which do not relate to the curriculum objectives for a class. Pupils will be informed if a question/issue is not on the programme and they will be advised to talk with their parent(s)/ guardian(s). Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents if a need arises. No personal questions will be answered and the disclosure of personal or family information is discouraged.
- The RSE programme will be taught as part of the school's SPHE curriculum. The strand units 'Growing and Changing' and 'Taking Care of My Body' are covered in *every class, every year*. Lessons containing sensitive material are covered as part of these strand units. Sensitive issues will be taught annually in November over a three-week period on consecutive Wednesdays, commencing on the first Wednesday of the month at 1:30 p.m. Parent(s)/guardian(s) will be advised of same in advance of teaching this area.
- The programme's resource material, including lesson plans, will be available in the school should parents wish to view same.
- There are five Special Education classes (co-educational) attached to this school. The lesson content for these classes has been agreed upon by staff. The learning content is differentiated according to the child's needs and level of understanding.
- In advance of the teaching the sensitive topics, a copy of the Home School Links page will be sent to parents/guardians via Aladdin.
- For children in our Special Education Classes, correspondence will be sent to Parents/Guardians in advance of the lessons (Appendix 1).

RSE Programme	Overview of specified content*
First Class	1. The Wonder of New Life 2. How My Body Works 3. Growing Means Changing 4. Decisions and their Consequences
Second Class	1. The Wonder of New Life 2. When my Body needs Special Care 3. Growing and Changing 4. Personal Decisions
Third Class	1. Preparing for New Life 2. As I Grow I Change 3. Making Decisions
Fourth Class	1. We are Unique 2. Changing Bodies 3. The Wonder of Life 4. As I Grow Older I Can Learn to Look After Myself
Fifth Class	1. The Person I am 2. Different Kinds of Friends 3. My Family 4. Keeping Safe 5. Feelings and Emotions 6. My Body Grows and Changes 7. The Wonder of New Life 8. Caring for New Life 9. Making Healthy Decisions
Sixth Class	1. Me and My Aspirations 2. Different Kinds of Love 3. Families 4. Keeping Safe and Healthy 5. Feelings and Emotions 6. Growing and Changing 7. Relationships and New Life 8. A Baby is a Miracle 9. Choices and Decision Making
Learning Resource Early Intervention 3 Autism Classes	New Life · Become aware of new life and birth in the world - new growth in springtime, baby animals being born. · Develop an awareness that a baby grows and is nurtured in the mother's womb until ready to be born. Growing and changing: · Become aware that people go through stages of growth i.e. baby-toddler-child-teenager-adult. My Body: · Identify/name parts of the body, including private parts of the body (Correct anatomical terms to be used). · Develop an understanding that certain body parts are private and need to be covered. Appropriate Touches: · Develop an understanding of appropriate touches and inappropriate touches. Safety: · Develop an understanding of how to keep safe in a variety of familiar situations and to recognise people who can keep them safe e.g. crossing the road, touching hot/sharp objects.

*Teacher may choose additional RSE lessons to supplement where necessary

9.0 Sensitive Language:

The RSE programme includes a number of sensitive issues, listed in the table below. It is school policy to deal with these issues through structured lessons, without undue emphasis. Listing the issues here, along with the classes in which they are first taught, enables parents to prepare their children in advance for a particular topic, if they so wish.

Class	Strand /strand Unit	Content Objectives *Consult curriculum for complete objectives in Growing and changing and Taking care of my body*	Language	Pages in RSE Resource Materials Book	Pages in Walk Tall	Supplementary resources
Junior /Senior Infants	**Myself** ▪ Growing and changing ▪ Taking care of my body	**Growing and changing** ▪ Become aware of new life and birth in the world ▪ Develop an awareness of human birth **Taking care of my body** ▪ Name parts of the male and female body using anatomical terms	womb breastfeeding penis vulva	New Life p68 My Body p147 Caring for new life p137 At the beach or swimming pool p.153	Our Amazing Bodies p94 (Senior Infants book)	▪ Anatomically correct dolls ▪ Picture books of new baby ▪ Visit of baby to class
First/ Second Class	**Myself** ▪ Growing and changing ▪ Taking care of my body	**Growing and changing** ▪ Begin to understand that reproduction, birth, growth and death are all part of new life cycles **Taking care of my body** ▪ Name the parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions	penis vulva vagina womb breastfeeding urethra	The Wonder of new life p59 /151 How my body works p67/ 161 Growing means changing p77/171 A Visit to the Doctor p.164	Our Amazing Bodies p37 (2nd class book)	▪ Picture books of going to the doctors ▪ Tom's Power Flower ▪ Books / activities on Life cycles ▪ Birth and new life in nature
Third/ Fourth Class	**Myself** ▪ Growing and changing ▪ Taking care of my body	**Growing and changing** • Understand the physical changes taking place in both the male and female body • Realise that changes do not occur at the same time but nonetheless are predictable and natural and that being different is normal **Taking care of my body** • Recognise and discuss how feelings and emotions are affected by the physical changes that take place during puberty • Discuss the stages and sequence of development of human baby from conception to birth	Revise above umbilical cord changes in puberty menstruation	Preparing for new life p69 The wonder of new life p169 As I grow and change p93 Growing and changing p195	As I grow I change p175 (3rd class book) Changing and Growing p140 (4th class book) The Wonder of New Life p.150	▪ Body Systems ▪ Picture books on Growing and Changing ▪
Fifth/ Sixth Class	**Myself** ▪ Growing and changing ▪ Taking care of my body	**Growing and changing** ▪ Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a loving committed relationship **Taking care of my body** ▪ Identify and discuss the physical changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty and understand that these take place at different rates for everyone ▪ Understand the reproductive system of both male and female adults	Revise above wet dreams Busy Bodies language semen sexual intercourse	My body grows and changes p81 The wonder of new life p92 Caring for new life p103 Different kinds of love p141	My Amazing body p345 (5th class book) Creation p121 (6th class book)	▪ Busy Bodies ▪ Power points recap ▪ Question Box ▪ Puberty Quiz

10.0 Busy Bodies Programme

The Busy Bodies Adolescent Development Programme is delivered by the School Nurse. This programme provides useful and supportive information about the physical and emotional changes that children will experience during puberty, the basics of reproduction, and how young people can look after themselves as they grow up. Permission is sought from Parents/Guardians for their child(ren) to attend this session. The Busy Bodies booklet and video material are supplementary resources to the RSE programme. They cover a range of pubertal and adolescent issues and can be used, along with other resources, activities and teaching methodologies to meet the students' learning needs during this important developmental stage. A booklet entitled "Busy Bodies" is available to download for parents on: https://www.healthpromotion.ie/health/inner/busy_bodies.

An additional PowerPoint presentation may also be shown to pupils which outlines a variety of topics such as the physical and hormonal changes that take place during adolescence, the importance of hygiene and human reproduction.

11.0 Confidentiality

Convent Primary School follows the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (revised 2023). Where there is disclosure by a child of abuse, or if a teacher has any concerns about a child, the school will follow our Child Protection Policy. The Principal, Ms. Sheila O'Connor is the school's Designated Liaison Person (DLP), and Mrs. Jennifer O'Farrell is the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLP).

12.0 Pupil Voice
In our school the voice of our pupils is acknowledged, valued and respected. Children are given opportunities to reflect and feedback on SPHE/RSE provision via teacher questioning, group discussions. self-assessment, focus groups and reflection.

13.0 Teaching Methodologies/Approaches
Active learning is the principal learning and teaching approach recommended for SPHE. It requires children to actively participate in their learning in a wide variety of ways, thereby increasing the possibility of internalising what they have explored and of being able to use this learning in their everyday lives. Active learning contributes significantly to fostering their self-confidence, self-discipline and self-control in the learner. Active learning methodologies are an integral part of teaching and learning in SPHE and RSE. Oide have developed a suite of resources to support school to implement active learning methodologies in SPHE: https://oide.ie/primary/home/wellbeing/sphe/resources/. The curriculum will be taught in a developmentally appropriate manner at all times. The teaching materials and methodologies used will reflect the needs of the children.

In Convent Primary School, we use the following approaches and methodologies to teach RSE:

- Stories and poems
- Classroom discussion
- role play
- video education.
- ICT activities
- Group work
- Games
- Art activities
- Reflection
- Circle time
- External facilitator (Circular 0042/2018)
- Integration with other curricular areas, SPHE, SESE, Art, Religion and Drama.
- Direct Teaching for the discrete, sensitive areas of the programme.

14.0 Resources
Staff may consult any of the following teaching resources when teaching RSE in addition to the Department of Education's Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme:

- PDST Health and Wellbeing RSE
- NCCA SPHE/RSE Toolkit
- Walk Tall Programme and Walk Tall Manuals
- Making the Links and Beyond
- Stay Safe programme
- Anatomical Dolls
- HSE publications (www.healthpromotion.ie)
- Busy Bodies Booklet/ Videos/ Workbook (PDST)
- Inclusive picture and story books
- INTO Different Families, Same Love Poster and Same Love Lesson Ideas
- INTO Different Families Same Love Online Presentations JI – 6th-as appropriate
- RESPECT guidelines
- Gender Equality Matters (GEM)
- All Together Now
- We All Belong
- PDST Education and Transgender Information and Identity Based Bullying Information
- RSE related educational websites

15.0 Parental Involvement
Parents/guardians/carers will be informed at enrolment that the school fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE curriculum. Families will be informed via Aladdin in advance of the teaching of formal RSE lessons (see Appendix 2). This will offer them an opportunity to meet with relevant teachers to discuss/view the material that will be covered and share any personal details they feel the teacher should be aware of prior to their child engaging in the RSE lessons. Families are invited to share any changes in circumstances with the school as necessary e.g. changes in family structures etc. For the welfare of some children, this information may be important for a teacher to know prior to engaging in specific topics on family/relationships etc.

A parent's right to withdraw a pupil from the RSE Programme 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/Guardian to inform the school in writing of this decision. This correspondence will be kept on the pupil's Aladdin file. Alternative arrangements will be considered and agreed upon by the relevant parties. If a child is withdrawn from specific RSE lessons, the school cannot guarantee that the withdrawn child will not hear the information from another source.

An Oide publication entitled 'RSE in Primary School-Tips for Parents' may be found at the following link: https://oide.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/RSE-in-the-Primary-School-Tips-for-Parents.pdf

16.0 Differentiation
The age and stage of development in a class can vary widely and strategies for differentiation can support gradual and appropriate learning. In Convent Primary School, teachers use assessment and professional judgment to differentiate the curricular objectives and content to best suit the needs of all pupils.
Adaptations to the way in which the content is delivered will be made for children with special and additional educational needs. Both consultation with parent(s)/guardian(s) in advance of lessons and the anticipation of the pupil's needs will be central to ensuring learning is meaningful.

17.0 Provision of Ongoing Support
Convent Primary School ensures the provision of ongoing support by:
- encouraging teachers to attend RSE CPD
- utilising staff meetings as a platform for discussion and development of RSE
- seeking the support from an OIDE Advisor if required
- reviewing RSE policy on a regular basis
- ensuring special education teachers have adequate training opportunities
- signposting staff to resources available from PDST and other sources

17.0 Assessment
Convent Primary School will employ the following methods for assessment in RSE:
- Observation and questioning to assess the pupils' engagement and interest
- Use of teacher-designed tasks such as worksheets, quizzes or games
- Use of reflection and/ or samples generated by pupils

18.0 Review
This policy was reviewed by Principal & Staff in September 2026. The RSE Policy will be reviewed in term 1 of the 2028/2029 school year. The policy may also be reviewed at an earlier time should a need arise. Families and staff will be informed of any amendments made.

19.0 Communication and Ratification

19.1 Communication

This policy is made available as part of the whole school plan. The whole plan is also available in the school office for viewing. This policy will be communicated to the school community by the following means:

- Board of Management/Other Staff members via hardcopy in office and SharePoint
- Pupils and Families via hardcopy from the Office and on the school website.

19.0 Ratification

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 15th October 2026

Signed _____ Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____ Principal/Secretary, Board of Management

Appendix 1: Correspondence to Parents/Guardians of Pupils in SEN Classes

Scoil an Chlochair
Convent Primary School

Dear Family,

Social, Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E) is a very important element of the school curriculum. S.P.H.E covers a wide range of topics such as self-identity, developing self-confidence, taking care of your body, exploring emotions, making decisions, developing social skills and fostering relationships. S.P.H.E. is explored through the following strands in the curriculum: *Myself*, *Myself and others* and *Myself and the wider world.*
Relationship and Sexuality Education (R.S.E.) is an integral part of the S.P.H.E. curriculum. Over the next few months, we will be exploring this element of the curriculum with the children in our class. As the pupils in our class are different ages and are at different stages of development, the content of the R.S.E. lessons will be adapted as appropriate to meet the individual needs of each pupil.
The following list of topics will be explored:

New Life:
Become aware of new life and birth in the world - new growth in springtime, baby animals being born.
Develop an awareness that a baby grows and is nurtured in the mother's womb until ready to be born.

Growing and changing:
Become aware that people go through stages of growth i.e. baby-toddler-child-teenager-adult.

My Body:
Identify/name parts of the body, including private parts of the body (Correct anatomical terms to be used).
Develop an understanding that certain body parts are private and need to be covered.

Appropriate Touches:
Develop an understanding of appropriate touches and inappropriate touches.

Safety:
Develop an understanding of how to keep safe in a variety of familiar situations and to recognise people who can keep them safe e.g. crossing the road, touching hot/sharp objects.
Our school's RSE policy is available to view on our school website www.conventprimaryschoolmallow.ie It outlines our agreed approach to achieve the objectives of the aforementioned strand units.

You will be informed via Aladdin regarding what topic we are covering each week with your child. Your support would be appreciated with reinforcing the learning at home. If you have any questions or if you would like to discuss this further, please feel free to contact me.

Kind regards,

_____
Class Teacher

Appendix 2: Letter to Parents/Guardians

Scoil an Chlochair
Convent Primary School

Dear Family,

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is an integral part of the Social, Personal and Health Education curriculum. We will be commencing formal RSE lessons in November. RSE predominantly lies within the strand units ' Taking care of my body' and 'Growing and changing' which can be viewed at https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/462570f8-27cc-4f5b-a13ed1e2de8c18d2/PSEC06_SPHE_curriculum.pdf and is summarised in the table below.

Social, Personal and Health Education Curriculum (NCCA 1999)

INFANTS - 2nd CLASS

Strand Unit - Growing and Changing
- As I grow I change
- New life
- Feelings and emotions

Strand Unit - Taking care of my body
- Knowing about my body
- Food and nutrition
- Making decisions

3rd CLASS - 6th CLASS

Strand Unit - Growing and Changing
- As I grow I change
- Birth and new life
- Feelings and emotions

Strand Unit - Taking care of my body
- Knowing about my body
- Food and nutrition
- Health and wellbeing

Our school's RSE policy is available to view on our school website www.conventprimaryschoolmallow.ie It outlines our agreed approach to achieve the objectives of the aforementioned strand units.

Parents/Guardians who choose to withdraw their child from the RSE programme assume full responsibility for teaching this aspect of education.

In the event that you do not wish your daughter to participate this year, she will need to be collected at 1.30pm on each of the following days:

- **Wednesday, ____ November**
- **Wednesday, ____ November**
- **Wednesday, ____ November**

Le meas,

_____
Sheila O'Connor, Principal