

Our Lady of Victories Infant School

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Relationships and Sexuality (RSE) Policy

Introductory Statement:

This policy statement is the approved approach to the teaching of RSE in Our Lady of Victories Infant School. SPHE and RSE will be taught in accordance with the curriculum guidelines of the Department of Education and in the context of the Catholic ethos and philosophy of the school.

Relationship to School Ethos:

Our Lady of Victories Infant School aims to promote the fullest possible development of each child – socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically and intellectually so that he/she may lead a full, enjoyable life as a child and go on to contribute to society as an adult.

Social Personal and Health Education & Relationships & Sexuality Education:

The SPHE curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn basic personal and social skills which foster integrity, self-confidence and self-esteem, while nurturing sensitivity to the rights and feelings of others. The Stay Safe Programme is also an aspect of SPHE and is taught under the strand unit 'Safety & Protection' and under the strand Unit 'Growing & Changing', this programme teaches personal safety skills and helps children to deal with upsetting, unsafe or frightening situations.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is an integral part of Social, Personal and Health Education. The RSE programme will be taught within the context of the SPHE curriculum for all class levels. 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.

RSE Programme 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 enhance the capacity of the child to resist sexual exploitation and abuse.

Teaching of RSE

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 Dept. 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 or core RSE education (sensitive lessons) belong 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

Organisation of RSE in our Lady of Victories Infant School

- The DES curriculum will be followed and SPHE/RSE lessons will be taught from Infants to 1st class by the class teacher.
- Every class teacher will teach the content for their class level only.
- Aspects of the SPHE and RSE curriculum may also be integrated with the Aistear Curriculum (Infants) and Stay Safe Programme.
- RSE content will be taught developmentally with age appropriate lessons being taught at each class level as per the curriculum guidelines.

RSE Topics/ Lessons - from Infants –1st Class

- Keeping Safe
- Bodily changes during growth and birth (birth to 9 months)
- 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 (Jun/Sen Infants)
- Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions (1st class)
- Developing an awareness of human birth

The following resources will be used when teaching RSE lessons

- Anatomical boy & girl dolls, bathtub & baby accessories
- Stories which involve new life e.g. Zaza's Baby Brother, Mom and Me

Collaboration

- Parents/ guardians are acknowledged as the primary educators of their children and the school works in partnership with parents in the education process. Parents/ guardians are informed about the RSE programme at the annual Junior Infants Induction Day. They are also informed of how to access the materials online. If parents have further enquiries they may contact the principal or SPHE coordinator.
- Parents/ guardians have the right to withdraw their child from RSE – specific/sensitive lessons on the understanding that parents will take full responsibility for this aspect of their child's education themselves. Each year the school will notify parents in advance of the planned teaching of the RSE 'sensitive lessons'. **It will be the responsibility of the parents to inform the school and the Board of Management in writing of a decision to withdraw a pupil and the same document will be kept in the storeroom for posterity.** However if a pupil is so withdrawn, the school cannot guarantee that other pupils will not inform the pupil in question of the content of the lesson(s), or that teachers or pupils will not refer to or revise aspects of the lesson as necessary during subsequent days/weeks. Our RSE policy is inclusive and the withdrawal of pupils for the 'sensitive lessons' will be discouraged. Pupils who are not participating in the RSE 'sensitive lesson' will be placed in another class for supervision for the duration of the lesson.
- Teachers will model the appropriate vocabulary relating to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, parts of the body and feelings. In teaching RSE the approach in the school is child centred and will always take into account the age and stage of development of the pupils.
- Teachers will teach only the content/topics advised for the class level and will only answer questions relevant to the programme for that class level. Teachers will not give

personal information and will not seek personal information from pupils. Respect for personal privacy and for personal information will be emphasised with the pupils.

- Teachers will inform pupils at the beginning of the RSE 'sensitive lesson' that it may not be possible to answer all questions from pupils. Pupil questions will be dealt with in accordance with the following criteria: circumstance in which the questions has arisen; clarification of information sought; relevance of the issue. If the question is outside the scope of the content for the class level, teacher may use the following phrases: *I won't be able to answer all your questions in class, that's something that you will learn about when you are older* or *perhaps you could talk to your parent/s about that*.
- Teachers will be aware of the learning needs of their pupils and will differentiate the RSE lessons as appropriate to ensure that pupils with special needs can learn at their level of understanding.
- Pupils will be introduced to all aspects of the RSE Programme at an age appropriate level, in accordance with the curriculum guidelines and the school RSE policy. From Junior Infants upwards pupils will be taught to identify and correctly name external parts of the male and female body. Our Lady of Victories fully complies with the DES Child Protection Guidelines and has an updated Child Safe Guarding Statement. In cases of disclosures from pupils, the DLP/DDLP will follow the procedures as outlined in the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017.

Communication, Monitoring and Review

This policy will be communicated to staff and the school community as appropriate and will be subject to regular review or if deemed necessary.

Roles and Responsibilities:

All members of staff share in the coordination and implementation of this policy.

Evaluation:

This policy is monitored on an ongoing basis and amendments made as seen fit.

Implementation:

This policy has been in place since January 2017 and was reviewed without amendment annually, including 15th October 2024.

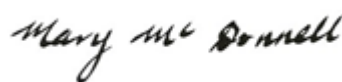
This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management of Our Lady of Victories on 15th October 2024.

Chairperson Signature:



15th October 2024

Principal signature:



15th October 2024