

## **St Gabriel's Relationships and Sexuality (RSE) Policy**

### **Rationale**

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) aims to foster self-worth and self-confidence and places a particular emphasis on developing a sense of personal responsibility for one's own behaviour and actions. SPHE promotes self-awareness and understanding by helping children to name and manage their own feelings, to recognise and appreciate individual abilities, and to cope with change of various kinds. They can learn how to manage their own behaviour and to set and review personal goals within a safe and supportive environment. Such personal and intrapersonal development will increase the child's sense of self-efficacy and help him/her to be more in control of his/her own life.

SPHE and RSE in our school aims to enhance the self-esteem of all children and staff in the school environment. It should acknowledge individual differences in children, give them a sense of acceptance and equip them with every-day life skills; all of which is done in a caring, trusting, secure environment, with the support of the family and the community.

Furthermore, SPHE and RSE is taught within the Catholic school ethos. With respect to RSE, St. Gabriel's school also recognises that in this area of a child's education, above all, the school is 'subsidiary to that of the parents' (Guidelines on Relationships and Sexuality Education, CPSMA, p.5).

The partners in the school community are the children, parents, teachers, ancillary staff, Board of Management, School Completion Project and Department of Education.

Working together we aim to:

- Promote self-esteem and self-worth
- Create a climate of respect, tolerance and fairness in which our children feel valued
- Recognise and reward effort and achievement
- Value difference

### ***Definition of RSE***

RSE, as part of Social, Personal and Health Education, aims to help children learn, at home and in school, about their own development and about their friendships and relationships with others. This work is based on developing a good self-image, promoting respect for themselves and others and providing them with appropriate information. It also 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. (Going Forward Together, 1997, p.6)

### ***Relationship of RSE to SPHE***

Throughout the school year, Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is taught as a subject from Junior Infants to 6<sup>th</sup> Class. RSE forms a part of this programme; it is a spiral curriculum, which ensures that topics are taught in a developmental manner throughout the child's primary school years.

St. Gabriel's school SPHE plan will be taught in a 2-year cycle. There are two exceptions to this. The strand units 'Growing and Changing' and 'Safety and Protection' will be taught in both years.

**RSE themes:**

Myself, Friendship, Family, Keeping Safe, Feelings and emotions, Growing and changing, Wonder of new life, Decisions

**Resources used for the teaching of RSE**

At all stages the material taught will be age appropriate. Special consideration will be given to children with special educational needs. Resources include:

- Resource Materials for Relationships and Sexuality Education, Department of Education Stay Safe programme
- Busy Bodies, HSE. Walk Tall, Dept. Of Education
- Other materials as deemed appropriate by the school / DE circulars

	<b>Year 1 Junior Infants, 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Year 2 Senior Infants, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Strands</b>	<b>Strand Units</b>	<b>Strand Units</b>
<b>Myself</b>	Self-identity	Growing and changing (JI – 2 <sup>nd</sup> )
	Taking care of my body	Making decisions (3 <sup>rd</sup> – 6 <sup>th</sup> )
	Growing and changing	Safety and Protection (Stay Safe)
	Safety and Protection (Internet/ anti-bullying)	
<b>Myself and Others</b>	Myself and my family	My friends and other people
		Relating to others
<b>Myself and the wider world</b>	Developing citizenship	Media education

***The Aims of the RSE Programme***

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child
- To help the child develop healthy friendships and relationships
- To help the child to develop healthy attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework
- To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction
- To enable children to be comfortable with the sexuality of oneself and others while growing and developing
- To equip children with the appropriate language to talk about themselves, their feelings, their development and their relationships with others.

***Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in Our School***

- In St. Gabriel's, we recognise the importance of strong home-school links and we encourage the active involvement of parents/ guardians in everyday school-life. If they have any concerns or questions they may speak to their relevant class teacher and review the content material if necessary. While it is not necessary to gain individual permission for SPHE programmes parents/ guardians will be informed via a letter before commencing any sensitive topics. If homework is given for the Stay Safe programme the worksheets should be completed at home and signed by the child's parents/guardians.
- As well as meeting parents/ guardians informally, parents/ guardians are also welcome to make appointments to meet their child's teachers during the school year. There are annual PT meetings held in November. With regard to SPHE, this is an ideal opportunity

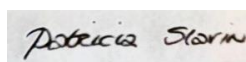
to let parents/ guardians know how their child is developing emotionally, physically and socially. It is also a chance for teachers to receive feedback from parents/ guardians and for teachers to voice concerns about any developmental difficulties that the child may be having in the SPHE area. It is also encouraged that parents/ guardians inform the school in any family situation changes which may impact on the child.

- Our RSE programme is inclusive and so we actively discourage withdrawal. However, in the case of children who haven't been given permission to participate, the class teacher or Principal will meet with the parents to discuss their concerns. The school will take account of their concerns and their right to withdraw the child on the understanding that the parent(s) is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves. Alternative arrangements for supervision of the child must be made by the parents.
- RSE is generally taught during the second term of the school year.
- All information delivered will be informed by the objectives of the SPHE curriculum.
- The curriculum is spiral in nature and all content 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 (Appendix 1). The use of slang words will be discouraged (RESPECT guidelines).
- Lesson plans will be based on St. Gabriel's SPHE policy, which has been informed by NCCA curriculum guidelines.
- The resources used will include the RSE, Stay Safe and Busy Bodies Programme and others deemed appropriate by the Principal and/ or SPHE coordinator.
- Advance notice will be given to parents regarding the 'sensitive lessons' (Appendix 2). Boys and girls may be separated for the delivery of this content in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Class.
- Questions arising from lesson content will be answered in an age-appropriate manner. The class teacher cannot answer questions which do not relate to the particular curriculum objectives for a class. Pupils will be informed if a question/topic is not on the programme and they will be advised to talk with their parents. Teachers may contact parents if they feel a question is inappropriate or needs to be addressed further.
- Teachers will not answer personal questions and are discouraged from disclosing personal or family information. Furthermore, children will not be required to give information of a personal nature.
- The RSE policy will be available to parents via the school website and in the school, on request. Parents may approach class teachers if they wish to view the programme content in detail.

### **Confidentiality**

Where there is disclosure by a child of abuse, or a teacher has concerns about a child, the school's Child Protection Policy will be followed. The school Principal is our Designated Liaison Person.

*The policy will be reviewed on a needs basis and at least within a four-year period.*



Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 27/5/2024

### Appendix 1 – Language to be used in RSE Lessons and Teaching of RSE

Class	Lesson Title	Language
Junior Infants	New Life	New baby; baby moving inside Mammy
	I grow	Life began in mother's womb
Senior Infants	Caring for New Life	baby in womb for 9 months, breast-feeding
	My Body	Language used: penis, vagina, vulva, urethra
First Class	How My Body Works	urine passes through the penis in boys and the urethra in girls.
Second Class	The Wonder of New Life	baby leaves its mother's womb through the vagina
Third Class	Preparing for New Life	umbilical cord, navel
Third Class	My Family	gay, lesbian, heterosexual, homosexual.
Fourth Class	The Wonder of New Life	the developing foetus.
Fourth Class	Growing and Changing	physical/emotional changes in puberty. Menstruation
Fifth Class	My Body Grows and Changes	puberty (revised) menstruation, reproduction
Fifth Class	The Wonder of New Life	reproduction
Life Sixth Class	Relationships and New	sexual intercourse in the context of a committed, loving relationship; reproduction.

While it is important to create an environment in which a child feels free to ask questions, it is also important that a safe environment is created for all the children in the class. Teachers are advised to set boundaries in the teaching of RSE as they would in any other subject.

*Suggested ways of setting limits are to say:*

- I'll do my best to answer your questions but I may not be able to answer all of them
- Would you be able to talk to your mum or dad about that?
- That's something you'll learn about as you get older.
- We agreed in our contract that we wouldn't ask anyone personal questions.

#### *Dealing with Questions*

All questions answered will reflect the parameters of the curriculum. Certain topics will not be discussed e.g. abortion, masturbation. Questions to the teacher may be written or asked within the group setting and answered within the boundaries of the curriculum and school policy. If any questions asked by the children are judged to be inappropriate, the teacher will refer the child to their parents, or state that this information may be available at a later stage of the curriculum.

## Appendix 2 – Letters to Parents/ Guardians

### Junior Infants

Dear parents/ guardians,

As part of the SPHE programme for Junior Infants the following objectives are set out for your children in the Primary School Curriculum:

#### New life

- develop an awareness of human birth  
*that a baby grows and is nurtured in the mother's womb until ready to be born*
- identify what babies need to help them to grow and develop  
*love, regular food and water, warmth, nappy changing, careful bathing, medical check-ups*

#### I grow

- realise that growth and change are part of the process of life and are unique to each individual

Over the next couple of weeks, I will be covering this area of the programme with the class. We will be talking in class about how life began in their mother's womb and how babies are able to move around inside their mother. Please note that no further details are given at this age.

This may be an opportunity for you to discuss these topics with your child at home and to revise work covered in school. If you have any queries/concerns regarding the programme to be covered please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

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Class teacher

## Senior Infants

Dear parents/ guardians,

As part of the SPHE programme for Senior Infants the following objectives are set out for your children in the Primary School Curriculum:

### New life

- identify what babies need to help them to grow and develop  
*love, regular food and water, warmth, nappy changing, careful bathing, medical check-ups*

### Knowing about my body

- appreciate the need, and understand how to care for his/her own body in order to keep it healthy and well
- respect his/her own body and that of others
- name parts of the male and female body, using appropriate anatomical terms

Over the next couple of weeks, I will be covering this area of the programme with the class. We will be talking in class about how a baby stays in the mother's womb for 9 months and that a mother can breastfeed a baby. When teaching the male and female body parts, the words 'penis', 'vagina', 'vulva' and 'urethra' will be used. Please note that no further details are given at this age.

This may be an opportunity for you to discuss these topics with your child at home and to revise work covered in school. If you have any queries/concerns regarding the programme to be covered please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

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Class teacher

## 1<sup>st</sup> Class

Dear parents/ guardians,

As part of the SPHE programme for 1<sup>st</sup> Class the following objectives are set out for your children in the Primary School Curriculum:

### Knowing about my body

- explore the various things the body can do  
*see, hear, move, breathe, make energy, feel, think*
- name parts of the male and female body, using appropriate anatomical terms, and identify some of their functions

Over the next couple of weeks, I will be covering this area of the programme with the class. When discussing the male and female body parts, the words 'penis', 'vagina', 'vulva' and 'urethra' will be used. We will also be talking in class about how different bodily functions. Included in this will be how the urinary system works. We will be discussing how urine passes through the penis in boys and the urethra in girls. Please note that no further details are given at this age.

This may be an opportunity for you to discuss these topics with your child at home and to revise work covered in school. If you have any queries/concerns regarding the programme to be covered please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

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Class teacher

## 2<sup>nd</sup>Class

Dear parents/ guardians,

As part of the SPHE programme for 2<sup>nd</sup>Class the following objectives are set out for your children in the Primary School Curriculum:

### New life

- begin to understand that reproduction, birth, life, growth and death are all part of a life cycle

### Knowing about my body

- explore the various things the body can do  
*see, hear, move, breathe, make energy, feel, think*
- name parts of the male and female body, using appropriate anatomical terms, and identify some of their functions

Over the next couple of weeks, I will be covering this area of the programme with the class. When discussing the male and female body parts, the words 'penis', 'vagina', 'vulva' and 'urethra' will be used. We will also be talking in class about how a baby leaves its mother's womb through the vagina to be born. Please note that no further details are given at this age.

This may be an opportunity for you to discuss these topics with your child at home and to revise work covered in school. If you have any queries/concerns regarding the programme to be covered please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

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Class teacher



### 3<sup>rd</sup> Class

Dear parents/ guardians,

As part of the SPHE programme for 3<sup>rd</sup> Class the following objectives are set out for your children in the Primary School Curriculum:

#### New life

- identify the care that needs to be taken while waiting for a baby to be born  
*diet, rest, love, support and role of other family members, medical interventions*
- develop an appreciation of the wonder of a new-born baby

#### Myself and others

- explore and discuss different kinds of families, recognising that families vary in structure, in the way they communicate and in the way family members spend their time

Over the next couple of weeks, I will be covering these areas with the class. When discussing the wonder of a newborn baby, the words 'umbilical cord' and 'navel' will be used. When discussing the family, the terms 'gay', 'lesbian', 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual' will be explained. Please note that no further details are given at this age.

This may be an opportunity for you to discuss these topics with your child at home and to revise work covered in school. If you have any queries/concerns regarding the programme to be covered please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

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Class teacher

## SPHE 4<sup>th</sup> Class

Dear parents/ guardians,

As part of the SPHE programme for 4<sup>th</sup> class the following objectives are set out for your children in the Primary School Curriculum:

### **Birth and new life**

- discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby, from conception to birth
- identify the care that needs to be taken while waiting for a baby to be born
- develop an appreciation of the wonder of a new-born baby

### **Knowing about my body**

- understand the physical changes taking place in both the male and female body
- realise that these changes do not occur at the same time but nonetheless are predictable and natural and that being different is normal
- recognise and discuss how feelings and emotions are affected by the physical changes that take place at puberty

Over the next couple of weeks, I will be covering this area of the programme with the class. The following topics will be included:

- time line of the growth of the baby in the womb (Note: the 4<sup>th</sup> class curriculum doesn't include conception)
- growing from a girl to a woman and a boy to a man; height, weight, hormonal changes, changes in body shape, menstruation (periods), voice changes, increases in body hair, skin changes, changes in friendship patterns
- feelings & emotions

This may be an opportunity for you to discuss these topics with your child at home and to revise work covered in school.

If you have any queries/concerns regarding the programme to be covered please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

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Class teacher

## SPHE 5<sup>th</sup> Class

Dear parents/ guardians,

As part of the SPHE programme for 5<sup>th</sup> class the following objectives are set out for your children in the Primary School Curriculum:

### **Knowing about my body**

- identify and discuss the physical and other 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
- realise how increased activity or involvement in physical activities can require increased attention to body care

Over the next couple of weeks, I will be covering this area of the programme with the class using the 'Busy Bodies' DVD, booklet and RSE Resource book. The topics covered include:

- Introducing puberty
- Why does puberty happen?
- What happens to girls?
- What happens to boys?
- Enjoying growing up

These booklets will be available to the class during this time. If you would like to borrow the DVD or booklet, please let me know. You can also view it online at [https://www.healthpromotion.ie/health/inner/busy\\_bodies](https://www.healthpromotion.ie/health/inner/busy_bodies)

This may be an opportunity for you to discuss these topics with your child at home and to revise work covered in school. If you have any queries/concerns regarding the programme to be covered please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

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Class teacher

## SPHE 6<sup>th</sup> Class

Dear parents/ guardians,

As part of the SPHE programme for 6<sup>th</sup> class the following objectives are set out for your children in the Primary School Curriculum:

### Knowing about my body

- identify and discuss the physical and other 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
- realise how increased activity or involvement in physical activities can require increased attention to body care
- understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed, loving relationship
- discuss and explore the responsibilities involved in being a parent and the emotional and physical maturity required to be a parent

Over the next couple of weeks I will be covering this area of the programme with the class using the 'Busy Bodies' DVD, booklet and RSE Resource book. We will revise some of the topics covered last year in 5<sup>th</sup> Class and also look at sexual intercourse. The topics to be covered are:

- What happens to girls?
- What happens to boys?
- Enjoying growing up
- Making babies
- A baby is a miracle
- Relationships and new life
- Families
- Different types of love

The 'Busy Bodies' booklets will be available to the class during this time. If you would like to borrow the DVD or booklet, please let me know. You can also view it online at [https://www.healthpromotion.ie/health/inner/busy\\_bodies](https://www.healthpromotion.ie/health/inner/busy_bodies)

This may be an opportunity for you to discuss these topics with your child at home and to revise work covered in school. If you have any queries/concerns regarding the programme to be covered please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

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Class teacher