

Thomond Primary School

**Policy on Relationships & Sexuality
Education
(RSE)**

Introductory Statement:

An RSE policy is a written statement of the aims of the RSE programme, the relationship of RSE to SPHE, and the organisation and management of RSE within the school.

This is a whole school plan for Thomond Primary School. This school is a mainstream co-educational school with 2 special classes for autistic learners, a HSCL co-ordinator and an Administrative Principal. It is an urban school with DEIS Band 1 status.

This policy was first developed in September 2015 through a collaborative process involving teachers and the principal and was reviewed in September 2020 by the SPHE co-ordinator.

Following our return to school in 2020, RSE was taught in term one as a priority as children missed this important programme due to remote teaching constraints. Ordinarily it is taught in the final term.

NOTE:

2024/2025

Following feedback from staff through the SSE process and following discussion by the Wellbeing Team, it was decided to move to a 2-year SPHE plan from September 2024. Growing and Changing will be explored via the RSE programme in term 2, year 2 of the plan. The 2-year plan will be attached here as an appendix.

Rationale:

This school plan has been drawn up with the intention of providing a useful tool for all teachers; outlining clear guidelines in the teaching of RSE and ensuring consistency and continuity in practice throughout the school.

With the 'bewildering variety of messages about sexuality and sexual activity' in our environment it is necessary to have a plan of approach for these everyday difficulties, and one which best supports our students.

This policy acknowledges the importance of the SPHE/RSE curriculum being taught in the context of a whole school climate that is inclusive and respectful to all partners. As such, we aim to provide an open and honest environment in order to develop each child as a confident, responsible and respectful individual who can make informed decisions concerning themselves, others and their environment.

RSE & SPHE

RSE is a developmental process of experiential learning, in which pupils participate, to help cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships.

RSE is an integral part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and must be taught in this context. The '*RSE Policy Guide for Primary Schools*' states that SPHE is "spiral, developmental in nature and age appropriate in content and methodology"; a principle vital to the success of an RSE programme.

The SPHE curriculum includes topics such as self-esteem, assertiveness, communication and decision-making skills; all of which can contribute to the effectiveness of this RSE policy.

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 relationships and friendships
- To foster an understanding of and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework in keeping with the ethos of the school
- 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 of birth and new life
- To enable the child to be comfortable with the sexuality of oneself and others while growing and developing

Specific Policy relating to elements of the RSE Programme:**Advice:**

The school's function is to provide a general education about sexual matters and issues and not to offer individual advice, information or counselling on aspects of sexual behaviour and contraception. However, sources of professional information and advice will be identified when appropriate. Advice should not be directive and should be age appropriate.

Explicit Questions:

Should a pupil raise a question, which is deemed inappropriate to the lesson, the teacher should consider the age of the student, the RSE programme content for the class level, the ethos of the school and this RSE policy. A teacher may seek advice from the SPHE co-ordinator or Principal if they are concerned about how to deal correctly with this situation.

Confidentiality:

Any child protection issues, which may arise within the RSE programme, will be dealt with as outlined in our Child Safeguarding Statement and in accordance with the Children First Guidelines.

Visiting Speakers:

It is the policy of the school that the RSE programme is best discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by the pupils. If deemed appropriate, a visiting speaker may be invited to add to the quality of provision of the RSE programme. The visitor will be provided with a copy of this document and agree the content of the presentation with the SPHE co-ordinator in advance and the class teacher will be present at all times.

Sexual Orientation:

The school promotes respect for all. Should issues of sexual orientation arise the discussion will be led by the teacher in an age-appropriate manner.

RSE Curriculum Planning:

1. Content:

The RSE programme reflects a spiral approach, where similar aspects are revisited in different ways according to the age, stage of development and readiness of the child.

RSE must be planned in such a way that the child will receive a comprehensive programme in RSE over an 8-year period. This plan will follow the relevant strands and strand units outlined in the 1999 curriculum for SPHE.

All teachers are familiar with the strands, strand units and content objectives for their own class level. Each teacher is expected to consult this policy and the RSE curriculum when planning. By doing this familiarity will be maintained if the teacher changes class level. New teachers will be provided with access to this policy on entering the school.

2. Approaches and Methodologies:

The teaching methodologies employed in RSE should be reflective of the aims and objectives of the programme. RSE seeks to promote behaviour which will allow children to take increasing responsibility for themselves as they grow and develop. In order for children to reflect on and make their own of information received it is necessary for them to be actively engaged in the learning process. Any or all of the following techniques will allow the child to play an active part in the learning process:

- Discussion
- Roleplay
- Interviewing friends or other school pupils, family members
- Analysing and evaluating newspapers and magazines, television schedules and other appropriate materials
- Hosting visitors
- Projects
- Modelling
- Designing advertisements
- Writing captions
- Ranking statements
- Describing photographs, cartoons and pictures
- Working in pairs/groups
- Viewing and discussing educational videos

3. Assessment:

RSE will be assessed in the following ways:

- Revision and written work
- Teachers will assess the child's progress in RSE using the recommended informed tools for assessment and personal judgement: teacher observation, teacher designed tests and tasks, projects
- Teachers will be available to share their expertise and explore their concerns among the staff in the school

- Information regarding the child's abilities, strengths and overall progress in RSE may be shared with the pupil and parents where appropriate

4. Linkage & Integration:

RSE shares content with language, the Arts, Physical Education, Religious Education and with Social, Environmental and Scientific Education and SPHE. An integrative approach is very significant for RSE as it ensures that children encounter RSE in a holistic manner rather than in isolation.

5. RSE & SEN:

Children with Special Educational Needs may have difficulty coping with the skills necessary to deal with relationships and sexuality and can have the greatest need in the area of RSE. As such, teachers will ensure participation of children with SEN, be they emotional and behavioural, learning or physical; by adapting the lesson and content to suit their ability. Teachers will achieve this by:

- Differentiating learning objectives
- Differentiation in support
- Differentiation in grouping
- Differentiation in teaching style
- Differentiation in task
- Differentiation in pace
- Differentiation in expected outcomes

6. Resources:

To include:

- Walk Tall Programme
- Stay Safe Programme
- RSE Programme
- Making the Links
- 'Busy Bodies' DVD and booklets
- 'Going Forward Together' (pack for parents)
- Report of the Expert Advisory Group on RSE Education
- Veritas: RSE in Catholic Schools
- 'Changes' Pack

7. Individual Teacher's Planning and Reporting:

This plan and curriculum documents will inform and guide teachers in their long- and short-term programme of work in RSE. Each teacher will keep a Cuntas Míósúil and this will inform our progress and needs when evaluating and reviewing our progress in RSE.

8. Staff Development:

Staff members with experience or training in the area of RSE will share their knowledge with other staff through meetings and consultation.

Staff will be notified of development opportunities in the area of RSE as they arise. Teachers may avail of opportunities within the school for team teaching with Special Education Teachers.

9. Parental Involvement:

Parental involvement is considered an integral part to effectively implementing RSE. Thomond Primary School appreciates that parents are the primary educator and therefore play a crucial role in the social, personal and health development of their children. This plan and the curriculum documents are available to all parents, to inform them of the programme for RSE. We recognise the role of the HSCL teacher as crucial to developing collaboration between the school and parents.

10. Roles & Responsibilities:

This plan will be supported, developed and implemented by all members of the staff. The principal and relevant post holders will coordinate the progress of the plan, encourage and accept feedback on its implementation and report to staff on findings. It will be ratified by the Board of Management.

11. Review & Monitoring:

The effectiveness of the RSE programme will be monitored and evaluated through pupil, staff and parental feedback.

This plan will be implemented in September 2020 and reviewed as necessary, in line with curriculum updates.

12. Ratification & Communication:

The Board of Management of Thomond Primary School ratified this plan on **17th September 2024.**

This plan is available to view at the school by the parents.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Michael Condon

Chairperson of the Board of Management

SPHE 2 year Plan

Months	Year 1	Year 2
September/October	Self-Identity (Myself)	Myself and My Family (Myself and Others)
November /December	My friends and other People (My Friends and Others)	Relating to Others (Myself and Others)
January/February	Safety and Protection (Myself)	Growing and Changing (Myself)
March/April	Making Decisions (3 rd - 6 th Myself)	Taking Care of my Body (Myself)
May/June	Media Education (Myself and the Wider World)	Developing Citizenship (Myself and the Wider World)