Community NATIONAL SCHOOLS

Ashbourne CNS

RSE Policy

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Community NATIONAL SCHOOLS

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1. Overview

At Ashbourne CNS we are committed to our core values of courage, creativity, collaboration and care. Our school celebrates diversity of belief, language and cultural traditions and we all learn to respect, trust and encourage each other every day. We listen to each other and negotiate our differences. This makes it easy for us accept, respect and include every person for who they are.

'Learning is the Heart of our Community' and we are dedicated to the holistic development of every child. Our practice is informed by Glasser's Caring Habits, Growth Mindset and a Restorative approach. By focusing on inter and intra-personal skills we seek to enhance relationships in our community and with the community. This holistic approach acknowledges that 'learning takes place in a relationship' and seeks to help children develop the resilience, self-esteem and relationships needed to overcome the many challenges on the road to adulthood.

We combine socio-cultural building blocks with high-quality approaches to teaching and learning in order to develop each child's academic, social, moral, emotional, spiritual and creative capabilities. Thus, enabling them to reach their full potential and play an active part in the local community and wider civic society.

Education is a partnership, and at Ashbourne CNS experienced teaching professionals, students and parents work together with members of the wider community in a welcoming educational environment which is safe, happy, stimulating, inclusive and reflective of the diverse modern society in which we live.

At Ashbourne CNS we seek to provide a safe physical, psychological and social environment that reinforces a sense of belonging to the school community and wider society. We strive to enable every student to realise their full potential regardless of any aspect of their identity, background or ability. We promote a fully inclusive education that recognises the plurality of identities, beliefs and values held by students, parents and staff. We seek to prepare open-minded, culturally sensitive and responsible citizens with a strong sense of social justice.

1.1 Clarification of Key Terms used in this policy

LMETB: Louth Meath Education and Training Board

CNS: Community National School

SNA: Special Needs Assistant

RSE: Relationship and Sexuality Education

SPHE: Social Personal and Health Education

NCCA: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

CPD: Continuous Professional Development

PDST: Professional Development Service for Teachers

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy, in accordance with the provisions of the Child Care Act (1991), Education Act (1998), Education (Welfare) Act (2000) and the revised 'Primary School Curriculum Guidelines' (1999), details the aims and the content of the agreed programme for the provision and the delivery of 'Relationships & Sexuality Education (RSE) in Ashbourne CNS.

3. Scope

This policy applies to members of the Board of Management, teachers, SNAs, pupils and parents in Ashbourne CNS.

4. Policy

4.1 Definition of RSE

Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) aims to help children learn, at home and in school, about their own development and about their friendships and relationships with others. This work will be based on developing a good self-image, promoting respect for themselves and others and providing them with appropriate information. RSE 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, respectful and responsible way.

4.2 Relationship between SPHE and RSE

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) enables pupils to develop essential personal and social skills that foster integrity, self-confidence, self-esteem, and sensitivity to the feelings and rights of others. RSE is a core component of SPHE and contributes to the holistic development, wellbeing, and personal growth of each child.

SPHE and RSE are grounded in the understanding that effective learning occurs when children feel respected, supported, and valued. Within this framework, RSE helps pupils to form healthy relationships with themselves and others, make informed choices, and develop a positive sense of identity and belonging.

SPHE:

- Is a lifelong process – RSE is a continuous element of SPHE throughout primary school, not confined to once-off lessons or isolated topics.
- Is a shared responsibility – involving collaboration between the family, school, health professionals, and the wider community. Each has a vital role in supporting the child's learning and development.
- Takes a holistic approach – focusing on developing skills, attitudes, values, and understanding as well as factual knowledge related to personal and social wellbeing.
- Is child-centred – RSE is planned with consideration for the needs, age, and developmental stage of each pupil, and adapted to the specific context of the school community.
- Is spiral in nature – RSE themes are revisited at different stages of the child's development, allowing knowledge and understanding to deepen and evolve over time.
- Promotes active and participatory learning – engaging children through discussion, reflection, and cooperative activities that build empathy, emotional awareness, and respectful relationships.

Through SPHE and RSE, pupils in Ashbourne CNS are supported in developing:

- A sense of identity, purpose, and belonging

- A sense of security and competence

RSE within SPHE provides consistent and developmentally appropriate messages that help pupils navigate an ever-changing world. Ashbourne CNS is committed to delivering a curriculum that is inclusive, equitable, and free from bias, in line with Department of Education policy and the SPHE Teacher Guidelines (1999, p.25).

By exploring different cultures, values, and traditions, pupils learn to respect diversity, challenge prejudice, and contribute positively to an inclusive and intercultural school community.

4.3 What the School Currently Provides

- Multi-Belief and Values Education taught through Goodness Me! Goodness You! (Patron's Curriculum for Community National Schools)
- SPHE lessons
- Bí Cineálta Anti-Bullying Policy
- RSE Manuals (Oide) and Busy Bodies (HSE) resources
- Stay Safe Programme (Oide)
- Walk Tall Programme (Oide)
- Webwise resources
- All Together Now! (Irish National Teachers Organisation)
- Adapted resources for SEN

4.4 Aims of the RSE Programme

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and wellbeing of the child
- To help the child to develop healthy and respectful friendships and relationships
- To foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral and social framework
- To enable the child to acquire an understanding of, and respect for human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction at age-appropriate levels
- To develop and promote in the child a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life at age-appropriate levels

- To enable the child to be comfortable with the sexuality and sexual identity of oneself and others while growing and developing.

4.5 Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in Ashbourne CNS

The SPHE curriculum will be followed and will be taught from Junior Infants to Sixth Class. All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school and the ethos of the patron, the whole school plan for SPHE and the RSE policy. Each class teacher will teach the content for their class level each year as set out in the curriculum, in accordance with the ethos of the school, and utilising the RSE manuals to complement their teaching. Teachers will remain impartial in the delivery of RSE lessons and will only answer questions based on the content of programme for that year or below e.g. they will not answer questions that are unsuitable for the age or class level of the pupils.

The management of RSE is as follows:

- From the academic year of 2025/2026 onwards, RSE and the Stay Safe Programme will be taught in alternate years. All classes will cover either RSE or Stay Safe during Term 2 of the school year.
- Sensitive lessons are covered under the broad theme *"As I Grow, I Change"* in the senior classes. These lessons are gender-specific, age-appropriate, and may be delivered separately. The method of delivery, including whether lessons are taught in mixed or separate groups, will be determined annually at the discretion of the class teacher and/or principal. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the best interests of all children. The principal will continue to engage with any child who presents as non-binary and, in consultation with their parents/guardians, will determine the most appropriate arrangement for that child.
- Special consideration will be taken to ensure that the needs of children with SEN are met. Taking into account the pupil's social and emotional development, instruction will be based on individual needs where possible. Parents will be consulted around sensitive issues. .

4.6 Parental Involvement

Ashbourne CNS recognises that parents/guardians are the primary educators of their children, particularly in matters relating to personal development, relationships, and

sexuality. The school aims to work in close partnership with parents to ensure consistency between home and school.

- **Access to Curriculum:** Parents are invited to view the RSE curriculum and may speak with the principal or class teacher at any time during the school year if they have questions or concerns.
- **Advance Notification:** Parents will be informed in advance of the RSE programme content and, in particular, of formal lessons covering sensitive areas such as puberty and sexual intercourse.
- **Parental Responsibility:** Parents are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the content of the RSE programme, to prepare their child for the information they will receive, and to discuss the material covered in school. Information on lesson content is available at Resources - Oide or from the school directly.
- **Confidentiality:** Parents are requested to inform teachers of any special family situations that may affect a child's participation or understanding. Such information will be treated in strict confidence.
- **Addressing Concerns:** If a parent has a concern or issue regarding any aspect of the RSE programme, they are encouraged to discuss it with the principal or class teacher.
- **Withdrawal from Sensitive Lessons:** Following consultation with the principal, a parent who wishes to withdraw their child from the sensitive elements of RSE should submit this request in writing, outlining their reasons. This will be recorded on Aladdin.
- **Parental Responsibility Following Withdrawal:** If a child is withdrawn, it is the parent's responsibility to address the relevant content with their child at home. The school cannot take responsibility for what the child may subsequently hear from peers following the delivery of these lessons (e.g. during yard or informal discussion)

4.7 Organisation and Curriculum Planning

RSE forms part of the national curriculum for SPHE by NCCA and will be taught from infants to 6th class. RSE will be covered under the following strands and strand units of the SPHE curriculum:

Strand: Myself

Strand Units: Growing and changing; Taking care of my body

The RSE programme is divided into two main parts:

1) The general programme which contains content covered through SPHE strands and strand units and compliment the aims and objectives of RSE

- Friendship
- Self-identity
- Family
- Self-esteem
- Growing up

2) The second section will deal with any sensitive/specific content covered through RSE strands and strand units. See Appendix 2 for information on sensitive content covered.

4.8 Approaches and Methodologies

When implementing the programme, staff at Ashbourne CNS will display respect for and sensitivity towards the different cultural and family backgrounds experienced by the children while maintaining responsibility to deliver the programme fully. The curriculum will be taught in an age-appropriate manner at all times. The curriculum will be taught from Junior Infants to 6th class. It will be taught through a spiral curriculum (key topics will be revisited in a developmental manner at regular intervals). The materials taught will reflect the needs of the children.

The RSE curriculum will be taught through:

- stories and poems
- classroom discussion
- group work
- games
- art activities
- reflection
- circle time

4.9 Differentiation

Teachers use professional judgment and assessment to adapt the SPHE and RSE programme to meet the diverse needs of their class. Strategies include:

- Setting realistic objectives and ensuring tasks align with prior learning.
- Breaking learning into small stages and using language appropriate to pupils' levels of understanding.
- Using task analysis to outline steps, guide students with key questions, and support self-direction and correction.
- Providing short, varied tasks and concrete learning materials, including word lists, charts, and visual aids.
- Encouraging interaction and collaboration through small-group work, moderated whole-class discussions, and the use of tools such as a Question Box.
- Employing higher- and lower-order questioning to engage all learners.

Differentiation supports pupils at different developmental stages, enabling gradual, appropriate learning for each child. Teachers can only answer questions that are age appropriate and relevant to the curriculum. For any questions that are not based on the curriculum, pupils will be advised to speak to their parents.

4.10 Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

The teaching RSE will be guided by each student's individual needs and informed by collaboration between parents/guardians, class teachers and support teachers as part of the Continuum of Support process. In some cases, pupils with SEN may be taught RSE topics earlier than the recommended class level outlined in the curriculum, where this is deemed necessary for their safety, personal development or emerging needs.

Pupils with SEN may experience additional challenges in their personal development, including understanding and managing the physical and emotional changes of puberty, as well as developing and sustaining positive relationships. To support learners effectively, instruction will be differentiated and may include visual strategies such as social stories, task analyses and other adapted RSE resources tailored to the student's learning profile, developmental stage and evolving needs.

In planning and delivering RSE for pupils with SEN, careful consideration will be given to the *NCCA Guidelines for Students with Moderate, Severe, and Profound General Learning Disabilities*. These guidelines will inform the design, adaptation and pacing of content to ensure that all pupils receive developmentally appropriate, accessible and meaningful RSE instruction.

4.11 Language

The SPHE curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to develop their language skills and extend their vocabulary in relation to personal and social development. Pupils are encouraged to understand the power and influence of language—recognising that when used positively, it can affirm, build respect, and strengthen relationships, while negative use can hurt or demean others. Children should become aware of and sensitive to how they use language in their daily interactions. Language is a powerful tool and should always be used with respect, integrity, and regard for the dignity of every person.

The use of language in RSE lessons applies in two key areas:

- The formal teaching and use of language across the school.
- The language used in discussion during formal RSE lessons.

Within RSE, appropriate and accurate vocabulary will be used when discussing topics such as sexuality, growing up, physical changes, body parts, and feelings. The use of slang or disrespectful terms will be discouraged. All anatomical terms and language introduced will be consistent with the recommended RSE teaching materials.

4.12 Provision of Ongoing Support

- Opportunities provided by Navan Education and Support Centre will be brought to the attention of staff members.
- Teachers will be encouraged to attend CPD in RSE.
- Staff meetings utilised as a platform for discussion and development of RSE materials.
- Support from an Oide Advisor.
- Promotion and communication of resources available from www.pdst.ie.

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5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Parents

Parents are responsible for informing themselves about the curriculum content being taught in RSE lessons, teaching their children about sexual relationships and sexual identity if they their children are withdrawn from programme and ensuring their children are respectful towards difference and diversity within Irish society.

5.2 Pupils

Students are responsible for being respectful towards the sexuality and sexual identity of oneself and others and for upholding the values of the school and the patron body.

5.3 Ashbourne CNS Staff

Ashbourne CNS staff members will read and familiarise themselves with all aspects of the RSE Policy.

5.4 Principal

Principal is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school and is accountable to the BoM for the implementation of the RSE Policy.

5.5 Board of Management

The Board is responsible for ratification of the policy.

Chairperson of the Board on the date of its ratification by the Board signs the policy document.

6. Policy Review

The policy will be reviewed after every two years. The policy may also be reviewed at an earlier time should a need arise.

Signed: Chairperson of Board of Management	Signed: (Principal) Date: 29/01/26

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Appendix 1

Whole School SPHE Plan

Term	Months	Year 1 Junior Infants & 1st Class	Year 2 Senior Infants & 2nd Class	Year 1 3rd Class & 5th Class	Year 2 4th Class & 6th Class
Term 1	**September** **October**	**Strand:** Myself **Strand Unit:** Self – Identity	**Strand:** Myself and Others **Strand Unit:** Myself and My Family	**Strand:** Myself **Strand Unit:** Self – Identity	**Strand:** Myself and Others **Strand Unit:** Myself and My Family
	November **December**	**Strand:** Myself and Others **Strand Unit:** My Friends and Other People	**Strand:** Myself and Others **Strand Unit:** Relating to Others	**Strand:** Myself and Others **Strand Unit:** My Friends and Other People	**Strand:** Myself and Others **Strand Unit:** Relating to Others
Term 2	**January** **February**	**Strand:** Myself **Strand Unit:** Safety and Protection (STAY SAFE Programme)	**Strand:** Myself **Strand Unit:** Growing and Changing (RSE -Sensitive Content)	**Strand:** Myself **Strand Unit:** Safety and Protection (STAY SAFE Programme)	**Strand:** Myself **Strand Unit:** Growing and Changing (RSE-Sensitive Content)
	March **April**	**Strand:** Myself **Strand Unit:** Safety and Protection (STAY SAFE Programme) *Road/Farm/Water Safety	**Strand:** Myself **Strand Unit:** Taking Care of My Body (RSE – Sensitive Content)	**Strand:** Myself **Strand Unit:** Making Decisions* *(3rd Class and 5th Class only)* (STAY SAFE Programme)	**Strand:** Myself **Strand Unit:** Taking Care of My Body (RSE-Sensitive Content)
Term 3	**May** **June**	**Strand:** Myself and the Wider World **Strand Unit:** Developing Citizenship	**Strand:** Myself and the Wider World **Strand Unit:** Media Education	**Strand:** Myself and the Wider World **Strand Unit:** Developing Citizenship	**Strand:** Myself and the Wider World **Strand Unit:** Media Education

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Appendix 2

RSE Sensitive Content Grid

Class Level	Strand/Strand Unit	Content Objectives ***Consult curriculum for complete content objectives in Growing and Changing and Taking Care of My Body***	Language	RSE Resource Materials Book	Walk Tall Programme	Supplementary Resources
Junior and Senior Infant Band	**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 p.68 My Body p.147 Caring for new life p.137 At the beach or swimming pool p.153	Our Amazing Bodies p.94 (Senior Infants book)	Anatomically correct dolls Picture books of new baby Visit of baby to class
1st and 2nd Class Band	**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 p.59/151 How my body works p.67/161 Growing means changing p.77/171 A Visit to the Doctor p.164	Our Amazing Bodies p.37 (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
3rd and 4th Class Band	**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 p.69 The wonder of new life p.169 As I grow and change p.93 Growing and changing p.195	As I grow, I change p.175 (3rd class book) Changing and Growing p.140 (4th class book) The Wonder of New Life p.150	Body system labelling activities Puberty sorting game Picture books on growing and changing
5th and 6th Class Band	**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 p.81 The wonder of new life p.92 Caring for new life p.103 Different kinds of love p.141	My Amazing body p.345 (5th class book) Creation p.121 (6th class book)	Busy Bodies Body system labelling activities Puberty sorting games Question box Puberty quiz