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## **RE: Relationship and Sexuality Education**

18/05/21

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is a very important element of the school curriculum. SPHE covers a wide range of topics such as self identity, making decisions, citizenship and relationships, which equip children with many of the skills and knowledge needed in today's world.

The Relationship and Sexuality element of the programme (RSE) includes the learning, understanding and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, sexual identity and intimacy.

The main aims of the RSE programme are:

- To enhance the personal development, well being and self-esteem of each child
- To enable each child to gain an understanding of and respect for human love, reproduction and sexual activity in a sensitive and measured way
- To enable the child develop healthy friendships and relationships
- To develop and promote a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life.

The content of the programme falls under the following headings:

- **Myself** - Self identity, taking care of my body, growing and changing, safety.
- **Myself and Others** - Myself and family, friends and relating to other people.
- **Taking Care of My Body** - Naming parts of the male and female body using appropriate terminology (Lower and Middle classes). Identifying physical changes. Understanding puberty and the Reproductive System (Senior Classes)
- **Growing and Changing** - The stages of development of a baby from conception to birth (Middle Classes). Understanding sexual relations within the context of a committed loving relationship (Senior Classes).

Within this content, there are a number of sensitive issues such as conception and reproduction. Our school policy outlines that these issues will primarily be taught in the Spring/Summer term and we are now advising parents in advance that this will take place in the coming weeks. These are available to view in the RSE policy on the school's website [www.stpatricksgboysns.com](http://www.stpatricksgboysns.com) or by calling to the school office to receive a hard copy. We encourage you to talk to your son about what he will learn through RSE in a mature and respectful way.

The following guidelines have been put in place to ensure everyone is happy with the delivery of the RSE programme. These are taken from our RSE policy, which, along with all other school policies, is available to parents on request from the office. Please read through the guidelines and do not hesitate to contact me should you have any queries or comments.

- The sections within the RSE programme which have been identified as sensitive issues will be taught in the Spring term in each class. These are available to view in the RSE policy on the school's website [www.stpatricksboysns.com](http://www.stpatricksboysns.com)
- The programme is taught within the ethos of the school and contemporary issues/topics are dealt with by the teacher at a level appropriate to the age and stage of development of pupils within a moral and spiritual framework.
- Relationships and Sexuality Education is an on-going process throughout life. A child's first experience of love, of intimacy and of relationships takes place in the family. Parents and the family are acknowledged as the primary educators of their children. We work in a supportive role with the parents, by complementing their role with a school based programme in RSE
- All the content objectives of the RSE Programme will be covered by the time children leave sixth class.
- Parents will be informed by letter two weeks prior to the teaching of sensitive issues. This will allow time for parents to discuss topics with the child, meet the teacher if required and/or follow the appropriate procedure for opting out of the RSE programme.
- If a visitor or guest speaker is invited to a class to enhance the delivery of the RSE programme, the class teacher will remain present in the class. Parents will be informed of such a visit and the content being addressed in advance of the visit. Parents are encouraged to use this opportunity to discuss these topics with their children beforehand. Parents are advised to inform childminders etc. that the sensitive topics are going to be discussed.
- A parent's right to withdraw a pupil from the sensitive issues process will be honoured on the understanding that the parent(s) is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves.
- Parents are obliged to inform the school in writing of their decision to withdraw the child from the sensitive issues classes. Any parent who wishes to withdraw their child are asked to discuss with the principal how this may be facilitated.
- Teachers do not cover topics such as contraception and same sex friendships. Children who ask questions in class on content outside the designated curriculum are encouraged to discuss the issue with their parents. Parents are informed and asked to talk to their child. Support is offered to the parent in the form of information and support agencies to assist a parent to inform their child in an accurate and suitable way.
- Curriculum books and resource materials are available in the school and parents are welcome to borrow them if desired.
- The school has no responsibility for any information which the pupil may receive outside the direct teaching of the RSE lessons
- Questions arising from curriculum content will be addressed by the teacher or by the visitor in a sensible, sensitive and age-appropriate manner.
- Questions arising outside of the curriculum will be referred back to the parent(s).

We are very aware of the importance and sensitivity of teaching the RSE programme to our pupils and we thank you for your ongoing support in ensuring your son will have received a balanced education in St. Patrick's Boys, which will prepare them not only for secondary school, but for life.

Is mise le meas,

Principal

Anthony Liddane