

St Therese of Lisieux Primary School



Relationships and Sexuality Policy

*Providing reliable, accurate and timely
age-appropriate information*

Article 28
You have the right to a good quality education.

Relationships and Sexuality Policy

Our vision statement

***“With a smile and a helping hand we inspire the children of today
become the adults of tomorrow.”***

St Therese of Lisieux Primary School aims to provide a supportive, positive learning environment which fosters pupil growth and development. This ethos is underpinned by our code of faith and pastoral care. We are committed to providing our pupils with a positive attitude towards Catholic education. Christ’s values and gospel message are an intrinsic part of our ethos, daily running of the school and our curriculum. We try to ensure that we work in partnership with the home, parish and the wider community to strengthen our pupils’ vision of their role as part of the Catholic community. This policy reflects the ethos of our school.

Rationale

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a lifelong process that involves the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills and the development of attitudes, beliefs, morals and values regarding personal and social relationships. For children, the learning process has begun informally, with their parents or carers, long before any education in a formal setting takes place at school. Sexuality includes all aspects of the human person that relate to being male or female and it develops throughout life. It is an integral part of the human personality and affects our capacity to give and receive love. It is a complex dimension of human life and relationships.

Effective RSE is essential if children are to value themselves as individuals and are to make responsible, well-informed and healthy decisions about their lives. As a Catholic school, RSE is presented through the Religious Education programme, as well as the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding programme.

Relationships and Sexuality Education is taught in a sensitive and inclusive manner, and in a way that is appropriate to the child’s emotional and physical age and stage of development.

Aims

Relationships and Sexuality Education provides children with opportunities to:

- value themselves as unique individuals and children of God;
- respect themselves and others;
- develop respect for difference within the school and community
- begin to develop moral thinking and value systems in line with our Catholic Ethos
- learn about friendships, healthy relationships and behaviours with others;
- recognise and communicate their feelings and emotions and those of others;
- help each child to value family life
- learn about the changes that occur as they progress towards adolescence, particularly the emotional and physical changes at puberty;
- learn about keeping themselves safe and know what to do or who to go to if they feel unsafe.

The Importance of Relationships and Sexuality Education

- **Respects the rights of children**

St Therese of Lisieux is working towards achieving Rights Respecting School awards, based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This means that all children and young people in Northern Ireland have a right to a good quality education in accordance with the Convention.

- **Promotes a better understanding of diversity and inclusion**

Schools are increasingly diverse spaces, reflecting wider societal change. We aim to provide a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment that fosters respect for difference, challenges prejudicial attitudes and promotes equality of opportunity for all pupils. We encourage children to be confident and respectful of themselves and others.

- **Helps children to keep themselves safer in the digital world**

Technology plays an integral role in the lives of many children in Northern Ireland today. However, whilst technological advancements provide many opportunities, along with opportunity comes risk, particularly if the children's activity is unsupervised.

In St Therese of Lisieux children are taught 'keeping safe' messages about how to behave safely and responsibly in the digital world which plays such an integral role in their lives. Children are helped to identify potential risks to their safety, and be aware of the strategies they can use to protect themselves.

- **Provides reliable, accurate and timely age-appropriate information**

Although the emphasis in RSE in primary schools is on friendships and healthy relationships, we also give children opportunities to learn and understand how the body grows and develops, and know about the stages of human development. In the latter part of Key Stage 2 pupils will be given the opportunity to learn about some of the emotional and physical changes that occur during puberty. The programme is tailored to be appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils and meets the needs of both genders. This knowledge forms part of the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding theme of 'Health, Growth and Change'. Before puberty is covered in class, teachers will give parents/ carers the opportunity to discuss the content and resources they plan to use.

Issues around sexual orientation, gender identity and the physical act of sex are not on the primary school curriculum. However, if the children ask questions around these issues teachers will respond in a sensitive, non-confrontational and reassuring way. They may advise the child to discuss the issues at home with their parents and/or inform the parents that the child is raising these issues and may benefit from a discussion around the child's questions at home.

- **Helps children to recognise inappropriate behaviour and touch**

Through Relationships and Sexuality Education, children develop an understanding of their own uniqueness. It is also vitally important that they know and understand that, even though they are young, their body belongs to them and them alone. When children learn about 'keeping safe' through boundaries and positive consent, it helps them to recognise what constitutes:

- appropriate and inappropriate behaviour;
- appropriate and inappropriate touch; and
- unwanted attention, or attention that makes them feel uncomfortable in any way.

Children are taught strategies to use if they feel unsafe at any time. Teachers endeavour to create an atmosphere in their classrooms where all children are valued and given time to discuss any issues or concerns they may have. All classrooms have a 'Jokes, Worries and Concerns' box in their classroom. Photos of the key staff children can approach are displayed in prominent areas throughout the school. Safeguarding messages are presented regularly throughout the year at assemblies, during Anti-bullying week, Internet Safety week and through the PDMU and RE curriculum.

The foundation for the effective delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education is the building of secure, trusting, respectful relationships between the teacher and their pupils. Pupils should feel reassured that their teacher cares about their wellbeing and be aware that there are adults whom they can talk to and confide in. Pupils must also know and understand that the promise of confidentiality is never an option in the classroom or school setting. It must also be clear to pupils that, whilst teachers will offer support, they are obligated to notify the child protection/safeguarding teacher or team if they are concerned that the pupil may be 'at risk'.

Engaging with parents or carers

The effectiveness of our policy and programme depends upon the involvement of teachers, parents, governors and other education and health professionals. Each of these has distinctive contributions to make to our policy. Our teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education aims to be complementary and supportive to parents/carers role as lead educators in this sensitive area, and will be delivered in the context of our Catholic ethos.

It is our role to assist parents in teaching RSE in a manner appropriate to the emotional and psychological development of the child. A copy of our policy is readily available for parents at any time. We will have regular review of our policy and on-going communication with parents. Parents will be made aware of any sensitive topics before they are discussed with the children through the weekly focus sheets and will be asked to consent to their child attending workshops/assemblies that address sensitive issues.

Materials/resources used will be available for parents/carers to view. We hold workshops for parents periodically to address issues such as keeping our children safe in a digital world and send home suitable materials from outside agencies.

If an outside agency/individual is coming into the school to support the Relationships and Sexuality Education programme, parents/ carers are told in advance. Where sensitive issues are concerned we explain the type of activities which will take place to parents / carers and seek consent. This ensures that they have the opportunity to raise any concerns they might have before the visit, lets parents/carers know what is going on and strengthens ties between home and school.

Withdrawal from Relationships and Sexuality Education

Since RSE is a statutory requirement, it is part of our school curriculum. As a school we actively promote the implementation of RSE. The school will, however, take account of parent/carers concerns and respect their wishes. However, parents/carers should consider the social and emotional effects of

being excluded, as well as the likelihood that the child will hear their peers' version of what happened or what was said in the classes, rather than the safe and reliable source of the teacher's. If parents/carers choose to withdraw their children from certain RSE lessons, then the children will be given the opportunity to complete work from another area of the curriculum in another class.

Strengthening the partnership between school and the wider community

We occasionally use the expertise and skills of education and health professionals from outside agencies or from individuals in the wider community, to support the children's learning. There are many benefits of this, including the following:

- Outside agencies/individuals in the wider community can bring specialist knowledge, expertise and experience into the classroom;
- The novelty of a new visitor coming into the classroom/school is often very welcomed by pupils;
- It can increase the pupils' knowledge of services which can be accessed in the local community, and teach them how to go about accessing these services if and when they need them; and
- It can enhance teachers' capacity by updating their knowledge and/or showing new pedagogy/teaching practices used by the outside agency/individual.

We ensure that any outside agency/individual delivering a support session in a school:

- discusses and agrees the content, resources and teaching methods with staff prior to delivering a session to ensure it is respectful of the school's ethos, and complementary to the ongoing provision of Relationships and Sexuality Education.
- receives a copy of the school's Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy;
- is made aware of and adheres to the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- agrees to and signs our code of conduct;
- is made aware of the issues around confidentiality;
- is vetted as appropriate.

To maximise learning from the session, teachers prepare pupils for the visit. During the session, the teacher is present at all times. Afterwards the teacher should provide pupils with the opportunity to discuss their experience(s) and honestly evaluate the session(s). We use pupils' feedback to inform future planning and provision.

Young people with special educational needs (SEN)

We ensure children with SEN in mainstream schools have appropriate, accessible and relevant Relationships and Sexuality Education. When necessary resources and teaching activities are adapted

of to ensure that there are no barriers to participation or learning for pupils with SEN compared to their peers. It is widely recognised that pupils with SEN are more vulnerable to all forms of abuse and exploitation. Therefore, teachers must try to ensure that they develop the knowledge, understanding and skills of pupils to enable them to:

- identify inappropriate and exploitative behaviour;
- help develop their own prevention strategies to stay safe;
- recognise and build healthy relationships; and
- know who they can talk to.

Working in mixed and single-gender groups

Generally, we teach Relationships and Sexuality Education in mixed groups, where boys and girls learn together to gain an understanding and appreciation of each other's perspectives. However, there are times that pupils and teachers prefer to work in single-gender groups, particularly when they are exploring puberty issues.

Personal backgrounds and cultural practices

We aim to be particularly sensitive to the personal circumstances and cultural background of our pupils. We recognise how pupils' views and values are influenced by their informal learning experiences and by the views of family, peers, community and the media. For example, for some pupils it would be inappropriate to address some Relationships and Sexuality Education issues in a mixed gender lesson because of cultural or religious beliefs. Other pupils may have same-sex parents or carers, so teachers need to be mindful of this. We aim to handle such issues very sensitively.

The importance of establishing good relationships in the classroom environment

Good relationships are important in any classroom; however, they are particularly important when teaching Relationships and Sexuality Education. In Relationships and Sexuality Education, learning is most effective when it takes place in a safe, secure, respectful and inclusive space, where pupils can express their feelings and opinions and participate confidently and freely without embarrassment, judgement or ridicule from their peers. Using circle time or creating a classroom charter are effective ways to help to create a positive and safe learning environment.

Approaches to teaching and learning

To ensure that Relationships and Sexuality Education is meaningful and engaging for pupils, we adopt a learner-centred approach to facilitate and guide their learning. We employ an enquiry-based approach when exploring sensitive and complex issues, and use participative methodologies. These approaches, which are underpinned by the Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities framework, often

lead to children gaining a deeper knowledge and understanding, and really engaging in the learning process.

Connected learning opportunities

There are many opportunities within the Northern Ireland Curriculum for other Areas of Learning to link with Relationships and Sexuality Education, which allows for a more connected learning experience for pupils. This is a particularly effective way for teachers to enable pupils to explore sensitive and complex issues, as it allows them to do so through a variety of different lenses. Through this multi-perspective approach, children will develop an appreciation of the range of different viewpoints and the reasons why people have them. For example, children can explore a range of ways of communicating and expressing feelings and emotions through the Arts, including art and design, music, and drama. Through Language and Literacy, children can develop a vocabulary to discuss emotions and feelings through talking and listening, reading, writing, drama, and role play.

Teaching resources

Our teaching of RSE is primarily through the Religious Education programme and the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding programme. The Diocesan approved 'Grow in Love' and 'The Wonder of My Being' resources alongside the CCEA Living.Learning.Together packs (PDMU) helps to support our teaching.

Teachers may supplement these approved resources with others but must be satisfied that the resources they plan to use:

- reflect the ethos of the school;
- are age-appropriate, inclusive, and sensitive to the pupils' needs and experiences;
- are factually accurate and up-to-date; and
- make clear distinctions between fact and opinion.
- do not contain inappropriate/explicit images

Teaching sensitive issues

Sensitive issues are part and parcel of life. Children are aware of them, and want to talk about and understand them, particularly those sensitive issues which are also topical. Pupils should not be denied the opportunity to explore such issues simply because a teacher feels uncomfortable discussing them, and they should not be sheltered from discussing sensitive issues in an age-appropriate way. To do either is to leave children ignorant and unprepared to engage and deal with the diverse and complex range of issues facing them in society today.

Links to other policies

This policy should not be seen in isolation and should be cross referenced with other school policies, in particular, the Pastoral Care Policy, the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, E-safety Policy and the Anti Bullying Policy. Procedures for dealing with bullying of any kind, including cyberbullying are detailed in the Anti Bullying Policy.

Monitoring and Evaluation

This implementation of this policy will be monitored by the RE and PDMU coordinators to ensure that the needs of the children are being met. Monitoring and evaluation will happen through review of planning documentation, discussion with staff and pupils through focused group discussions and through consultation with parents.

Personal Development and Mutual Understanding Curriculum

FOUNDATION STAGE

Pupils should be enabled to explore:

- themselves and their personal attributes;
- their own and others' feelings and emotions;
- the importance of keeping healthy
- how to keep safe in familiar and unfamiliar environments.
- their relationships with family and friends;
- their responsibilities for self and others;
- how to respond appropriately in conflict situations;
- similarities and differences between groups of people;
- learning to live as a member of a community.

KEY STAGE 1

Pupils should be enabled to explore:

- their self-esteem and self-confidence;
- their own and others' feelings and emotions and how their actions affect others;
- strategies and skills for keeping themselves healthy
- strategies and skills for keeping themselves safe
- initiating and developing mutually satisfying relationships;
- responsibility and respect, honesty and fairness;
- constructive approaches to conflict;
- similarities and differences between people;

KEY STAGE 2

Pupils should be enabled to explore:

- their self-esteem, self-confidence and how they develop as individuals;
- their management of a range of feelings and emotions and the feelings and emotions of others;
- how to sustain their health, growth and well-being
- coping safely and efficiently with their environment.
- initiating, developing and sustaining mutually satisfying relationships;
- human rights and social responsibility;
- causes of conflict and appropriate responses;
- valuing and celebrating cultural difference and diversity;

Appendix 2

The Wonder of My Being Programme Overview

	1. To appreciate that I am a boy/girl.
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Year One	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. To appreciate that I am part of a family. 3. To understand that I grew in my mother's womb. 4. To learn that Jesus was part of a family. 5. To appreciate that I am special.
Year Two	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To understand that I needed help with everything when I was a baby. 2. To understand that I have grown and changed since I was a baby. 3. To understand some developmental stages of babies e.g. crawling, walking, talking ... 4. To appreciate that my family loves and cares for me. 5. To appreciate that God chose Mary to be the mother of his son Jesus. 6. To appreciate that Mary and Joseph loved and cared for Jesus.
Year Three	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To appreciate that people celebrate weddings. 2. To appreciate the qualities that are required for friendship. 3. To appreciate the qualities necessary for family. 4. To appreciate how a mother cares for her new baby. 5. To appreciate that Jesus helped Mary and Joseph at home. 6. To appreciate how we can help at home.
Year Four	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To appreciate that Mary was told by an Angel that she was to be the mother of Jesus. 2. To appreciate that an Angel appeared to Joseph to tell him he would be the one to care for Mary and Jesus. 3. To appreciate the role of Mary as the mother of God. 4. To appreciate the qualities and values that were part of the Holy Family of Nazareth. 5. To learn the vocabulary associated with pregnancy and birth. 6. To appreciate the preparations that were needed for your birth. 7. To appreciate that family is a gift from God
Year Five	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To appreciate the uniqueness of each person. 2. To appreciate that we are all created in the image and likeness of God. 3. To appreciate the importance of preparing responsibly for new life. 4. To appreciate the stages of development between birth and two years. 5. To appreciate we change as we grow (2 years – 9/10 years). 6. To be aware of people who help us grow and develop: family, church, medical. 7. To revisit the Sacrament of Baptism so that the children can become aware of their place in God's family.
Year Six	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To appreciate that we are made in God's image and likeness. 2. To appreciate the stages of growth before birth. 3. To recognise significant moments in our lives to date. 4. To recognise that we are created by God and that our bodies are sacred. 5. To recognise that our bodies change as we grow. 6. To appreciate that everyone is part of the body of Christ. 7. To appreciate the values of friendship in our lives. 8. To identify negative behaviour and how it can affect other people.
Year Seven	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To appreciate that we are called by God. 2. To appreciate the presence of God in our lives as we grow and change. 3. To appreciate the talents that each of us has and consider how we will use these as we grow and change. 4. To appreciate the qualities and characteristics of friendship. 5. To understand the importance of accepting and respecting each other just as we are. 6. To make pupils aware that they are influenced by many different people and things. 7. To appreciate that I can be a good or bad influence others. 8. To help make informed decision about their lives. 9. To enable the children to face future changes with optimism.