

# **Letterfrack National** **School**

## **RSE Policy**

## **Introduction**

Scoil Mhuire National School, Letterfrack is a co-ed mainstream primary school catering for pupils from infants to sixth class. The school is a catholic primary school under the patronage of the Diocese of Tuam. The ethos of our school is founded on Christian principles where tolerance and respect for others is paramount. It is our intention that everyone feels valued and our pupils are encouraged to develop their full potential in a caring and supportive environment. Relationships and Sexuality Education (R.S.E.) encompasses the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, sexual identity and intimacy. In Letterfrack N.S. we seek to promote the overall development of the child which involves the integration of Relationships and Sexuality into personal understanding, growth and development within the context of our Catholic ethos.

## **Rationale**

Letterfrack N.S. is committed to the education of children regardless of race, religion, gender or status. Relationships and Sexuality are integral parts of the human personality and impact biologically, psychologically, culturally, socially and spiritually. The loving and caring ethos of the school is the cornerstone of our Relationships and Sexuality Policy. RSE is a lifelong process that involves the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills, and the development of attitudes, beliefs, morals and values. While we believe that the primary responsibility for addressing these issues rests with parents, we acknowledge the vital part the school can play in supporting and complementing this.

## **Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education**

Relationships and Sexuality Education seeks to provide children with opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of relationships and human sexuality, through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework. 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.

# **Relationship of RSE to Social, Personal and Health Education**

In Letterfrack N.S, RSE will be taught in the context of Social, Personal and Health Education. SPHE is a subject in the primary school curriculum. SPHE contributes to developing the work of the school in promoting the health and well-being of children and young people. This happens in the context of their emotional, moral, social and spiritual growth, as well as their intellectual, physical, political, religious and creative development. SPHE is taught from Junior Infants to Sixth class and is formally timetabled.

RSE will be facilitated in the following ways within our school:

- In the context of a positive school climate and atmosphere
- As part of timetabled S.P.H.E.
- On an integrated, cross-curricular basis

The RSE Curriculum is a spiral curriculum. This involves revisiting key topics in a developmental manner at regular intervals. As it is a progressive programme it is taught bi-annually over the 8-year primary cycle. RSE is part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). Through SPHE and RSE, pupils are enabled to enhance their self-esteem and wellbeing through:

- A sense of identity
- A sense of purpose
- A sense of belonging
- A sense of security
- A sense of competence

## **Aims of our RSE Programme**

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of each child.
- To help children develop healthy and friendships and relationships.
- To foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework
- To enable the child to acquire an understanding of, and respect for, human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction (5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> class)
- To develop and promote in the child a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life (5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> class)

# Management and Organisation of the R.S.E Programme in our school

## Policies that support SPHE/RSE

- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Substance Use Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- GDPR/Data Protection Policy

## Parental Involvement:

Relationships and Sexuality Education is an on-going process throughout life. Parents and the family are acknowledged as the primary educators of their children. We work in a supportive role with the parents of our school; by complementing their role with a school based programme in R.S.E. Parents with particular concerns should discuss these with the principal or class teacher. The curriculum books and resource materials are available in the school and parents are welcome to view them if desired.

## Pupil Voice

In our school the voice of our pupils is acknowledged, valued and respected. Children are given opportunities to reflect and feedback on SPHE/RSE provision via focus groups and questionnaires. This information will be used to inform school improvement in relation to future RSE provision

## Withdrawal from RSE:

Since RSE is an obligatory requirement of the Department of Education and Science, it should be inclusive. Letterfrack N.S. actively promotes the implementation of RSE and strongly discourages withdrawal. The school will, however, take account of parental concerns and a parent's right to withdraw a pupil from themes pertaining to sensitive issues 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 should make arrangements for the supervision of the child while the RSE class is in progress (Parent/Guardian may take the child out of school during sensitive lessons should they so wish – times and dates of such lessons will be made available to them for this purpose). The school can take no

responsibility for any information which the pupil may receive outside the direct teaching of the RSE lessons.

#### Content:

All the content objectives of the RSE Programme will be covered by the time children leave sixth class. It is school policy that the content objectives are covered with each class level as outlined in the SPHE curriculum statement, within the context of the school's Catholic ethos and without personal slants from the class teacher. One half hour period per week is timetabled in each class for SPHE and RSE will be included in the programme taught during this time. The approach to the teaching of RSE will be kept as normal as possible and will usually be delivered within the child's class by the class teacher. Teachers will be encouraged and supported to teach the sensitive issues to their own class. The RSE policy committee felt strongly that RSE should be taught as lightly and as freely as possible so as to foster a normal environment around the subject. At this school we feel that respect and understanding are of great importance and in viewing all subjects in this regard we foster a healthy attitude concerning RSE.

#### Differentiation

The age and stage of development in a class can vary widely and strategies for differentiation can support gradual and appropriate learning. In Letterfrack NS, teachers use assessment and professional judgment to differentiate the curricular objectives and content to best suit the needs of all pupils. Adaptations to the way in which the content is delivered will be made for children with special and additional educational needs. Both consultation with parents/guardians/carers in advance of lessons and the anticipation of the pupil's needs will be central to ensuring learning is meaningful. This may be reflected in the student's support file.

#### Teachers' Opt Out Right:

Notwithstanding the above (See section on Content) the teachers' right to opt out will be honoured which will not affect the teaching of the subject. In such circumstances the Principal will make arrangements to have this section of the programme taught. Where possible arrangements will be made for a facilitator/ outside guest speaker on the subject of the sensitive areas every two years.

#### Mixed Groups:

The delivery of the RSE programme will be co-educational within the context of the class group. Where multi class groups are concerned exceptions will be made to ensure that pupils are taught the appropriate class level objectives. Therefore the RSE lessons will be taught in conjunction with the corresponding class within the school and both class groups will come together for these lessons.

#### Terminology:

In teaching issues related to RSE, teachers will use the correct biological terms for parts of the body.

## Questions

In Letterfrack NS teachers may use a variety of methodologies to create a safe, open space where pupils feel comfortable to ask RSE related questions.

### **1. Question Box**

For older pupils a 'question box' is one methodology that may be used as part of the formal RSE lessons. Teachers can follow up on the written questions at a later date, thus allowing time to prepare suitable answers, consult with colleagues/RSE policy to formulate an appropriate response. During the delivery of each RSE lesson, pupils can be encouraged to place their questions into a box. These questions can be reviewed and the following may be taken into account: •

- All pupils are encouraged to write on the question sheet.
- If they don't have a question, ask them to write something interesting they learned in the lesson
- Questions arising from lesson content will be answered in an age-appropriate manner.
- The teacher cannot answer questions which do not relate to the particular curriculum objectives for a class
- Pupils will be informed if a question/issue is not on the curriculum and they will be advised to talk with their parents/guardians/carers
- Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents if a need arises
- No personal questions will be answered and children will be reminded not to share inappropriate personal information about their families or others.

### **2. Open Forum Questions**

Teachers give pupils an opportunity to ask questions at various times throughout the RSE lesson. Questions will be answered in an age and developmentally appropriate way. Children will be made aware that the class teacher may not be able to answer their question and they will be signposted to ask an adult they trust at home.

Possible responses • I'll do my best to answer your questions but I may not be able to answer all of them • That's something you'll learn about as you get older • Is that something you could talk to your parents/guardians/family about? • We agreed that we wouldn't ask anyone personal questions... • Somebody asked a question and the language that was used was slang language. I think what they meant to ask was....

## Confidentiality and Child Protection:

Letterfrack NS follows the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017. If a child is withdrawn from specific RSE lessons, the school cannot guarantee that the withdrawn child will not hear the information from another source. Parents are invited to share any changes in circumstances with the school as necessary e.g. changes in family structures etc. For the welfare of some children, this information

may be important for a teacher to know prior to engaging in specific topics on family/relationships etc.

Family Status:

Pupils will be encouraged to appreciate the value of a stable family life and the importance of marriage or long term loving relationships as the ideal context for rearing children. We acknowledge the different family units that are represented in school and will endeavour to treat all situations sensitively

Sources and Resources:

The RSE and the Stay Safe Programmes and other resources that are deemed suitable by the Principal/SPHE co-ordinator will primarily be used for the delivery of the RSE themes.

Ongoing support, development and review

The Board of Management of Letterfrack N.S. supports and fosters the development of a R.S.E school policy. The programme of work will be reviewed at regular intervals by teachers. Letterfrack N.S. will ensure access to in-career development opportunities for teachers and the policy committee in R.S.E. The policy and programme will be reviewed every four years. Any amendments necessary as a result of reviews will be undertaken.