

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.

Development of this Policy

Parents were encouraged to play a meaningful role in the R.S.E. policy formation, through a series of meetings, representation on the Policy Development Committee and the ratification of the finished product. Consultations took place with staff, parents and Board of Management in the writing of this policy.

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.

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 (5th & 6th class)
- To develop and promote in the child a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life (5th & 6th class)

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

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.

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.

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:

Questions arising from curriculum content will be addressed by the teacher or by the visitor in a sensible, sensitive and age-appropriate manner. The class teacher cannot answer questions which do not relate to the particular curriculum objectives for a class. Pupils will be informed that that question/issue is not on the programme and they will be referred back to the parent(s). Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents themselves if they feel that a question is very inappropriate.

Confidentiality and Child Protection:

Where there is disclosure by a child of abuse, the school will follow the Department of Education and Science child protection guidelines and guidelines as set out in Child First.

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 by the policy committee after the first year and every four years thereafter. Any amendments necessary as a result of reviews will be undertaken.