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Introductory Statement

St. Marnock's N.S. has a responsibility to put in place an R.S.E. policy as part of the wider Social, Personal & Health Education (S.P.H.E) subject of the curriculum. This policy sets the parameters for the organisation and management of R.S.E. in this school.

School Philosophy

We aim to create a happy school atmosphere which nurtures the spiritual, moral, emotional and intellectual development of each child. The school promotes habits of mutual respect, courtesy and an awareness of all people within our community. The need for this policy arises from our schools obligation to provide for all the needs of the student body and respond appropriately to sensitive and emotive issues relating to emerging sexuality. Parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children in sexual matters. The R.S.E Programme within St. Marnock's only acts as a support to parents, and parents retain the right to withdraw their children from these classes. The school management recognises the rights of parents to share in the task of making the school a pleasant and safe environment for all children.

Definition of R.S.E

R.S.E (Relationship and Sexuality Education) is a developmental process through experiential learning in which pupils participate to help cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships. The programme will help students to form values and friendships by promoting good self-image and developing respect for themselves and others.

Relationship and Sexuality Education within Social, Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E.)

The Draft Guidelines for RSE (NCCA, June 1995, 1.2) state that Social, Personal and Health Education is "spiral, developmental in nature and age appropriate in content and methodology". The RSE programme is designed to follow this principle and pattern. Apart from the specific lessons of RSE, SPHE covers other areas which would be pertinent to the development of a healthy attitude to sexuality in oneself and one's relationship with others. SPHE deals with many issues such as self-esteem, assertiveness, communication and decision making skills - all of which can contribute to the effectiveness of the RSE programme

Aims of our R.S.E. Programme:

1. To promote feelings of self- esteem and value in each individual.
2. To promote respect, tolerance, and fairness towards others and ourselves.

3. To promote a sense of responsibility in which social, moral and civic values are respected.
4. To help the child develop understanding of healthy attitudes towards human sexuality in a spiritual, moral and social framework.
5. To ensure the child acquires an understanding of and respect for human love, sexuality and reproduction.
6. To help the child appreciate the gift of birth and new life.
7. To enable the child to feel comfortable with his own sexuality and that of others while growing and developing.
8. To help the child develop healthy friendships and relationships.

Guidelines for the management and organisation of Relationships and Sexuality Education in our school:

Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff will be made by the Principal.

Informing and Involving Parents:

We recognise that parents are the primary educators of their children, and that the home is the natural environment in which RSE should take place. The role of the school, therefore, is seen as one of support for the work of the home in this area. The approach in school is child-centred and will always take the age and stage of development of the children into account.

Appropriate language and answering questions:

Appropriate vocabulary relating to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, parts of the body and feelings will be used. The use of slang words will be discouraged. Questions arising from lesson content will be answered in an 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 if a question/issue is not on the programme and they will be advised to talk with their parents. Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents themselves if they feel that a question is very inappropriate. It is our policy not to answer personal questions and to discourage disclosure of personal or family information.

Confidentiality and Child Protection:

The school follows the D.E.S Child Protection Guidelines and has a Child Safeguarding Policy with the Principal as Designated Liaison Person. In cases of disclosure; the D.L.P will be informed and will follow the procedures as set out in Children First., Guidelines. St. Marnock's N.S also ensures that all staff are familiar with and have copies of relevant chapters of the DES guidelines which outline procedures that must be followed where concerns or disclosures of abuse arise. Agreed procedures are in place that aim to protect children and staff e.g. issues around toileting, changing for games, one to one teaching etc. It is also school policy that teachers do not promise absolute confidentiality. Pupils must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the Principal and possibly to parents if the Principal decides it is in the best interests of the pupil to notify them.

Participation in the RSE programme:

- It is school policy that all pupils partake in the R.S.E Programme.
- Parents are encouraged to speak with the teacher if they have any questions or queries about the programme. Parents are also welcome to view the curriculum used.
- If parents/guardians request the withdrawal of a child from RSE lessons, this request must be made in writing and addressed to the class teacher. An alternative plan, agreed with parents and in writing, may be put in place for any pupil not completing the programme in school.
- With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom. Should a child who is withdrawn from the sexually sensitive classes receive inappropriate information from others outside of these classes, it will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian to address the issues.

Using visiting speakers and others:

It is school policy that most of the RSE programme is best discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by the pupils. However visitors can enhance the quality of the provision as long as they are used in addition to, not instead of a planned programme of RSE.

We invite a facilitator from Accord to work with our 6th classes for one day annually. The content of this programme is designed specifically for these age groups. Parents are made aware of the content in advance and are asked for their consent in writing in order for their children to take part.

Special Needs:

Children with special needs may need more help than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up. They may also need more help in learning what sorts of behaviour are and are not acceptable, and in being warned and prepared against abuse by others.

Ongoing support and development for staff:

The Board of Management of St. Marnock's N.S. supports the implementation of the RSE programme. We recognise that our school has a supportive role to that of the home and we have a commitment to ensuring that:

- Our teachers have access to in-career development opportunities
- Relevant teaching materials are provided.

The teacher's right to choose is enshrined in the policy and if teachers do not wish to teach specific aspects of the programme or require additional resources, the Board of Management will make alternative arrangements. The teacher may need to plan the specific material to be covered and should be present during all lessons. The staff will teach the programme from the following:

- Busy Bodies (Booklet, DVD) H.S.E.(5th & 6th Classes)
- The Stay Safe Programme
- Relationships and Sexuality Programme (R.S.E)
- Walk Tall Programme
- Children First (Child Protection Guidelines)
- Making the Links

Please see **Appendix 1** for overview of programme content.

Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the RSE programme:

We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this programme. Specifically important to the RSE Programme are:

- a) pupil feedback
- b) staff review and feedback
- c) parental feedback

This policy will be reviewed in 2023 or as the need arises.

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A copy of this policy will be made available on the school website www.ie and to any parent on request from the school office.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The whole school community of Board of Management, staff, pupils and parents play a key role in the formation and implementation of the plan.

Ratification:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St. Marnock's NS on 5th April 2022.

Signed: *Ciarán McCormack*

Date: 5th April 2022

Ciarán McCormack

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Appendix 1:

Topics covered up to 2nd class include:

- Keeping safe
- Naming bodily parts using correct terminology
- Bodily changes during growth and development
- Making and keeping friends
- Making age appropriate choices
- Appreciating family life
- Recognising and expressing feelings
- Self-care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep (link with P.E. Healthy Eating Policy and S.P.H.E.)
- Expressing opinions and listening to others.

Topics covered from 3rd to 6th classes include:

- Bodily changes
- Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise
- Keeping safe
- Expressing feelings
- Family relationships
- Birth and new life
- Making healthy and responsible decisions
- Forming friendships
- Reproduction, conception (5th & 6th classes)