



St. Anne's Primary School

## RSE Policy

Relationship and Sexuality Education Programme

**"Be it known to all who enter here,  
that Christ is the reason for this school;  
the unseen, but ever present, teacher in its classes,  
the model of its staff and the inspiration of its pupils."**

Draft: June 2018

St. Anne's is a Catholic primary school where the ethos is spiritual and rooted in the teachings of Christ. We strive to educate our children with the vision that they are all God's children, made in his image and likeness. Helping with the development of each child including their relationship with God, the world, self and others, we endeavour to nurture a positive attitude towards the life that God has given them. This RSE policy reflects the ethos of our school.

Sexuality is much more than its biological aspects, it concerns the innermost being of the human person. We believe it is a gift from God. It is the drive within each person to give and receive love and affection. RSE at St. Anne's is taught within the moral, social and spiritual framework that reflects the beliefs and ethos of the Catholic Church.

This policy has been written in keeping with The Equality Act (sexual orientation) Regulations (NI 2006) and relevant sections of UNCRC.

The policy was drawn up by the RE co-ordinator (Mrs S. Fitzsimons) in consultation with staff and the Principal, Mr J. Hennessy. A copy of the final policy will be available to all staff, governors and parents. The policy will be reviewed on a three-year cycle. Any feedback or comments on the policy should be directed to the school Principal.

### **RSE Aims**

At St. Anne's Primary School, the general aim of the RSE policy is to foster self-esteem, self-awareness and a sense of moral responsibility firmly rooted within the context of Catholic teaching.

We aim

- to promote a shared vision of Relationships and Sexuality Education across the school.
- Show how Relationships and Sexuality Education complements and supports other aspects of school life.
- Establish consistent standards and practices in delivering Relationship and Sexuality Education throughout the school.

Through the teaching of various curricular programmes and inclusive learning we aim to enable children to:

- develop knowledge and understanding of their worth and dignity as children of God, recognising their strengths and limitations, abilities, skills, personal qualities, attitudes and values;
- develop respect for difference, gender and race;
- develop awareness of their own sexuality as a God given gift as well as helping them to come to terms with physical and emotional changes;
- foster the growth of values which impact on moral behaviour personally and socially;
- develop independence of mind and to take responsibility for their own lives;
- encourage and promote a deep respect for woman and men within the context of the school among staff, pupils and parents.

## **DEFINITION**

Relationship and Sexuality is:

- a lifelong process, it is an integral part of the learning process beginning in childhood and continuing into adulthood.
- A shared responsibility between school, parish and parents.
- An important part of the overall personal, social and moral development of all children including those with special needs.
- About providing opportunities for children to clarify their own and others attitudes and values about personal and social relationships and to consider how these affect behaviour.
- About developing and implementing personal, social, communication and decision-making skills.
- About fostering self-esteem and self-awareness, a sense of moral responsibility and the skills to make informed choices and decisions, including issues relating to personal safety of themselves and others.
- About helping children to develop a morals and values framework that is compatible with their gender, culture, race, sexuality, faith and ability.

## **RATIONALE**

The Department of Education Circular 2013/16 requires every school to have an up-to-date written policy on how it will address the delivery of RSE. In St. Anne's, we have a responsibility to help direct and guide our children to grow and develop into mature adults capable of realising their full potential as human beings, created in the image and likeness of God. Working along with the parents, we endeavour to equip, form and prepare children for life in a moral and spiritual context enabling them to make positive and responsible choices about themselves and the way in which they live their lives now and in the future.

## **Why is RSE important?**

### **Section 1: The Importance of RSE**

Effective RSE is essential if children are to value themselves as individuals and are to make responsible and well-informed decisions about their lives.

- It respects the rights of the children
- Promotes a better understanding of diversity and inclusion
- Helps children to keep themselves safer in the digital world
- Provides reliable, accurate and timely age-appropriate information
- Promotes the use of appropriate language
- Help children to recognise inappropriate behaviour and touch

### **Section 2: Building Partnerships between Home, School and the Wider Community**

RSE is a lifelong process which begins in the home. The home exerts a major influence on all aspects of a child's life, particularly in the sphere of RSE. We are mindful of the fact that our role must be considered to be complementary to that of parents or carers. In building partnerships we will:

- Engage with parents or carers, keeping them up-to-date with information which would encourage them to discuss any issues which may arise in the classroom with their children
- Provide suitable information for parents/carers with learning difficulties
- Understand that parents or carers have the right to have their children educated in accordance with their wishes and therefore, may choose to withdraw their children from RSE lessons.

- Engage with pupils including them in evaluating the RSE provision within the school.
- Strengthen the partnership between school and wider community by choosing to use the expertise and skills of education and health professionals and outside agencies.

### **Section 3: Delivering Inclusive RSE**

A young person's sexual orientation and/or gender identity is a central and significant part of who they are and how they see themselves. Children and young people must feel comfortable and confident in themselves without fear of being bullied or being viewed as different.

In St. Anne's, the issue of sexual orientation and gender identity will be handled in a sensitive, non-confrontational and reassuring way. All pupils, regardless of their sexual orientation, have the right to learn in a safe and secure environment, to be treated with respect and dignity, and not to be treated any less favourably on grounds of their actual or perceived orientation. In creating a safe and happy learning environment for our children, there are some issues that need the focus of the school as a whole.

#### **Dealing with homophobic language and bullying.**

The Equality Commission of Northern Ireland has issued 'good practice' measures to help schools to address homophobic bullying. There include:

- Updating anti-bullying policies to cover all equality issues ensuring that policies stipulate what behaviour is and is not acceptable.
- Communicating their anti-bullying policy to all staff, governors, pupils and parents/carers.
- Raising awareness of what homophobic bullying is
- Ensuring that effective reporting systems are in place

#### **Young People with Special Educational Needs**

In St. Anne's we aim to deliver an RSE curriculum to all children with SEN that is appropriate, accessible and relevant to each child. Through careful planning, adapting of resources and communicating with parents/carers, we ensure that all pupils participate in a comfortable level.

Teachers 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**

RSE in St. Anne's will be taught in mixed groups, where boys and girls learn together in order to gain an understanding and appreciation of each other's perspective. However, there may be times that pupils and teachers prefer to work in single-gender groups, particularly when they are exploring issues such as puberty and female genital mutilation. Teachers will use their own discretion when planning RSE lessons to decide upon the best way of delivering the lesson.

### **Personal Backgrounds and cultural practices**

In St. Anne's, when teaching RSE, teachers are particularly sensitive to the personal circumstances and cultural backgrounds of their pupils. Teachers recognise how pupils' views and values are influenced by their learning experiences and by the views of family, peers and community. This knowledge and understanding is an integral part of the pastoral care and ethos of our school.

### **Confidentiality**

A pupil's right to privacy must be respected at all times by both the teacher and all other pupils in the class. Pupils should be made aware that no one will be expected to ask or answer any personal questions.

If a child makes a disclosure, which has Child Protection implications, the teacher must inform the pupil that they have a moral and legal responsibility to inform the Principal or designated teacher for Child Protection. All information will be relayed in a professional and responsible manner, following the school procedure set out in the Child Protection policy, sensitive to the needs of the child. It is very important that any pupil who feels that they cannot talk or does not wish to talk to their parents/carers has access to other sources of support.

### **Section 4: The Classroom Environment**

The objectives of St. Anne's RSE programme are embedded in a number of cross curricular areas in the curriculum, in particular our Religious Education and Personal Development and Mutual Development programmes. 'The Wonder of My Being' is a whole school RSE programme which is delivered in conjunction with our 'Grow In Love' RE programmes and has links with the PDMU materials outlined in the PDMU resource 'Living. Learning. Together.' It involves parents at each stage and emphasises three inter-related aims.

1. To inspire in pupils an awareness of the marvel of the God's gift of sexuality and the goodness of his plan for love and family life.
2. To ensure that pupils are introduced to the factual information about human sexuality, love and family life, which is appropriate to their age and stage of development.
3. To encourage pupils to practice values such as selflessness, compassion and concern for others.

RSE in our school permeates many other aspects of our curriculum such as Circle Time, Road Safety, e-safety, Healthy Eating and anti-bullying. Our RSE programme also involves Child Protection and the promotion of the 'Keeping Safe' message and giving our children the information and strategies to recognise and keep safe in potentially difficult situations.

Various outside agencies may be called upon and all visiting personnel will be provided with a copy of the school's RSE policy before their visit.

The foundation for the effective delivery of RSE is the building of secure, trusting, respectful relationships between the teacher and their pupils. Good relationships within the classroom is an important part of the ethos and pastoral care in St. Anne's Primary school. RSE 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 without feeling embarrassed or judged.

Teachers aim to provide a meaningful and engaging learner-centred approaches to their lessons. These approaches, which are underpinned by the Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities framework, often lead to children gaining a deeper understanding and knowledge in the learning process.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The Principal and staff will be involved in monitoring and evaluating the RSE programmes. The RE co-ordinator will seek staff feedback regarding delivery of the Wonder of my Being programme, PDMU programmes and Grow in Love.

This policy will be subject to on-going review in collaboration with staff, Governors, parents and pupils.

### **Policy links**

Information relating to various areas in the RSE policy can be linked to the schools'

- Anti-bullying policy
- Policy on vetting and using outside agencies
- Child Protection & Safeguarding policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Internet Safety/E-safety policy