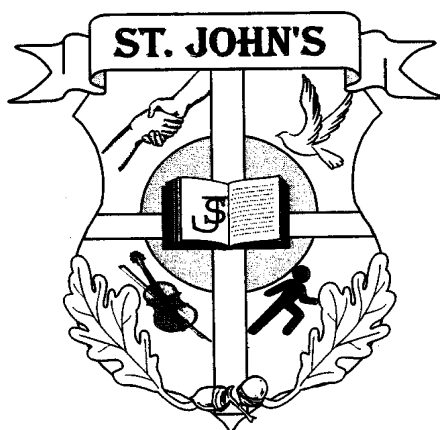


**St. John's Primary  
Bligh's Lane  
Derry**

**A Policy for Relationships and Sexuality  
Education (RSE) 2025**



**"Learning Together Growing  
Together"**

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

At St. John's Catholic, Primary School, we provide a happy, nurturing, inclusive, learning, environment which delivers high quality outcomes and life-enriching experiences. We embrace diversity and encourage all to respect the environment and develop the confidence and digital skillset required to contribute to society and the local and global economy. We work collaboratively with parents/carers and community partners to promote the social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual well-being of each individual, thereby enabling our school family to 'Learn Together' and 'Grow Together.'

## **RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE)**

RSE is not a new area of the curriculum. The framework for sex education was initially established by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DENI) in a *Guidance Circular 1987/45*. The main recommendation of this Circular was that each school should have a written policy on sex education which is endorsed by staff and governors and communicated to parents. It also stated, "sex education should be taught in a sensitive manner which is in harmony with the ethos of the school and in conformity with the moral and religious principles held by parents and school management authorities."

The Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 further set out the legislative basis, requiring all grant aided schools to offer a curriculum which:

- promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, intellectual, and physical development of children at the school and thereby of society ...and...
- prepares such children for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of adult life.

The general principles which underpin our work are those set out in Departmental guidance and the following Circulars:

**Circular 2001/15:** Relationships and Sexuality Education

**Circular 2001/15-22:** Guidance for Primary Schools - Relationships and Sexuality Education

**Circular 2010/01:** Guidance on Relationships and Sexuality Education

**Circular 2013/16:** Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy in Schools

**Circular 2013/19:** Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance Document for Primary Schools: Northern Ireland (NI) 2021

**Catholic Schools Trustee Service**

Relationships and Sexuality Education – Evidence Document for Primary Schools NI (2021)

**Circular 2024/1 Guidance on Amendments to the Relationship and Sexuality Education**

At St. John's P.S. we further recognise the importance of working in partnership with parents/carers in this area of personal development and acknowledge the contribution that can be made by outside agencies with skill and expertise in particular areas of the curriculum (NSPCC, Women's Aid and School Nursing Service). St John's is a Catholic Primary School and in RSE all children will be taught in an atmosphere of mutual respect within our Catholic ethos.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a lifelong process which encompasses the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills, and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about personal and social relationships and gender issues. The learning process begins informally with our

parents (or those holding parental responsibility) long before any formal education takes place at school.

RSE is included on a statutory basis within the NI curriculum through PDMU, Health Education, the World around Us and Religious Education. Health Education is taught mainly through the medium of PDMU in the Personal Understanding and Health strand as detailed later.

In RSE all children will be taught in an atmosphere of mutual respect. The value of a stable family life, marriage and the responsibilities of parenthood will be presented. As they mature, children will be encouraged to appreciate the importance of self-discipline, dignity, respect for themselves and others. Through PDMU and the World Around Us children will learn about changes in their bodies as they grow older and, in Y7, will be given the opportunity for a talk with the Pastoral Care Vice-Principal in order to prepare them fully for post-primary schools and the emotional and physical changes they may expect to experience over the next few years.

"...children and young people should be helped to develop harmoniously their physical, moral and intellectual qualities...they should receive a positive and prudent education in matters relating to sex, and young people have the right to be stimulated to make sound moral judgement based on a well-informed conscience and to put them into practice with a sense of personal commitment..." (Gravissium Educationis, Para.3, Second Vatican Council)

Teaching always will be appropriate to the maturity and level of understanding of the children concerned. Teachers will be aware of, and consider, the variety of existing pupil knowledge, the different attitudes and beliefs and the child's capacity to understand the issues.

Sexuality includes all aspects of the human person that relate to being male or female and is subject to change and development throughout life. Sexuality is an integral part of the human personality and has biological, cultural, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions. It especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to give and receive love; procreation and, in a more general way, the aptitude for forming relationships with others. It is a complex dimension of human life and relationships.

Teaching RSE should provide opportunities which enable children:

- to form values and establish behaviour within a moral, spiritual, and social framework;
- to examine and explore the various relationships in their personal lives;
- to learn how to develop and enjoy personal relationships and friendships which are based on responsibility and mutual respect;
- to build the foundations for developing more personal relationships in later life;
- to make positive, responsible choices about themselves and others and the way they live their lives.

Consent of parents will be sought for inclusion in RSE lessons. Parents have the right to withdraw their child from RSE lessons.

### **AIMS**

The aims of RSE are to:

- enhance the personal development, self-esteem, and well-being of the child;
- help the child develop healthy and respectful friendships and relationships;
- foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, social, and spiritual framework;
- promote responsible behaviour and the ability to make informed decisions;

- help the child come to value family life and marriage;
- appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood;
- promote an appreciation of the value of human life and the wonder of birth.

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

The RSE curriculum should enable children to:

- acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self;
- develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth;
- develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness, and well-being of others;
- understand the nature, growth, and development of relationships within families, in friendships and in wider contexts;
- develop an awareness of differing family patterns;
- develop strategies to make decisions, solve problems, and implement actions in various personal, social and health contexts;
- become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change and understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity;
- develop personal skills which will help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships;
- develop some coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse;
- acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction;
- acquire and use an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development;
- develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making.

### **SKILLS**

The RSE curriculum should enable children to develop the skills necessary to form and maintain relationships and to make informed choices and decisions regarding health and well-being.

Children should also be helped to develop skills to critically evaluate the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes, and values. They need opportunities to develop:

- **practical skills** for everyday living; for supporting others; for future parenting;
- **communication skills** learning to listen, listening to others' points of view; putting one's own view forward clearly and appropriately; giving and receiving feedback; handling and resolving conflict peacefully; being assertive;
- **decision-making and problem-solving skills** for sensible choices made in the light of relevant information; making moral judgements about what to do in actual situations and putting these judgements into practice; acting responsibly and with initiative as an individual or as a member of a variety of groups;
- **inter-personal skills** for managing relationships confidently and effectively; for developing as an effective group member or leader.

### **MORALS AND VALUES**

RSE should enable children to clarify what they believe and why they believe it and develop a respect for and interest in the beliefs of others. Children need opportunities to explore values and attitudes and to consider how they, and others, are affected by them.

The importance of a moral framework is emphasised in the DfEE Circular No 5/1994 *Education Act 1993: Sex Education in Schools*: "Sex education . . . must not be value-free; it should also be tailored not only to the age but also to the understanding of pupils. School's programmes of sex education should therefore aim to present facts in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner, set within a clear framework of values and an awareness of the law on sexual behaviour. Children should accordingly be encouraged to appreciate the value of stable family life, marriage, and the responsibilities of parenthood. They should be helped to consider the importance of self-restraint, dignity, respect for themselves and others, acceptance of responsibility, sensitivity towards the needs and views of others, loyalty, and fidelity. And they should be enabled to recognise the physical, emotional, and moral implications, and risks, of certain types of behaviour, and to accept that both sexes must behave responsibly in sexual matters." Teachers are reminded: "to acknowledge that many children come from backgrounds that do not reflect such values and experiences. Sensitivity is therefore needed to avoid causing hurt and offence to them and their families, and to allow such children a sense of worth." (Paragraph 8)

### **CRED**

Links with Community Relations Equality and Diversity (CRED) Policy

The CRED policy complements what St John's is striving to achieve for children. It aims to improve outcomes for children by 'educating children to develop self-respect and respect for others, promote equality and work to eliminate discrimination, and by providing formal and non-formal education opportunities for them to build relationships with those of different backgrounds and traditions within the resources available.' CRED aims and principles are very much the same as the aims of the NI Curriculum, namely the Curriculum aims to empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives.

In St John's we are sensitive to and welcoming of the diverse identities of all members of the school community. Within the school ethos it is obvious that there is an acceptance of difference and a valuing of diversity. The school's approach to CRED implementation is similar to that of RSE in that it reflects the needs of all children. Topics that lend themselves to exploring issues of diversity, equality, different cultures and conflict would meet the needs of both CRED and the curriculum.

### **NURTURE**

The nurturing approach offers a range of opportunities for children and young people to engage with missing early nurturing experiences, giving them the social and emotional skills to do well at school and with peers, develop their resilience and their capacity to deal more confidently with the trials and tribulations of life, for life.

The Six Principles of Nurture also underpin our work in Child Protection and Safeguarding.

1. Children's learning is understood developmentally
2. The classroom offers a safe base
3. The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing
4. Language is a vital means of communication
5. All behaviour is communication
6. The importance of transition in children's lives.

### **OTHER RELEVANT POLICIES**

This policy complements and supports a range of other school policies including:

- Personal Development and Mutual Understanding
- Nurture
- The World Around Us
- Religious Education
- Positive Behaviour/Anti-Bullying
- Child Protection
- Pastoral Care
- Use of Reasonable Force/Safe Handling
- Special Educational Needs
- First Aid and the Administration of Medicines
- Health and Safety
- ICT and access to the internet
- eSafety
- Intimate Care
- Critical Incident
- Acceptable Use of the Internet
- EA Social Media
- Staff Code of Conduct

### **Special Educational Needs**

It is particularly important for teaching staff to be aware of the fact that physical development may outstrip emotional maturity in the case of children with Special Needs and to accommodate this disparity in class lessons and experiences.

### **DELIVERING THE RSE PROGRAMME**

The Programme "In The Beginning..." will be the Primary Resource. The following includes extracts from the N.I. Primary Curriculum - Personal Development and Mutual Understanding will support this with a focus on Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities.  
Strand - Personal Understanding and Health

### **Foundation Stage**

Self-Awareness - Exploring who they are, what they can do, identifying favourite things, what makes them special.

#### Feelings and Emotions

- beginning to recognise how they feel;
- knowing what to do if sad or lonely, afraid or angry;
- telling others about feelings;
- realising what makes people sad or unhappy, recognising how people feel.

#### Health and Safety

- Being aware of caring for his/her own body;
- recognising good hygiene practices;
- understanding growth and change;
- exploring appropriate personal safety strategies, road safety;
- medicines and drugs -safety rules.

#### Religious Education

- Life is a gift from God (Catechism of the Catholic Church CC 2260);
- Stories which help children distinguish right from wrong and help children to make moral judgements about situations;
- Moral values such as sharing, caring, love, forgiveness, and friendship;
- The importance of family and care of the earth.

## **Key Stage 1**

### Self-Awareness

- Feeling positive about oneself;
- awareness of own strengths, abilities, qualities, personal preferences
- recognising own feelings and emotions;
- recognising and managing the effects of strong feelings – anger, sadness, loss;
- acknowledging that everyone makes mistakes;
- recognising how they can develop and improve learning.

### Health, Growth and Change

- Recognising and valuing the options for a healthy lifestyle;
- having respect for their bodies and those of others;
- being aware of the stages of human growth and development;
- recognising how responsibilities and relationships change as you grow older;
- understanding medicines and drugs;
- understanding that, if not used properly, all products can be dangerous;
- being aware that some diseases are infectious, and some can be controlled.

### Religious Education

- My family is a gift from God;
- Christians respect their bodies and the bodies of others because they were created by God (CCC 364; CSRE 3a)
- The importance of looking after ourselves physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

## **Key Stage 2**

### Self-Awareness

- developing self-awareness, self-respect, and self-esteem;
- confidently express own views and opinions;
- identify current strengths and weaknesses;
- face problems and try to resolve them;
- examine and explore own and others' feelings and emotions;
- recognise, express, and manage feelings in a positive and safe way;
- develop insight into potential and capabilities;
- reflect on progress and set goals;
- identify and practise effective learning strategies;
- be aware of different learning styles.

### Health, Growth and Change

- understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle;
- recognise what shapes positive mental health;
- know about the harmful effects of tobacco, alcohol and other illicit and illegal substances;
- understand that bacteria and viruses affect health and know that basic routines can be followed to minimise risks;
- know how the body grows and develops;
- be aware of physical and emotional changes that take place during puberty (Y7 only);
- be aware of the skills and importance of good parenting;
- recognise how responsibilities change as they become older and more independent.

### Keeping Safe

- develop strategies to resist peer pressure;

- recognise the nature of bullying and the harm which can result;
- become aware of the potential danger from strangers and how their attention can make you uncomfortable;
- recognise appropriate road use;
- develop a pro-active and responsible approach to safety – at home, near water, on the internet, TV etc;
- know where, when and how to seek help;
- being aware of basic emergency procedures and first aid.

#### Religious Education

- The importance of looking after ourselves physically, emotionally and spiritually;
- Life is precious and God-given;
- The human body is sacred – the visible image of God.

All of the above are supported in the school curriculum through:

PDMU Programme  
 Religious Education Programme  
 Heartstart Programme  
 PATHs Programme  
 PANTS Week  
 Flourish  
 Puberty Talks  
 Alcohol and Drugs awareness programme Your Life  
 Road Safety Programme  
 Visits from dentists, school nurse etc.  
 Nurture Programme  
 School Counsellor  
 Circle Time  
 Buddy System  
 In The Beginning.... (RSE programme)  
 Yes Project  
 Various sports skills  
 Young Enterprise Programme  
 N.I. Fire Service  
 Pride in our Community Project (Triax)  
 Helping Hands Project  
 Fair Trade  
 School Council  
 Shared Education.

#### **Monitoring, Evaluating and Reviewing the RSE Policy:**

The staff of St. John's Primary School are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this policy. Specifically, important to the RSE Programme are:

- Religious sensitivity within our Catholic School Ethos in St. John's Primary School;
- Children's Feedback;
- Staff Review and Feedback;
- Parental Feedback;
- Feedback from Community Services;
- Further Departmental guidance and legislative changes.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Kathleen McCallion**

**(Chairperson of the Board of Governors)**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**(Ratified at Board of Governors' meeting)**