

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION

(RSE) POLICY



This policy was ratified in 1999

Reviewed: 2008, 2019, 2022, 2025

Next Review Date: December 2028

Introduction and Rationale

All schools are required to have a written RSE policy that outlines how RSE is taught. This policy aligns with the Department of Education's guidelines on Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) and reflects best practice in primary schools. It informs teachers, parents, and students about the content and delivery of RSE within the SPHE curriculum, both formally and informally.

RSE provides children with opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of relationships, human development, and sexuality through age-appropriate processes that support moral, spiritual, and social development.

At St. Francis Xavier Senior School, RSE is taught primarily within Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE), and is supported across other areas of the curriculum including Religious Education, Health Education, and the Stay Safe programme.

School Philosophy

St. Francis Xavier Senior School is a Roman Catholic school that respects all faiths and beliefs. We aim to nurture the uniqueness of each child, developing their spiritual, moral, social, and emotional growth. We also strive to equip children with the knowledge and skills they need for healthy relationships and lifelong learning.

Definition of RSE

Relationships and Sexuality Education is an integral part of SPHE. It provides structured opportunities for pupils to develop knowledge and understanding of human growth, sexuality, and relationships, while fostering values and behaviours consistent with moral, social, and spiritual development.

Aims of the RSE Programme

The programme aims to:

1. Support the personal development, self-esteem, and well-being of pupils.
2. Help pupils develop healthy friendships and relationships.
3. Foster understanding of human sexuality in a moral, social, and spiritual context.
4. Enable pupils to understand and respect human love, relationships, and reproduction.
5. Help pupils feel comfortable with their own and others' sexuality as they grow and develop.

Objectives of the RSE Programme

Pupils will:

- Develop self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-worth.
- Appreciate the dignity, uniqueness, and well-being of others.
- Understand the nature and development of relationships in families, friendships, and wider communities.
- Recognise and value diverse family structures.
- Understand responsibilities associated with family life and parenthood.
- Learn decision-making and problem-solving strategies in personal, social, and health contexts.
- Recognise the physical, emotional, and social aspects of growing up and developing sexuality.
- Develop skills to establish and maintain healthy relationships.
- Learn strategies to protect themselves and others from abuse.
- Use appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth, and development.
- Critically evaluate external influences on lifestyles and decisions.

Organisation and Management of RSE

- RSE is taught from 3rd to 6th classes within SPHE, using a spiral curriculum that revisits topics at age-appropriate levels.
- Teachers create a supportive, inclusive, and non-threatening environment.

- Lessons complement parental teaching and consider pupils' developmental stage, needs, and family background.

Parental Involvement and Rights

- Parents are the primary educators regarding relationships and sexuality. The school supports this role through information and consent procedures.
- Parents are informed of sensitive RSE lessons in advance and may view curriculum content.
- Parents wishing to withdraw their child from sensitive lessons must provide written notification. Withdrawals are handled confidentially.

Curriculum and Content

SPHE Strands Covered:

- Myself
- Growing and Changing
- Taking Care of My Body

General RSE Topics:

- Friendship and self-identity
- Family life and diverse family structures
- Self-esteem and emotional well-being
- Growth and development

Sensitive Topics (Age-Appropriate):

- Bodily changes and puberty (3rd–6th class)
- Reproductive system (5th–6th class)
- Conception and birth within committed relationships (5th–6th class)
- Personal hygiene and healthy lifestyle choices
- Staying safe and coping strategies

Special Supports

- Female pupils receive guidance on menstruation, sanitary supplies, and puberty in 4th–6th classes.
- Pupils with Special Educational Needs are supported through differentiated teaching, pre-teaching of concepts, small-group or 1:1 support, and Individual Education Plan (IEP) objectives.

Teaching Approaches

- Age-appropriate, culturally sensitive, inclusive teaching.
- Methods include storytelling, discussion, group work, art, circle time, and guest speakers.
- Use of "Question Box" in 5th–6th classes to provide a safe way for pupils to ask questions.
- Clear ground rules for discussion, confidentiality, and teacher response.

Assessment

- Teacher observation, class discussions, reflection worksheets, portfolios, and Stay Safe Booklets.
- Assessment informs lesson planning and ensures learning is age-appropriate and meaningful.

Confidentiality and Child Protection

- Follows **Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017)** and the **Child Protection Procedures for Primary Schools (2017 update)**.
- **Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025** inform school practices and procedures.
- Teachers will report concerns to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) in line with statutory requirements.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed for pupils withdrawn from lessons if peers discuss content.

Resources

- Stay Safe Programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Webwise Resources
- Busy Bodies DVD and Booklet
- The Parents' Association runs an optional programme for all girls in the school every second year, which educates them about bodily changes and the process of maturing.

Sixth-class workshops are facilitated by trained professionals, with prior parental information evenings.

Staff Training and Support

- Teachers are encouraged to attend RSE CPD.
- Support and resources are provided by PDST and local Education Centres.
- All school personnel have undertaken Child Protection Training in 2025 based on the new **Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025** guidelines.
- All school personnel undertake **Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017)** training every 3 years.

Supporting Policies

- Child Protection Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Bí Cinéalta – Anti- Bullying Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy

Implementation, Ratification and Communication

- The Board of Management of St. Francis Xavier Senior School drew up this policy in 1999. Revised by the **SPHE Co-ordinator: Mrs. Sinéad Gill (Acting up AP2), Staff and the BOM December 2025**. This policy will be reviewed by **December 2028**, or earlier if required due to by new guidelines or legislation.
- The RSE Policy is communicated to Staff via the shared drive and Aladdin, and to parents via Aladdin and is available to download on the school website.

Signed:


Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 3/12/25


Principal

Date: 03.12.2025