

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION (R.S.E.)

The Board of Management, directed by the Department of Education and Science, recognises the importance of developing a school policy on Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) for Ratoath Senior National School. This arises from the document, *Relationships and Sexuality Education in Catholic schools* prepared by the NCCA for the Department of Education and Science, *Guidelines for Teachers* issued by the Department of Education and Science and the document *Developing a Policy for RSE in Catholic Schools* prepared and published by the Catechetical Commission of the Episcopal Conference.

The RSE programme is set in the context of the Catholic ethos of the school. It is cross-curricular in nature, and will be incorporated in the Catholic Catechetical programme as outlined in the Alive-O/Children of God series which explicitly deals with topics given in the guidelines for relationships and sexuality as outlined in the Department of Education and Science document. The ethos of a Catholic school is entirely concerned with fostering the development of relationships - the love of God and the love of every human being.

The Catholic school is dedicated to the education of the whole human being. The human and Christian values which go to make up the Christian understanding of life cannot be taught without reference to sexuality and procreation and the responsible, respectful and loving use of these gifts of God. In the school setting, therefore RSE will be taught in the context of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).

The current Social, Personal and Health Education provision at Ratoath Senior National School may be summarised as follows:

Moral Development: Children of God Series, Alive-O series, Right and Wrong, Respect for Self and Others, Living and belonging to the Community. Respecting difference. Respecting other cultures and religions.

Personal and Social Skills: Stay Safe Programme, Circle-Time to develop and maintain Self-Esteem, Anti-drug awareness, Nicotine, Alcohol, Solvents, Anti-bullying, dealing with aggression, Healthy Eating, Healthy Living – personal hygiene, Exercise, Sleep, Making Choices – towards Self-Discipline, Anti-litter and recycling

School Government: Communication Skills, Decision making, Taking responsibility for self, Tolerance and Respect for Difference, Developing Self-esteem, co-operating and sharing.

A Supportive School Climate: Conflict is handled constructively, Initiative and Creativity are encouraged, and Effort is recognised and rewarded. There is support for those with difficulties and Parental involvement is encouraged.

Developing a school policy and programme on Relationships and Sexuality Education, within the context of Social, Personal and Health Education, requires the collaboration and good-will of all the partners for the benefit of the pupils and their families.

Aims of Relationships and Sexuality Education

- To help young people develop healthy friendships and relationships;
- To promote an understanding of sexuality;
- To promote a healthy attitude to sexuality and to relationships;
- To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction;
- To enable young people to develop healthy attitudes and Christian values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework.

Topics Covered

- Caring for themselves regarding hygiene, exercise and sleep

- Keeping themselves safe
- Changes in their bodies as they mature and develop
- How babies are conceived and born (5th & 6th Class programme)
- Their feelings and the appropriate expression of these feelings
- Extended family relationships
- Making healthy and responsible decisions
- The nature of friendship
- Handling conflict in friendships
- Evaluating the portrayal of relationships and sexuality in the media.

The approach to these topics will be child-centred and will always take the age and stage of development of the pupils into account.

General Principles

The policy of Ratoath Senior National School is rooted in Gospel values – based on principles of justice, respect dignity of the person, tolerance and friendship.

The policy for Relationships and Sexuality Education for Ratoath Senior National School is devised in consultation with parents and teachers to ensure that the pupils learn about relationships and sexuality within a caring Catholic community so as to help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

RSE programme is a partnership between home and school in which parents play a primary role.

The school should be seeking to communicate the Christian vision of human life and human relationships.

The school must realise that, in this area above all, its role is subsidiary to that of parents.

The Catholic school in the formulation of its policy should reflect Catholic moral teaching on sexual matters.

The dignity, privacy and modesty of each individual child must always be respected.

Review of both policy and programme should be undertaken at regular intervals.

The right of parents to withdraw their children from aspects of Relationships and Sexuality Education is respected. If parents wish that their children opt out or withdraw from any aspect of the R.S.E. programme, they must write either to the chairperson of the B.O.M. or the school Principal and express their wishes clearly.