

Castleknock Educate Together National School

Relationships and Sexuality in Education

Introduction

Castleknock Educate Together National School (CETNS) has a responsibility to put in place an RSE policy as part of the wider social, personal and health education (SPHE) strand of the Primary School Curriculum. The process was reviewed in the academic year 2011/2012 in line with policy review schedules to ensure good management of RSE within the school.

CETNS aims to create a warm stimulating environment where children work toward realising their potential. In cooperation with parents the school works to instill feelings of self-confidence, self-awareness and self-respect so that children under our care are equipped to cope with the world both inside and outside our school. As an Educate Together school we are founded on the four principles below

1. Multidenominational where all children have equal rights of access to the school, and children of all social, cultural and religious background are equally respected).
2. Co-educational and committed to encouraging all children to explore their full range of abilities and opportunities.
3. Child-centred in our approach to education
4. Democratically run with active participation by parents in the life of the school, whilst positively affirming the professional role of the teachers.

As an Educate Together school, the spirit of our school is inclusive, encouraging respect for diversity. We also provide educational programmes based on morality, ethics and good citizenship. Our school prides itself on our motto that 'no child is an outsider' and 'learn together to live together', which compliment the principles underlying RSE.

Rationale

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.

Aims

The RSE programme aims to help children learn at home and in school about their personal development, friendships and relationships with others.

- To enhance the personal development, well being and self-esteem of each child
- To enable each child to gain an understanding of and respect for human love, reproduction and sexual activity in a sensitive and measured way
- To enable the child develop healthy friendships and relationships

Relationships to School Ethos

The school ethos affirms and supports close links between school and home. To this end parents were encouraged to play a meaningful role in the RSE policy formation, through a series of meetings, representation on the steering committee and the ratification of the finished product. Parents also have the right to withdraw their children from participating in RSE classes.

School Provision

Strand Units

Myself - Self identity, taking care of my body, growing and changing, safety and protection

Myself and Others - Myself and family, friends and relating to other people

Taking Care of My Body -Naming parts of the male and female body using appropriate terminology (junior and lower middle classes). Identifying physical changes, understanding puberty and the reproductive system (senior classes)

Growing and Changing -The stages of development of a baby from conception to birth (middle classes). Understanding sexual relations within the context of a committed loving relationship (senior classes).

Teachers do not cover topics such as contraception and same sex relationships. Children who ask questions in class on content outside the curriculum are talked to individually and discreetly. Parents are usually informed and asked to talk to their child.

Methodology

Circle time is used extensively in classes to build confidence and address fears. Boys and girls are taught together in all classes. Senior pupils are treated in a mature way and are encouraged to discuss issues that arise with their parents. The Learn Together and SPHE resource materials are used extensively in all classes.

The Stay Safe and Walk Tall Programmes

The Stay Safe programme is taught in line with the SPHE policy in the school. Aspects of the programme such as bullying are revised in all classes. Guest speakers from ACCORD deliver a full day programme to 5th/6th classes every year, where issues such as physical and emotional development, bodily changes and sexual awakening are explored. The cost of this lecture is borne by the Board of Management.

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 PE, Healthy Eating and SPHE Policies)
- Expressing opinions and listening to others
- Bodily changes
- Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise
- Keeping safe
- Expressing feelings
- Family relationships
- Making healthy and responsible decisions
- Forming friendships
- Reproduction, conception (5th and 6th Classes)

Guidelines for Management

Parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children in sexual matters. The school RSE programme acts as a support only to parents, and parents retain the right to withdraw their children from classes, however, if this is the case parents must communicate this in writing to the school. The programme is taught within the ethos of the school and contemporary issues/topics are dealt with by the teacher at a level appropriate to the age and stage of development of pupils within a moral and spiritual framework. Teachers are present at all times when guest speakers are visiting a class.

Child Protection

The school follows the DES Child Protection directives and has a Child Protection Policy with the Principal as Designated Liaison Person and the Deputy Principal as Deputy Designated Liaison Person. In cases of disclosure, the DLP/DDLP will follow the procedures as set out in Children First.

Teacher Choice/Staff Development

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, a suitable speaker will be employed by the Board of Management. This in no way affects the delivery of any strand of the curriculum and the teacher may need to plan the specific material to be covered and may be present during the talk.

The staff availed of training in:

- The Child Abuse Prevention Programme (Stay Safe)
- Relationships and Sexuality Programme (RSE)
- Walk Tall Programme for Substance Misuse (SMPP)

The PDST whole school plan is available on a shared resource file in both the office and the school server. Each teacher is responsible for his/her long-term and short-term planning, comprising of a yearly and fortnightly schemes of work. A Cúntas Míosúil (monthly assessment) is retained in the Principal's Office.

School/Community Links

Parent meetings have been arranged every 2nd year with Accord tutors to inform and facilitate questions from 5th & 6th class parents. The RSE programme has 10 lessons per class level and the home-school communication letters are sent to parents during the RSE teaching block in line with SPHE policy to keep parents informed.

The school is involved in many activities including:

- Athletics, basketball, soccer, chess, tennis inter-school competitions
- Cumann na mBunscoil - football, hurling and camogie
- Choir
- Annual School Shows
- Credit Union Quiz
- G.A.A.
- Swimming
- School tours

Evaluation

- Teacher observation
- Inventory of what needs to be changed
- Ensuring all strands are covered
- Teacher designed tasks and tests and self-evaluation
- Community feedback

Roles and Responsibilities

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

Implementation

This policy will be implemented immediately.

Review

This policy will be reviewed in 2016.

Ratification and Communication

This plan will be presented to the Board of Management for ratification. It will then be presented to the parent body through the parents' policy folder which is located at the entrance of the school.

This policy was ratified at Board of Management meeting on 12/12/2012.

Chairperson CETNS:

 Sinéad Quirke