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POLICY STATEMENT ON RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION

(This policy statement will form part of the overall programme for Social,
Personal and Health Education).

Policy for Relationships and Sexuality Education

Background.

The Minister for Education has decided to proceed with the introduction into schools of relationships and Sexuality Education and has requested schools to begin the process of developing their policies so that they may start to include Relationships and Sexuality Education Health Education in their curricula.

We welcome this initiative by the Minister to formalise the provision of Relationships and Sexuality Education in the school curriculum as something that will enable Aghamore N.S to build on the work it already does in, for instance, religious Education, Social and Environmental Studies.

This policy has been formulated through a consultative process, involving parents, management & staff of Aghamore N.S.

AIMS OF RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION

Relationships and Sexuality Education is central to the social, personal and moral development of the child. This education starts before the child comes to school and the programme in the school is a continuation of this process.

Our overall aims are:

1. To foster and support the personal, moral and social development of each child.
2. To enable each child to develop relationships based on mutual respect, dignity and responsibility.
3. To enable each child to achieve an understanding of his/her own and others sexuality in positive ways.

A programme of Relationships and Sexuality Education in Aghamore National School will:

- a) Recognise that the primary responsibility for Relationships and Sexuality education lies with each child's parents.
- b) Recognise, be consistent with and promote the fundamental principles and ethos of Aghamore National School.
- c) Be implemented in consultation with the full school community including parents, teachers and the patron.
- d) Be subject to ongoing review and development.

All children must have equal right of access to the school and the religious, cultural and social background of each child must be respected.

Each child attending Aghamore National School must be allowed to develop his or her potential without distinction by sex.

The democratic principle: - **Aghamore National School will endeavour at all times to be aware of and sensitive to the needs and aspirations of its parents, teachers and children, both individually and collectively, and be responsive to them.**

OBJECTIVES OF RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION

This programme will need to:

- Be sensitive to children's concerns - i.e. self, family, home friends.
- Provide opportunities where pupils can share their concerns and where they can expect to be listened to sensitively and where support is available.
- Encourage respect for self and others in the school and wider community.
- Help each child to develop a positive sense of self worth.
- Develop in each child a positive sense of wonder; respect and delight in his/her own particular stage of growth and development.
- Help children to recognise that uniqueness/difference is valued.
- Help children to recognise the importance of the choices they make, and to accept responsibility for the decisions they take.
- Help pupils develop an awareness of peer, social and media pressure where necessary.
- Help children to grow in confidence in their relationships.
- Enable pupils to develop an understanding of themselves, their bodies and their feelings as they grow and change.
- Explain the process of procreation appropriate to the stage of development of the child.

In implementing a programme to meet these objectives we recognise that Aghamore National School already addresses many aspects of Relationship and Sexuality Education in its Religious Education provision. This will provide a basis for the development of a full programme in this area.

Such a programme will be relevant to the stage of development of a particular age group involved. The teacher will answer factual questions within the programme as appropriate to the age group involved.

Parents:

It is recognised that parents are the prime providers of Relationship and Sexuality Education and that this education begins before the child enters the school.

To ensure that parents' wishes are taken into account in the introduction, development and implementation of a programme of Relationship and Sexuality Education the Board of Management will ensure that:

- Parents are consulted on the development of a policy for Relationship and Sexuality Education.
- Opportunities will be given to parents to advise them of the content of the programme to be taught.
- Children may be advised to ask a particular question at home.
- Parents will have the right, if they have objections, to withdraw their children from aspects of the programme on the basis of prior agreement between the parent and the school. The Principal will make arrangements for the supervision of those children where instruction takes place within school time.

Teachers.

The principal and teaching staff, in consultation with the board of management of the school, will have the task of developing and implementing a programme designed to meet the needs of the children in the school and which will be consistent with the agreed policy.

In doing so it is recognised that:

- In this context parents are acknowledged as primary educators of their children and the school will work in a supportive role.
- All content objectives should be covered by the time the children leave 6th class... (and we will follow DES Guidelines or cover all in 5th or 6th class)

- Teachers' rights to opt out from teaching the sensitive sexual issues will be respected.
- If no member of staff is available to teach the sensitive sexual issues we leave it to the discretion of the Board of Management, Principal and Class teacher to arrange for the education to be made available. A suitable guest speaker may be invited in to deliver the contents of the programme to 5th & 6th class. All information delivered will be informed by the content objectives of the SPHE curriculum. This may be arranged during the course of the last two terms of the school year on a two yearly basis.
- A parent's right to withdraw a pupil from the process will be respected on the understanding that the parent is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education on himself or herself. It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the school of this decision.
- Should a pupil require information that is not in line with the curriculum content and considered not to be age appropriate for the general body of pupils, the school will consider which of the following courses of action would be most advisable and appropriate:
 - a) Answer publicly/ privately or
 - b) Send question home to parents.

An outline of lessons will be available to parents before the commencement of the programme.

The Child:

1. *The learning process will take place in a "safe" environment encouraging class/group interaction based on mutual respect.*
2. *A child may be advised to discuss personal concerns that are outside the agreed programme at home. (See (a) & (b) above.*
3. *Questions from children in class will be answered within the agreed programme for that age group.*
4. *The child's privacy must be respected at all time by both teacher and other pupils in the class.*

The table below shows an outline of how the various strands of the SPHE Programme are implemented over a two-year period.

Overview of Content of SPHE

Month	Strand Units (Year 1) (Odd Years e.g. 21/22)	Strand Units (Year 2) (Even Years e.g. 20/21)
September/October	<i>Self-identity (Myself)</i>	<i>Myself and My Family (Myself and Others)</i>
November/December	<i>My friends and other people (Myself and Others)</i>	<i>Relating to others (Myself and Others)</i>
January/February	<i>Making Decisions (Myself)</i>	<i>Taking Care of My Body (Myself)</i>
March/April	<i>Media Education (Myself and the Wider World)</i>	<i>Developing Citizenship (Myself and the Wider World)</i>
May/June	<i>Safety and Protection (Myself)</i>	<i>Growing and Changing (Myself)</i>

Following is a brief summary of the Sexually Sensitive Issues within the RSE Programme:

Junior/Senior Infants: Naming parts of the male/female body using appropriate anatomical terms.

New Language: Born, womb, penis, vulva,/vagina, breasts

[P17 SPHE Curriculum]

First & Second Classes: Name parts of the male/female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions.

New Language: Urine, urethra, anus

[P27 SPHE Curriculum]

Third & Fourth Classes: Discuss the stages and sequence of the development of the human body in the womb.

New Language: Pregnancy, umbilical cord, navel, (belly button) fertilised egg, scan, hormones, cells, menstruation, periods, pubic areas, pubic hair, perspiration,

[P 41 SPHE Curriculum]

Fifth & sixth Classes: Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty.
Reproductive system of male/female adults.
Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed, loving relationship.

New Language: Ovaries, fallopian tubes, uterus, cervix, testicles, scrotum, sperm production, erection, wet dreams, conception, adolescence. responsibilities

[P56, 58 SPHE Curriculum]

Resources:

RSE manuals (Walk Tall)

Videos

Library Books

Resource material for parents

Invited speakers (See P. 33 of SPHE Teacher Guidelines re. guidelines)

REVIEW PROCESS & ONGOING DEVELOPMENT

A body convened by the Board of Management and comprising representatives of the Board, Parents and Teachers will review the content and implementation of the relationship and Sexuality Programme.

The first such review will be carried out after the programme has been in place for a two-year period and will involve consultation with all parents and teachers.

The review body will also make recommendation to the Board of Management on the frequency of future reviews of the programme.

Teachers will avail of opportunities for ongoing training and professional development in the area of RSE.

Reviewed by the Board of Management on

Signed:(Chairperson).