R.S.E. Policy for Merlin Woods Primary School

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| * **Introduction**

Merlin Woods Primary School is a co-ed mainstream Primary School with two special classes. The school is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Diocese of Galway. The ethos of our school is founded on Christian principles where tolerance and respect for others is paramount. It is our intention that everyone feels valued and our pupils are encouraged to develop their full potential in a caring and supportive environment. RSE encompasses the acquisition of knowledge and understanding and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, sexual identity and intimacy. In Merlin Woods Primary School we seek to promote the overall development of the child which involves the integration of RSE into personal understanding, growth and development within the context of our Catholic ethos.* **Development of this Policy**

This policy was devised by two teachers who then brought the policy back to the rest of the staff at planning development meetings. These two members received RSE Training in Galway Education Centre. It was ratified by the Board of Management in January 2015. It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE. It was reviewed by the RSE Policy committee with a PDST advisor in October 2014.* **Rationale**

Merlin Woods Primary School is committed to the education of all the children in their care. Relationships and Sexuality are integral parts of the human personality and impact their biologically, culturally, socially and spiritually. The ethos of the school is the cornerstone of our RSE Policy. RSE is a lifelong process that involves the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills and the development of attitudes, beliefs, morals and values. While we believe that the primary responsibility for addressing these issues rests with parents, we acknowledge the vital part the school can play in supporting and complementing this. |
| * **School Philosophy**

Merlin Woods Primary School is a Catholic school and therefore all policies developed are implemented in ways which are in keeping with the ethos of the school. The ethos of the school is characterised by the following:* + *Sensitive to reality of our children’s lives in a changing world*
	+ *Mutual respect between all partners in education*
	+ *Child-centred*
	+ *Aims to ensure each child reaches full potential in the holistic sense*
	+ *Hopes that children are equipped with high self-esteem to enable them to go to live happy and fulfilled lives*
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| * **Definition of RSE**

RSE seeks to provide children with opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of relationships and human sexuality, through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework. RSE aims to help children learn, at home and in school about their own development and about their friendships and relationships with others. This work will be based on developing a good self-image, promoting respect for themselves and others and providing them with appropriate information. |
| * **Relationship of RSE to SPHE**

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) provides opportunities for pupils to learn basic personal and social skills which foster integrity, self-confidence and self-esteem while nurturing sensitivity to the feelings and rights of others. (p. 5 NCCA interim curriculum and guidelines for RSE) |
| * **Current Provision** Included in the school curriculum is:
* SPHE
* Incredible Years-positive school climate and atmosphere
* Use of R.S.E manual
* Use of resources, eg anatomically correct dolls for infants, puppets, role play equipment, etc.
* Use of the RSE Manual and Busy Bodies DVD and Busy Bodies Booklet
* Religious Education through the Alive O Programme

As our school has classes Junior Infants to 4th Class currently the RSE committee will review and consider when our school reaches 6th class if an outside speaker will be invited to work with sixth class until the RSE programme has been fully implemented in the school. When and if an outside speaker visits the school parents will be invited to attend with their children. In line with Child Protection guidelines, teachers should remain in the class with an external speaker to the school.  |
| * **Aims of our RSE programme**
* *To help young people develop healthy friendships and relationships*
* *To promote a healthy attitude to sexuality and to relationships*
* *To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child*
* *To foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude towards, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework*
* *To enable the child to acquire an understanding of, and respect for, human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction- Fifth and Sixth Class*
* *To understand the physical changes taking place with the onset of puberty- Senior Classes*
* *To develop and promote in the child a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life*
* *To enable the child to be comfortable with the sexuality of oneself and others while growing and developing*
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| * **Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School**
* *Curriculum Matters:*
* Curriculum Content –The curriculum by NCCA will be followed as published, and will be taught from Infants to 6th class. All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school and the policy. Each class teacher will teach the content for their class level.
* If an outside speaker is used, the class teacher is responsible for making them aware of school policy and that teacher will sit in during the lesson.

Topics covered up to 2nd class include:* Keeping Safe
* Bodily changes during grown and birth (birth to 9)
* Making age appropriate choices
* Appreciating family life
* Recognising and expressing feelings
* Self care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep
* Expressing opinions and listening to others
* *Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms (Junior/ Senior Infants)*
* *Naming the parts of the male/ female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions (1st/2nd)*

Topics from 3rd to Sixth include:* Bodily changes
* Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise
* Keeping Safe
* Expressing Feelings
* Family relationships
* Making healthy and responsible decisions
* Forming Friendships
* *Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (Fourth class)*
* *Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (Fifth and Sixth Class)*
* *Reproductive system of male/female adults (Fifth and Sixth Class)*
* *Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship.(Fifth and Sixth Class)*
* *Organisational Matters:*
* If children are withdrawn by their parents, they must give a notice in writing to the school principal that they are withdrawing their child. The child will be accommodated in another teacher’s classroom in the school.
* With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom.
* Any teacher has the right to opt-out from teaching the sexually sensitive issues in RSE.It is responsibility of Board of Management to ensure that the curriculum will be taught to the children by another teacher or an outside speaker.
* Parents are invited/welcome to view the curriculum and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns.
* *Dealing with Questions:*

All questions answered will reflect the parameters of the curriculum. Certain topics will not be discussed i.e. abortion, masturbation, homosexuality, contraception. Questions to the teacher may be written or oral within the group setting and answered within the boundaries of the curriculum and policy. Any questions asked by the children that are judged to be inappropriate, the teacher will refer the child to their parents or will explain that this will be covered at second level. * With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom.
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| * **Provision for Ongoing Support**
	+ Parents welcome to view curriculum if they wish
	+ Regular contact with parents prior to the teaching of lessons involving “sensitive issues” in the form of the home/school link page accompanying such lessons in the RSE Resource Books **OR** Contact will be made with parents prior to the address by the outside speaker. 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.
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| * **Links to other policy areas**
* Child Protection Policy
* SPHE Policy

**Child Protection**The school follows the DES child protection guidelines and has a child protection policy with the Principal as Designated Liaison Person. In cases of disclosure, the DLP will follow the procedures as set out in Children First.  |
| * **Review**

This policy was reviewed in Summer 2014 and will be reviewed after the first group of fourth class have carried out the RSE Programme. All teachers will be invited to contribute feedback at that stage having looked at the policy and how the programme was received. The policy will be reviewed every 2 years thereafter, or if a need arises in between. Parents will be informed of any amendments made by the RSE policy committee. |