

# GAELSCOIL PHORT LÁIRGE

## Policy: Relationship and Sexuality Education

### Gaelscoil Phort Láirge – *Our School Philosophy*

*“The general aim of education is to contribute towards the development of all aspects of the individual, including the aesthetic, creative, critical, cultural, emotional, intellectual, moral, physical, political, social and spiritual development for personal family life, for working life, for living in the community and for leisure”.*

Curriculum & Assessment Towards the New Century.

Gaelscoil Phort Láirge actively influences all aspects of the growth and development of its pupils. This influence includes the school's environment and climate, its curriculum and its interaction with the community. The promotion of Social, Personal and Health Education of pupils is one of Gaelscoil Phort Láirge's core aims. The school provides opportunities for pupils to learn basic personal and social skills, which foster integrity, self-confidence and self-esteem while nurturing sensitivity to the rights and feelings of others. The attainment of these objectives for all pupils is influenced by Gaelscoil Phort Láirge's school climate, by its organisation and teaching methods, by the school's approach to pupils' personal difficulties, and by the wider education and spiritual values transmitted by the school.

The promotion of the Social, Personal and Health Education of pupils throughout their time in Gaelscoil Phort Láirge is an integrated part of the school's educational policy. Therefore, it is in this context that SPHE, encompassing Relationship & Sexuality Education is included as part of our curriculum.

### **Rational**

There is broad agreement in Irish society on the need for Relationships and Sexuality Education in the formal education system. Support for a positive educational programme on human sexuality within the context of faith and morality has been articulated by church bodies. Educational groups, including the NCCA, teacher unions and national parent representative bodies have publicly stated the need for a soundly based RSE programme. Examples from research and common observation include:

- Earlier physical maturation of children
- Evidence of earlier sexual activity
- The informal and unsupervised contents within which children acquire information about sexuality.
- The changing roles of men and women in society

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- Health issues related to sexual practice
- Young people becoming aware through travel, the media and the communications revolution, of different sexual mores and cross-cultural influences
- Pressures on family life

### **Definition of Relationship and Sexuality Education**

Relationship and Sexuality Education is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. In the school setting it is an integral part of general educational provision, which seeks to promote the overall development of the person and which includes the integration of sexuality into personal understanding, growth and development.

### **Aims of Policy of Relationship and Sexuality Education**

1. To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child.
2. To help the child to develop healthy friendships and relationships.
3. To foster an understanding of and a healthy attitude to human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework.
4. To enable the child to acquire an understanding of and a respect for human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction.
5. To develop and promote in the child a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life.
6. To enable the child to be comfortable with the sexuality of oneself and others while growing and developing.

### **Guidelines for Management and Organization of Relationship and Sexuality Education in Gaelscoil Phort Láirge**

Social, Personal and Health Education programme is a core part of our curriculum. The syllabus is a spiral one, extending in scope each year and revisiting key topics in deeper ways appropriate to the age and stage of development of the pupils. Relationships will be a central part of this programme and Sexuality Education will take place within this context.

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Relationships and Sexuality Education will have particular relevance across a number of curricular areas. The staff of Gaelscoil Phort Láirge will make every effort to deliver RSE in a holistic manner however it will often be necessary to teach the syllabus in isolation for a period of time for organisational purposes as some individual children will not be participating in the programme, as decided by their parents. The syllabus will be based on the "Oideachas Caidrimh & Gnéasachta" Programme from the DES. It is important to note that some areas of the syllabus (especially those focused on 6th class) are quite sensitive and the management of Gaelscoil Phort Láirge recognise this thus it does not place pressure of any type on the class teachers in question to teach this content should they not feel comfortable in doing so. A health nurse or some other health professional is employed by the school to cover this content with 6th class on an annual basis.

The teaching methods for the Relationships and Sexuality module will be based on sound pedagogical principles as used in SPHE and in other areas of the curriculum. These methods will be child-centered and appropriate to the age and stage of development of the pupil. In organizing the learning environment the teacher will be careful to create an atmosphere in the classroom which respects the privacy of each individual pupil and to treat all with due sensitivity and care. The extent to which the content is treated will be dependant on the emotional and intellectual maturity of the children. Thus, a degree of flexibility is acceptable. The teacher in his/her professional capacity is ideally the person who can take responsibility for the delivery of the school-based element of the programme. Any or all of the following approaches may be used by the teacher with the aim of enabling the child to play an active part in the learning process;

- Discussion
- Role play
- Interviewing friends, or other school pupils or family members
- Surveys of attitudes
- Analysing and evaluating newspapers, magazines, agony columns, television
- Guest speakers/ facilitators
- Projects
- Designing advertisements/writing captions
- Describing photographs
- Viewing and discussing videos

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Sexuality affects friendships and the quality of social interactions. The approach to RSE in the school will take cognizance of this understanding of sexuality when dealing with children with special needs. RSE provides opportunities for all children to learn to accept each other, and to recognise and promote the dignity of each human being. However where severe learning difficulties occur some adaptations may be made to the programme to suit ability and rates of physical growth. This will enable the child to cope with their emerging sexuality and its consequences as they grow and develop.

The use of proper terms for parts of the body and body functions will be encouraged from the earliest age so that these terms will be given a status and acceptability. In this way embarrassment will be reduced and children will become comfortable with these words and their meanings. Having a language which is socially acceptable and unambiguous in RSE is especially important because it has long been an area fraught with misunderstanding, unease and anxiety.

### **Role of Parents**

Parents are the primary educators and home is the natural environment in which RSE should take place.

The role of parents in the home is crucial in forming the child's learning environment by promoting positive attitudes towards RSE, by encouragement and the fostering of self-esteem and by direct instruction relevant to the child's age and learning needs. The school has a role to play in supporting and complementing the work of the home in this task. Most parents look to the school for support in fulfilling their obligations to their children in this area of development however provision will be made for the rights of parents who hold conscientious or moral objections to the inclusion of such a programme on the curriculum of their child. In such cases, children will be omitted from RSE lessons and supervised in another classroom by another teacher.

### **Support, Development and Review**

It is essential to note that this policy is not a finished product; it shall always be an ongoing process. Training is essential.

Gaelscoil Phort Láirge supports programme development so as to enable teachers to acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary to teach the programme and

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manage the consultative process with parents and others. Training of parents and parent associations is also supported.

The RSE policy was created after a process of consultation between the school community. The collaboration and good will of the whole school community are essential if RSE is to be successful in Gaelscoil Phort Láirge.

### **Review**

***The Board of Management reviewed this policy in February 2019. The Board of Management of Gaelscoil Phort Láirge shall review this policy again during the 2022/2023 academic year.***

***Síniú an Chathaoirleach:***

*Rohán Ógáin*  
*28/2/2019*