



# **RELATIONSHIP & SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE) POLICY**



# **Relationship & Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy Jonah Special School**

## **Introduction**

It is the policy of Jonah School to ensure that our policies are in accordance with the ethos and values of Jonah Special School and in accordance with the Child Protection and DES guidelines.

We have endeavoured to highlight areas which are relevant to all classes in Jonah Special School.

This policy is designed to safeguard both our students and staff and applies to all staff involved in Relationship & Sexuality Education at Jonah Special School. It aims to support best practice in RSE. If you cannot work within this policy for any reason, please speak with the Principal.

## **Aims**

Jonah Special School caters for students with a diagnosis of ASD aged between 4-18 years. It is our intention that everyone feels valued and our students are encouraged to develop to their full potential in a caring and supportive environment. Relationships and Sexuality Education (R.S.E.) encompasses the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, sexual identity and intimacy. In Jonah Special School we seek to promote the overall development of the child which involves the integration of Relationships and Sexuality into personal, social, health and citizenship skills and knowledge.

## **Definition of Relationship Sexuality Education (RSE)**

RSE is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs, and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. All young people whatever their ability, develop physically and emotionally and need to be guided to understand their bodies and feelings. Central to RSE is the fostering of self-esteem, through which the students become more responsible in making choices and decisions in all aspects of life and particularly in those relating to sexuality and relationships.

## **RSE and SPHE**

RSE will be taught in the context of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum. SPHE contributes to developing the work of the school in promoting the health and well-being of our students. Jonah Special School is a supportive school climate, where the needs and well-being of all members of the school community are considered. It is essential the school makes the best possible provision for SPHE. RSE is an integral part of the SPHE programme. The objective of RSE is to help and support young people through their physical, emotional and moral development. A successful programme, firmly embedded in SPHE, will help young people to learn to respect themselves and others and to move more confidently from childhood through adolescence and into adulthood.



## RSE Curriculum Areas

As with the majority of educational provision in Jonah Special School, RSE programmes will be delivered as part of each student's individualised program and in consultation with each student's parent or guardian. The individual goals will depend on the needs of each student.

| Curricular Areas                     |                                      |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>Junior level</i>                  | <i>Senior level</i>                  |
| Self-awareness – Who am I            | Body changes                         |
| Identifying & naming body parts      | Menstruation & masturbation          |
| Gender                               | Self-care                            |
| Hygiene and general health           | Emotional changes                    |
| Family & Friends                     | Feelings                             |
| Making decisions/choosing – yes & no | Respect for others                   |
| Growing and changing – size skills   | Resolving conflict                   |
| Preparation for puberty              | Integration and community experience |
| Staying safe                         | Gender                               |

At all times the students' stage of development and maturity will be of prime consideration, students will be introduced to these topics in a manner that is appropriate and meaningful to them.

## Decreasing Behaviours & RSE

There may at some point be a need to input goals aimed at decreasing behaviours that are occurring in excess. Any intervention aimed at decreasing sexualised behaviours will be approached in the same way as other behaviours we try to decrease. Please see our Behaviour Support Policy for further information.

## Sexualised Behaviour

While recognising that sexual behaviours are a natural part of maturation, it is important that the school adopts a general procedure to address these behaviours during school hours. Some of these behaviours include but are not limited to:

- Masturbation.
- Exposing genitals.
- Inappropriate touching of peers or staff.
- Kissing peers or staff.



#### Procedure:

- Interrupt the behaviour.
- Redirect the student to an activity that involves high concentration.
- Provide reinforcement for staying on the assigned task.
- Inform the class teacher.
- Keep a record of instances.
- Inform parents.
- Design a support plan, (where records show this is necessary). Please see our Behaviour Support Policy for further information.

### **Parental Involvement**

Relationships and Sexuality Education is an on-going process throughout life. Parents and the family are acknowledged as the primary educators of their children. We work in a supportive role with the parents in our school, by complementing their role with a school based program in RSE. During each student's annual IEP meeting parents can discuss SPHE and RSE with the class teacher and it can be incorporated as appropriate into the students programme.

The staff in the Jonah Special School must seek parental consent before introducing specific RSE programmes. Staff are advised to show parents teaching resources and materials including images that will be used before commencing teaching. In keeping with our Code of Behaviour Policy, consent will be sought for any intervention aimed at decreasing behaviors'.

Parents may wish to talk about and address this area of learning with their child's teacher, but deliver the content at home. After discussing and agreeing expectations, it will be possible to provide resources or ideas for parents to use at home. Due to the personal and private nature of this work it will be important to have one or two consistent people liaising with families on these issues. This will typically be the class teacher and the Clinical Director.

Parents are advised to inform their child's teacher in confidence of any special family situations that may cause upset to the student when covering RSE, e.g. death, family separation etc.

Since RSE is an obligatory requirement of the Department of Education and Science, it should be inclusive. Jonah Special School actively promotes the implementation of RSE and discourages withdrawal from the program. The school will, however, take account of parental concerns and a parent's right to withdraw a student from themes pertaining to sensitive issues will be honored on the understanding that the parent(s) is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves. Parents are obliged to inform the school in writing of their decision to withdraw the child from an RSE programme.

### **Terminology**

In teaching issues related to RSE, teachers will use the correct biological terms for parts of the body. Visual supports may also be used. Any visual aids of sexual body parts will be drawings or symbols (sourced from appropriate curriculum resources) and never photographs.

### **Sources and Resources**

The school will use the RSE and Stay Safe Program. We may also use other materials which have been identified by staff as useful and approved as suitable by the school Principal and Clinical Director.



## Confidentiality and Child Protection

Where there is disclosure by a child of abuse or reason to suspect abuse, the school will follow the Department of Education and Science Child Protection Guidelines and guidelines set out in 'Children First'(2001/2011) and the school's policy on Child Protection.

## Links with other Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Child Protection Policy.
- Code of Behaviour Policy.
- Intimate Care Policy.
- Child Safe Guarding Statement.

## Policy Review

It is fully acknowledged by all parties that this RSE policy will be reviewed from time to time to ensure that it is kept up to date and that it retains its relevance. Ongoing evaluation and new approaches to education, DES guidelines & agreements may require this document to be modified.

## Jonah Special School

Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Jonah Special School at its meeting held on:

**Ratified by the Jonah Board of Management on:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Principal**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Chairperson, Board of Management**

**Next Review Period: *September 2028***