








**St. Patrick's N.S.  
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 Ballylinan, Athy, Co. Laois R14HK31

Registered Charity Number (RCN): 20126087






# RSE Policy

## 2023/2024

Ballylinan National School  
17064U



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### Introductory Statement

This policy was drawn up during the 2023-2024 school year. This policy is an agreed approach to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). It was developed to inform teachers and parents/guardians/carers about the provision of RSE in Ballylinan National School.

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### 1. School Details

Ballylinan National School is a co-educational, Catholic primary school in Laois. The school currently has 222 pupils, the principal, 14 teachers, 2 SNAs and 1 full time secretary.

### 2. School philosophy

We recognise that SPHE is intrinsic to the teaching and learning that occurs both formally and informally in school. Through our SPHE/RSE programme we wish to assist children to develop feelings of self-worth and self-confidence, while encouraging their ability to relate to others in a positive way. The curriculum encourages children to be aware of their rights as an individual, while at the same time accepting responsibility for their actions as members of the school and wider community. Our school values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. Our ethos values respect, inclusion and diversity of all members of our school community. Our school acknowledges that parents/guardians/carers have the primary role in the social, personal and health education of their children and as such, their involvement will be encouraged. SPHE/RSE is a key component in supporting our pupils to develop into healthy young adults.

### 3. Definition of RSE

*“Relationships and Sexuality Education is an integral part of SPHE and must be taught in this context. It provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality and relationships through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework. In particular, it addresses the meaning of human sexuality, relationships, growth and development, relevant to personal and social skills.”*

The above definition of RSE is referenced from the Interim curriculum and guidelines for primary schools (DE 1996, p.5)

### 4. SPHE/RSE Curriculum

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.



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### **RSE is part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).**

Through SPHE and RSE, pupils are enabled to enhance their self-esteem and wellbeing through:

- A sense of identity
- A sense of purpose
- A sense of belonging
- A sense of security
- A sense of competence

#### **4.1 SPHE/RSE is**

- a **lifelong and continual process** throughout primary school and should not be confined to once off inputs or solitary lessons
- a **shared responsibility** and collaboration between family, school, health professionals and the community
  - a subject which **develops a child's skills, attitudes, values and understanding** relevant to a range of social, personal and health issues
- **child-centred.** RSE education should prioritise the needs of the child and his/her environment, with appropriate adaptations made to suit individual requirements and individual school situations
- **spiral in nature.** SPHE/RSE formally begins in Junior Infants and is developed throughout the child's time in school. This will provide opportunities to consolidate and build on previous learning in a developmentally appropriate manner.
  - taught through **active learning methodologies.** RSE provides a range of learning opportunities that requires children to actively participate in their learning in a wide variety of ways e.g. discussion, circle time, role play.
  - **free of bias.** Lessons, language and resources selected by the school should reflect this. SPHE/RSE encourages children to be inclusive with each other, challenge prejudice and learn how to live together in an intercultural society

#### **4.2 Aims of RSE**

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and wellbeing of the child
- To help the child to develop healthy friendships and relationships



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- To foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, 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
- 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

Aims taken from the Interim curriculum and guidelines for primary schools (DE 1996, p.9)

### 4.3 Broad Objectives of RSE






When due account is taken of abilities and varying circumstances, the RSE education curriculum should enable the child (in conjunction with the SPHE curriculum) to:

- Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self
- Develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and wellbeing of others
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-worth
- Understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and wider contexts
- Develop an awareness of differing family patterns
- Come to value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood
- Develop strategies to make decisions, solve problems and implement actions in various personal, social and health contexts
- Become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change and understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity
- Develop personal skills which help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships
- Develop coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse
- Acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction
- Acquire the use of appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development
- Develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making

Objectives are taken from the Interim curriculum and guidelines for primary schools (DE 1996, p.9)



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### 4.4 Policies that support SPHE/RSE

- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Substance Use Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- GDPR Policy
- Wellbeing

### 4.5 Curriculum Planning for SPHE/RSE






The curriculum is delineated at four levels—Infant classes, First and Second classes, Third and Fourth classes, and Fifth and Sixth classes—and is divided into three strands:

1. Myself
2. Myself and others
3. Myself and the wider world.

Each of these strands is further subdivided into a number of strand units or topic areas that contain particular objectives. Ballylinan NS will teach aspects of all three major strand units each year and strand units will be chosen in such a way that the child will receive a comprehensive programme in SPHE over a two year period. Ballylinan NS have created this timetable to reflect this approach:



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**Year 1: Stay Safe ( Begins 2023/2024 school year)**

	Infants	1st/2nd	3rd/4th	5th/6th
<b>Term 1</b>	Walk Tall (Myself)  Welcome to Wellbeing  Fire safety	Walk Tall (Myself)  Welcome to Wellbeing	Walk Tall (Myself)  Weaving Wellbeing	Smart Moves  Weaving Wellbeing
<b>Term 2</b>	Stay Safe  Wellbeing Week	Stay Safe  Wellbeing Week	Stay Safe  Wellbeing Week	Stay Safe  Wellbeing Week
<b>Term 3</b>	Taking care of my body  Myself and the Wider World  Looking back at my accomplishments	Taking care of my body  Myself and the Wider World  Looking back at my accomplishments	Web Wise  Taking Care of my Body (1 week of RSE)  Myself and the Wider World	Web Wise  Taking Care of my Body (1 week of RSE)  Myself and the Wider World



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**Year 2: Begins 2024/2025 school year**

	Infants	1st/2nd	3rd/4th	5th/6th
<b>Term 1</b>	Walk Tall (Myself) (4wks)  Welcome to Wellbeing  Fire safety	Walk Tall (Myself)  Weaving wellbeing  Fire safety	Walk Tall (Myself)  Weaving Wellbeing  Fire safety	Walk Tall (Myself)  Weaving Wellbeing  Fire safety
<b>Term 2</b>	RSE (5 weeks)  Myself and Others (5 weeks)  Walk Tall (5 weeks)  Wellbeing week (1 week)	RSE (5 weeks)  Myself and Others (5 weeks)  Walk Tall (5 weeks)  Wellbeing week (1 week)	RSE (5 weeks)  Myself and Others (5 weeks)  Walk Tall (5 weeks)  Wellbeing week (1 week)	RSE (5 weeks)  Myself and Others (5 weeks)  Walk Tall (5 weeks)  Wellbeing week (1 week)
<b>Term 3</b>	Taking care of my body (5 weeks)  Looking back at my accomplishments (3 weeks)  Water Safety	Taking care of my body (5 weeks)  Looking back at my accomplishments (3 weeks)  Water Safety	Web Wise (2 weeks)  Taking Care of my Body Walk Tall (3 wks)  Myself and the Wider World (3 wks)  Water Safety	Web Wise (2 weeks)  Taking Care of my Body Walk Tall (3 wks)  Myself and the Wider World (3 wks)  Water Safety





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### Please note the following:

- The Stay Safe Programme is covered with all classes every second year.
- The Sensitive Areas of the RSE Programme (Strand Unit: Growing and Changing) are covered in Senior Infants, Second Class, Fourth Class and Sixth Class. We use the Busy Bodies resource for students in 4th -6th classes. Please note: in a Stay Safe year the senior classes will also have at least one lesson pertaining to RSE Growing and Changing
- Internet safety is taught in conjunction with the Stay Safe programme using [www.webwise.ie](http://www.webwise.ie)
- Year 1 of the Timetable refers to 2023/2024; Year 2 refers to 2024/2025 and this pattern will continue for subsequent years ensuring pupils receive a comprehensive SPHE Programme over a two-year period.
- RSE, which largely looks at the development of relationships, is interwoven through all strands and strand units of the SPHE curriculum. The more sensitive aspects of RSE will be covered under the strand 'Myself' and strand units 'Growing and changing' and 'Taking care of my body'. Teachers will refer to the resource **Making the Links** to support their planning for the delivery of these strand units. Please see appendix 1.

### 5. Guidelines for the Implementation of RSE






The SPHE curriculum will underpin all teaching and learning of RSE in Ballylinan National School. The SPHE curriculum 1999 is allocated 30 minutes of discrete teaching time by the Department of Education. Teachers can use their professional discernment if extra time is required, this can be taken discretionary time. Teachers are encouraged to use an integrated approach for the delivery of SPHE. All resources used will be in keeping with this RSE policy and will take into consideration the sample criteria for choosing resources, as outlined in the SPHE Teacher Guidelines p.103.

### 6. Pupil Voice

In our school the voice of our pupils is acknowledged, valued and respected. Children will be given opportunities to reflect and feedback on SPHE/RSE provision via focus groups and questionnaires. This information will be used to inform school improvement in relation to future RSE provision.



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### 7. Approaches & Methodologies

In Ballylinan National School, we will use the following approaches and methodologies to teach RSE;

- stories and poems
- classroom discussion
- ICT Activities
- group work
- games
- art activities
- reflection
- circle time
- drama

### 8. Resources

In Ballylinan National School our staff may consult any of the following teaching resources when teaching RSE in addition to the DE Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme:

- PDST Health and Wellbeing RSE
- NCCA SPHE/RSE Toolkit
- DE Walk Tall Manuals
- Making the Links and Beyond
- Stay Safe programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Anatomical Dolls
- HSE publications ([www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie))
- Busy Bodies Booklet/ Videos/ Workbook (PDST )
- Inclusive picture and story books. See appendix 2
- INTO Different Families, Same Love Poster
- INTO Different Families, Same Love Lesson Ideas
- INTO Different Families Same Love Online Presentation J1 – 2nd
- INTO Different Families Same Love Online Presentation 3rd – 6th
- RESPECT guidelines
- Gender Equality Matters (GEM)
- All Together Now
- We All Belong
- PDST Identity Based Bullying Information
- RSE related educational websites
- Books used to support the teaching of RSE are listed in Appendix 2.



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### 9. Parental Involvement

In Ballylinan National School parents/guardians/carers will be informed at enrolment that the school fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE curriculum. Parents/guardians/carers will be informed in advance of the teaching of the formal RSE lessons. (A sample letter is provided in Appendix 3). This will offer parents/guardians/carers an opportunity to meet with relevant teachers to discuss/view the material that will be covered and share any personal details they feel the teacher should be aware of prior to their child engaging in RSE lessons. If a parent/guardian wishes to withdraw their child from specific formal RSE lessons, this should be provided in writing to the school and kept on file. Alternative arrangements will be considered and agreed upon by the relevant parties. The school cannot accept responsibility for indirect RSE related information delivered to the child outside of formal RSE lessons i.e. on yard, school bus etc.

Parents may be signposted to developmentally –appropriate resources to support them in speaking with their child about relationships, sexuality and growing up.

### 10. Differentiation

The age and stage of development in a class can vary widely and strategies for differentiation can support gradual and appropriate learning. In Ballylinan National School, teachers use assessment and professional judgement to differentiate the curricular objectives and content to best suit the needs of all pupils.

Adaptations to the way in which the content is delivered will be made for children with special and additional educational needs. Both consultation with parents/guardians/carers in advance of lessons and the anticipation of the pupil's needs will be central to ensuring learning is meaningful. This may be reflected in the student's support file.

### 11. Questions

In Ballylinan National School teachers may use a variety of methodologies to create a safe, open space where pupils feel comfortable to ask RSE related questions, that are related to the curriculum objectives for that particular age group.



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### 11.1 Question Box

A 'question box' is one methodology that may be used as part of the formal RSE lessons. Teachers can follow up on the written questions at a later date, thus allowing time to prepare suitable answers, consult with colleagues/RSE policy to formulate an appropriate response.

During the delivery of each RSE lesson, pupils can be encouraged to place their questions into a box. These questions can be reviewed and the following may be taken into account:

- All pupils are encouraged to write on the question sheet. If they don't have a question ask them to write something interesting they learned in the lesson
- Questions arising from lesson content will be answered in an age-appropriate manner.
- The teacher cannot answer questions which do not relate to the particular curriculum objectives for a class
- Pupils will be informed if a question/issue is not on the curriculum and they will be advised to talk with their parents/guardians/carers
- Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents if a need arises
- No personal questions will be answered and children will be reminded not to share inappropriate personal information about their families or others

### 11.2 Open Forum

#### Questions

Teachers give pupils an opportunity to ask questions at various times throughout the RSE lesson. Questions will be answered in an age and developmentally appropriate way. Children will be made aware that the class teacher may not be able to answer their question and they will be signposted to ask an adult they trust at home.

#### Possible responses

- ★ *I'll do my best to answer your questions but I may not be able to answer all of them*
- ★ *That's something you'll learn about as you get older*
- ★ *Is that something you could talk to your parents/guardians/family about?*
- ★ *We agreed that we wouldn't ask anyone personal questions...*
- ★ *Somebody asked a question and the language that was used was slang language. I think what they meant to ask was....*



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### 12. Assessment

Ballylinan National School may employ the following methods for assessment in SPHE/RSE:

- Observation and questions to assess the pupils' engagement and interest
- Use of teacher-designed tasks such as worksheets, quizzes or games
- Use of reflection or learning log
- Pupil Portfolio

### 13. Confidentiality

Ballylinan National School follows the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2023/24. If a child is withdrawn from specific RSE lessons, the school cannot guarantee that the withdrawn child will not hear the information from another source. Parents are invited to share any changes in circumstances with the school as necessary e.g. changes in family structures etc. For the welfare of some children, this information may be important for a teacher to know prior to engaging in specific topics on family/relationships etc.

### 14. Child Protection

Ballylinan National School follows the Department of Education and Science Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, which are based on Children First, National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children. The principal is the designated liaison person (DLP).

Each teacher has a copy of our Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment. This statement is published on our website, a copy is on display in the front hall, and a printed copy is also available to parents in the Principal's office.

The school DLP is Mrs. Aileen Hurley (Principal) and the DDLP is Mrs. Paula Connolly (Deputy Principal).

### 15. Provision of Ongoing Support

Ballylinan National School ensures the provision of ongoing support by the following:

- encouraging teachers to attend RSE CPD
- utilising staff meetings as a platform for discussion and development of RSE
- seeking the support from an Oide Advisor



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- create a mentor system amongst staff to support the teaching RSE
- budgeting for the updating and development of RSE materials
- reviewing RSE policy on a regular basis
- ensure special education teachers have adequate training opportunities
- staff will reflect on information gathered from pupil questionnaires and focus groups. This will be used to inform future developments regarding RSE.
- signposting staff to resources available from PDST/Oide and other sources

### 16. Review and Ratification

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Ballylinan National School on

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The policy will be reviewed regularly in the light of experience. It will be reviewed by the full staff and Board of Management every three years. (The policy may also be reviewed at an earlier time should a need arise. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made.)

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

\_\_\_\_\_

(Chairperson B.O.M)






(Principal)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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### Appendix 1: RSE Language grid for teachers

Class	Strand /strand Unit	Content Objectives <i>Consult curriculum for complete objectives in <u>Growing and changing</u> and <u>Taking care of my body</u></i>	Language	Pages in RSE Resource Materials Book	Pages in Walk Tall	Supplementary resources
Junior /Senior Infants	<b>Myself</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Growing and changing</li> <li>▪ Taking care of my body</li> </ul>	<b>Growing and changing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Become aware of new life and birth in the world</li> <li>▪ Develop an awareness of human birth</li> </ul> <b>Taking care of my body</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Name parts of the male and female body using anatomical terms</li> </ul>	womb breastfeeding penis  <b>vagina</b>	New Life p68 My Body p147 Caring for new life p137 At the beach or swimming pool p.153	Our Amazing Bodies p94 (Senior Infants book)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Anatomically correct dolls</li> <li>▪ Picture books of new baby</li> <li>▪ Visit of baby to class</li> </ul>
First/ Second Class	<b>Myself</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Growing and changing</li> <li>▪ Taking care of my body</li> </ul>	<b>Growing and changing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Begin to understand that reproduction, birth, growth and death are all part of new life cycles</li> </ul> <b>Taking care of my body</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Name the parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms and identify some of their functions</li> </ul>	penis vulva vagina womb breastfeeding urethra	The Wonder of new life p59 /151 How my body works p67/ 161 Growing means changing p77/171 A Visit to the Doctor p.164	Our Amazing Bodies p37 (2 <sup>nd</sup> class book)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Picture books of going to the doctors</li> <li>▪ Tom's Power Flower</li> <li>▪ Books / activities on Life cycles</li> <li>▪ Birth and new life in nature</li> </ul>
Third/ Fourth Class	<b>Myself</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Growing and changing</li> <li>▪ Taking care of my body</li> </ul>	<b>Growing and changing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the physical changes taking place in both the male and female body</li> <li>• Realise that changes do not occur at the same time but nonetheless are predictable and natural and that being different is normal</li> </ul> <b>Taking care of my body</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise and discuss how feelings and emotions are affected by the physical changes that take place during puberty</li> <li>• Discuss the stages and sequence of development of human baby from conception to birth</li> </ul>	Revise above umbilical cord changes in puberty menstruation	Preparing for new life p69 The wonder of new life p169 As I grow and change p93 Growing and changing p195	As I grow I change p175 (3 <sup>rd</sup> class book)  Changing and Growing p140 (4 <sup>th</sup> class book) The Wonder of New Life p.150	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Body Systems</li> <li>▪ Picture books on Growing and Changing</li> </ul>
Fifth/ Sixth Class	<b>Myself</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Growing and changing</li> <li>▪ Taking care of my body</li> </ul>	<b>Growing and changing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a loving committed relationship</li> </ul> <b>Taking care of my body</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify and discuss the physical changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty and understand that these take place at different rates for everyone</li> <li>▪ Understand the reproductive system of both male and female adults</li> </ul>	Revise above wet dreams <u>Busy Bodies language</u> semen sexual intercourse	My body grows and changes p81  The wonder of new life p92  Caring for new life p103  Different kinds of love p141	My Amazing body p345 (5 <sup>th</sup> class book)  Creation p121 (6 <sup>th</sup> class book)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Busy Bodies</li> <li>▪ Power points recap</li> <li>▪ Question Box</li> <li>▪ Puberty Quiz</li> </ul>



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### Appendix 2: Picture books






These books have been specifically chosen and the themes or concepts are clearly indicated. All these books are child friendly. Each book's message is of love, care, and respect. These books give teachers a menu of options to address all types of families, gender expression, gender identity and LGBT themed issues. These resources were chosen with careful consideration and in line with the SPHE curriculum guidelines (pg. 84.) These books can act as a foundation for introducing and having conversations around acceptance and understanding of different children and families in our school community.

Book Title	Class level
'The Family Book' by Todd Parr "Its Okay to be Different" by Todd Parr 'The Paper Bag Princess' By Robert Munsch	Junior and Senior Infants
'Amazing Grace' by Mary Hoffman 'And Tango Makes Three' by Peter Parnell and Justin Richardson	First and Second Class
'The Boy in the Dress' 'The Great Big Book of Families' by Mary Hoffman '10,000 dresses' By Marcus Ewert	Third and Fourth Class
"Donovan's Big Day" by Leslea Newman "The Misadventures of the Family Fletcher." by Dana Alison Levy	Fifth and Sixth Class





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**Appendix 3: Sample letter to parents**

Dear Parents/Guardians/Carers,

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is an integral part of the Social, Personal and Health Education curriculum. We will be commencing formal RSE lessons in Term 2, January 2022. RSE predominantly lies within the strand units 'Taking care of my body' and 'Growing and changing' which can be viewed at [https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/462570f8-27cc-4f5b-a13ed1e2de8c18d2/PSEC06\\_SPHE\\_curriculum.pdf](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/462570f8-27cc-4f5b-a13ed1e2de8c18d2/PSEC06_SPHE_curriculum.pdf) and is summarised in the table below.

**Social, Personal and Health Education Curriculum (NCCA 1999)**

INFANTS - 2nd CLASS	3rd CLASS - 6th CLASS
<p><b>Strand Unit - Growing and Changing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As I grow, I change</li> <li>• New life</li> <li>• Feelings and emotions</li> </ul>	<p><b>Strand Unit - Growing and Changing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As I grow, I change</li> <li>• Birth and new life</li> <li>• Feelings and emotions</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strand Unit - Taking care of my body</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowing about my body</li> <li>• Food and nutrition</li> <li>• Making decisions</li> </ul>	<p><b>Strand Unit - Taking care of my body</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowing about my body</li> <li>• Food and nutrition</li> <li>• Health and wellbeing</li> </ul>

Our school's RSE policy is available to view on our school website ([www.ballylinannationalschool.com](http://www.ballylinannationalschool.com)). It outlines our agreed approach to achieve the objectives of the aforementioned strand units. If you wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to arrange an appointment to meet with your child's class teacher.

Yours sincerely,

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School Principal