

## **Carrig National School**

### **Relationships and Sexuality Policy**

#### **Introductory Statement & Rationale**

This policy statement is an approved approach to the teaching of RSE in Carrig National School. It was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in the RSE programme within SPHE.

This policy was originally drafted in 1998 by a policy committee, teachers and Board of Management. It was reviewed and amended in 2009, 2014 and now again in 2022.

#### **School Philosophy/Ethos**

Carrig N.S. is a co-educational, primary school which strives to provide a well-ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere where the intellectual, spiritual, physical, moral and cultural needs of the pupils are identified and addressed. While Carrig N.S. is a school with a Catholic ethos, it also has due recognition for all other religions.

Carrig N.S. recognise that SPHE is intrinsic to the teaching and learning that occurs both formally and informally in school and in the classroom. Through our SPHE programme and subsequently through RSE, 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 also 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 the wider community.

Our school values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. Our ethos means that we value respect, tolerance and openness through the lived experience of the children and school community. Parents have the primary role in the social personal and health education of their children so their involvement will be encouraged as much as possible. SPHE and RSE are key components in supporting our school and children to develop into healthy young adults.

#### **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.

## 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.

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.

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-centered**. 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 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

## Aims of our RSE Programme

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

### **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

### **Policies which support SPHE/RSE**

- Child safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Substance Use Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy

- Enrolment Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- GDPR Policy

**Our school follows a two-year plan for SPHE**

September 2022	Year 1
September 2023	Year 2
September 2024	Year 1
September 2025	Year 2
September 2026	Year 1
September 2027	Year 2
September 2028	Year 1
September 2029	Year 2

Month	Year 1	Year 2
September/October	Myself and my family (Myself and others)	Self-identity (Myself)
November/December	Relating to others (Myself and others)	My friends and other people (Myself and others)
January/February	Growing and changing (Myself)	Safety and protection (Myself)
March/April	Taking care of my body (Myself)	Making decisions* (Myself)  4 <sup>th</sup> class only Growing and changing – An introduction to changes with a particular focus on menstruation
May/June	Developing citizenship (Myself and the wider world)	Media education (Myself and the wider world)

\*'Making decisions' is only a strand unit from 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>. Juniors -2<sup>nd</sup> may complete the Safety Issues section of 'Safety and Protection' at this time. Due to the increased amount of lessons in the Stay Safe programme from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class, placing the strand unit 'Making decisions' after the 'Safety and Protection' strand will enable the teacher to achieve some of the content objectives of 'Making decisions' through the Stay Safe programme.

- **3<sup>rd</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> classes cover Safer Internet Day in February of each year.**

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. Suggested resources are listed under the Resources Section of this policy.

## Guidelines for the Implementation of RSE

The SPHE curriculum will underpin all teaching and learning of RSE in Carrig 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.

- The strands units 'Growing and changing' and 'Taking care of my body' are covered in one year of a 2-year plan
- Lessons containing sensitive material are covered as part of these strand units
- We recognise that parents are the primary educators of their children, and that the home is the natural environment in which RSE should take place. The role of the school, therefore, is seen as one of support for the work of the home in this area.
- The approach in school is child-centred and will always take the age and stage of development of the children into account. Appropriate vocabulary relating to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, parts of the body and feelings will be used at each class level (**See Appendix 2**). The use of slang words will be discouraged. Language will, at all times, reflect respect for those involved and for educational content.
- Questions arising from lesson content will be answered in an age-appropriate manner. The class 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 programme and they will be advised to talk with their parents. Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents themselves if they feel that a question is very inappropriate. Teachers can also be mindful that a question need not be answered immediately. For older children, a question box can be used as part of a structured RSE lesson. This allows teachers to follow up on a written question at a later date, thus allowing time to prepare suitable answers, consult with colleagues etc.
- *If issues arise which might be seen to contravene Children First Guidelines, the teacher will notify the Designated Liaison Person in the school.*
- It is our policy not to answer personal questions and to discourage disclosure of personal or family information. Teachers will be mindful of their reactions to any questions.
- In the class situation children will be encouraged to recognise that certain information is for them only and it would be inappropriate to discuss this with younger siblings/children for example. The teacher should clarify expectations beforehand.
- Our RSE programme is inclusive and so we actively discourage withdrawal. Should a parent seek to have their child withdrawn from the RSE lessons, the school will take account of parental concerns, and parents' right to withdraw their child from themes pertaining to sensitive issues will be honoured on the

understanding that the parent(s) is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves.

- Each class teacher will teach the content for their class level each year as laid out in the curriculum, utilising the RSE manuals to complement their teaching.
- Special consideration will be taken to ensure the needs of children with SEN are met. Taking into account the pupils social and emotional development, instruction will be based on individual needs where possible. Parents will be consulted around sensitive issues.
- If a teacher has concerns about teaching the sensitive topics in RSE they should consult with the principal
- Substitute teachers (short-term) or student teachers on placement are not expected to teach the sensitive content.

### **Pupil Voice**

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

### **Approaches and Methodologies**

In Carrig 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
- external facilitator (Circular 0042/2018)

## Resources

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

- PDST Health and Wellbeing RSE
- NCCA SPHE/RSE Toolkit
- 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
- INTO Different Families, Same Love Poster
- INTO Different Families, Same Love Lesson Ideas
- INTO Different Families Same Love Online Presentation J1 – 2<sup>nd</sup>
- INTO Different Families Same Love Online Presentation 3rd – 6th
- RESPECT guidelines
- Gender Equality Matters (GEM)
- All Together Now
- We All Belong
- PDST Education and Transgender Information
- PDST Identity Based Bullying Information
- RSE related educational websites

## Parental Involvement

- Parents will be informed at enrolment that the school fully implements the RSE strands of the SPHE programme including sensitive aspects of the programme at enrolment.
- Parents will be informed in advance of lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme, with a letter relevant to what will be taught at their child's class level.
- The letter will be issued in advance, giving parents an opportunity to meet with relevant class teachers if they so wish, to discuss or clarify what is covered and to prepare their children, it also gives parents an opportunity to become involved, to inform themselves of the programme content and to prepare children for the information they will acquire around the sensitive areas and discuss areas covered in RSE/SPHE. (A sample letter is provided in **Appendix 1**)
- Parents are invited/welcome to view the curriculum and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns at any time during the year. The school acknowledges that parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children about growing and changing.
- Following discussion with Principal and Class Teacher, if a parent wishes to withdraw their child from the sensitive lessons it should be given in writing stating their reasons for doing so and this will be centrally filed.
- If a child has been withdrawn from the sensitive RSE lessons, the school takes no responsibility for what the child may hear following on from the teaching of the lessons. E.g., What they may hear on yard.

## Differentiation

The age and stage of development in a class can vary widely and strategies for differentiation can support gradual and appropriate learning. In Carrig National School, teachers use assessment and professional judgment 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.

*Consider:*

- that objectives are realistic for the students
- that the learning task builds upon prior learning
- providing opportunities for interacting and working with other students in small groups or 1:1



- organising the learning task into small stages: outlining the steps to be learned/completed in any given task, posing key questions to guide pupils through the different stages/processes, and assisting in self-direction and correction
- ensuring that the language used is pitched at the pupil's level of understanding. Some children may be pre-taught language or concepts in preparation of whole class work
- creating a learning environment through the use of concrete, and where possible everyday materials, and by displaying word lists and laminated charts with pictures
- employing active learning methodologies

*Useful Resources:*

- Middletown Centre for Autism
- PDST RSE
- Stay Safe for Children with SEN

**Language**

Language reflects values, attitudes, beliefs, prejudices and principles and can inform behaviour. It not only helps to express a culture, but influences and shapes that culture as well. It is essential that children are enabled to use language in a precise and appropriate manner. The language that is promoted in the school must be one that nurtures both children and adults as unique and valuable human beings. It should respect cultural and other differences and be used in a way that encourages inclusiveness. In the Anti-Bullying Procedures 2013, schools are asked to put specific strategies in place to prevent identity-based bullying, such as homophobic and transphobic bullying. In order for the RSE policy to be fully in line with these procedures, it is important to refer to the age-appropriate definitions of these terms, cited in the Stay Safe programme.

Language is a powerful tool and should be used with respect and integrity for the dignity of each person. Children should become aware of the power and influence of language. When used positively, language can build up, affirm and show respect to another human being, but if used in a negative manner it can hurt, diminish and demean.

*Consider:*

- what language you model in your classroom
- what language you use to promote a positive, inclusive classroom environment for all
- becoming aware of binary language or language that implies gender stereotyping
- if the correct anatomical terms are used in a consistent way across all class levels

- what strategies you use to tackle derogatory language in your classroom (e.g. when a child misuses the word 'gay' or 'lesbian') How are they corrected
- what strategies you use to teach correct anatomical terms (e.g. when a child misuses the word 'willy' or 'pee-pee') How do you respond
- familiarising staff with the PDST Identity Based Bullying resource and PDST Education and Transgender resource which is useful in creating an awareness about the spectrum of sexualities and genders that exist.

## **Questions**

In Carrig National School teachers may use a variety of methodologies to create a safe, open space where pupils feel comfortable to ask RSE related questions.

### ***Question Box***

For older pupils 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

### **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....*

Teachers should be cognisant not to invalidate a pupil's question, but rather set boundaries and manage expectations around questions. This can be done using a variety of strategies; question box, open forum questions, online questioning tools. In the instance that the teacher may not be able to answer a specific question, it is important that child will be signposted towards another adult who they trust for an answer. You may refer to HSE website: <https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/for-parents/sample-questions-and-answers/> to support staff in formulating responses.

## Assessment

Carrig National School will 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

## Confidentiality

Carrig National School follows the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017. 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.

Children may disclose personal information during RSE lessons. Disclosures of abuse will be dealt with in line with Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017.

## Provision of Ongoing Support

Carrig 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 a PDST Advisor
- 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 and other sources

## Review

Carrig National School will review this policy every four 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

## Ratification and Communication

The Board of Management of Carrig NS ratified this plan on

4/10/22

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

*Perry Maloney*

Perry Maloney (Principal)

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

*Brian Geraghty*

Brian Geraghty (Chairperson, Board of Management)

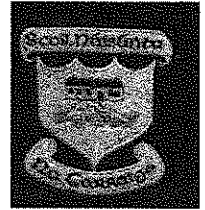
Date \_\_\_\_\_

4/10/2022

This plan is available to view at the school by the parents and is available on the policy section of our school website

Appendix 1

# Scoil na Carraige



Dear Parents/Guardians,

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 202\_.

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-a13e-d1e2de8c18d2/PSEC06\\_SPHE\\_curriculum.pdf](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/462570f8-27cc-4f5b-a13e-d1e2de8c18d2/PSEC06_SPHE_curriculum.pdf)

Our school's RSE policy is available to view on our school website ([www.carrigschool.ie](http://www.carrigschool.ie)). 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,

---

Perry Maloney

School Principal

## Appendix Two

Lesson Content – Sensitive Issues					
Class	Lesson	Strand Unit	Language	Date	Home/School
J.I. S.I.	<b>Theme 6</b> Caring for new life p.137	Growing and changing	Penis/Vagina or Vulva Naming parts of male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms	Term 2 every second year	S.I. RSE Manual p. 145
	<b>Theme 7</b> My Body p.147	Taking care of my body			
1 <sup>st</sup> 2 <sup>nd</sup>	<b>Theme 6</b> The wonder of new life p.59/p.151	Growing and changing	As above: introduce womb, breast, breast feeding, urethra. Naming as above and identify some of the functions.	Term 2 every second year	RSE Manual p. 65, 160, 169
	<b>Theme 7</b> How my body works p67 <b>Theme 8</b> When my body needs special care p.161 Growing means changing p. 77/p.171	Taking care of my body			
3 <sup>rd</sup> 4 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Theme 6</b> Preparing for new life p.69	Growing and changing	Discuss the stages and sequence of development of human baby in the womb. Umbilical cord. Any questions as to how the baby got there cannot be answered by the teacher.	Term 2 every second year Girls in 4 <sup>th</sup> class only <b>every year</b> , an introduction to changes with a particular focus on menstruation.	RSE Manual p. 181
	<b>Theme 6 from 4<sup>th</sup> class</b> The wonder of new life p.169 <b>Theme 8</b> As I grow I change p.93 <b>Theme 8 (girls only in 4<sup>th</sup> class)</b> Growing and changing p.195				
5 <sup>th</sup> 6 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Theme 6</b> My body grows and changes p.81	Growing and changing	Changes that occur in boys and girls at the onset of puberty. Reproductive system of male/female adults. Understand sexual intercourse, conception and birth within context of a committed relationship.	Term 2 every second year	RSE Manual p. 92,101,112,149 Busy Body Booklets and DVDs
	<b>Theme 7</b> The wonder of new life p.93 <b>Theme 8</b> Caring for new life p.103 <b>Theme 2</b> Different kinds of love p.141	Taking care of my body			

## Appendix 3

### JUNIOR INFANTS TO SECOND CLASS

#### **MYSELF:**

**Taking Care of My Body:** Caring for one's body, respect for one's body and that of others, diet, hygiene, being able to name parts of male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms. (penis/ vagina)

**Growing and Changing:** Understanding growth and change, exploring feelings, becoming aware of new life and birth, understanding a baby's needs.

### THIRD CLASS TO SIXTH CLASS

**Taking Care of My Body:** Understanding health, dangers of substance misuse, personal hygiene, nutrition. For 4<sup>th</sup> Class: understanding physical changes for boys and girls (puberty). For 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> class children: understanding physical and other changes at puberty, understanding the male and female reproductive system.

**Growing and Changing:** Identifying and discussing feelings, having a positive sense of self. For 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> class children: recognising how feelings are influenced by puberty, being able to discuss the development of the human baby during pregnancy, For 6<sup>th</sup> Class children: understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth in the context of a committed, loving relationship.

## Appendix 4

### All Families

#### Strand

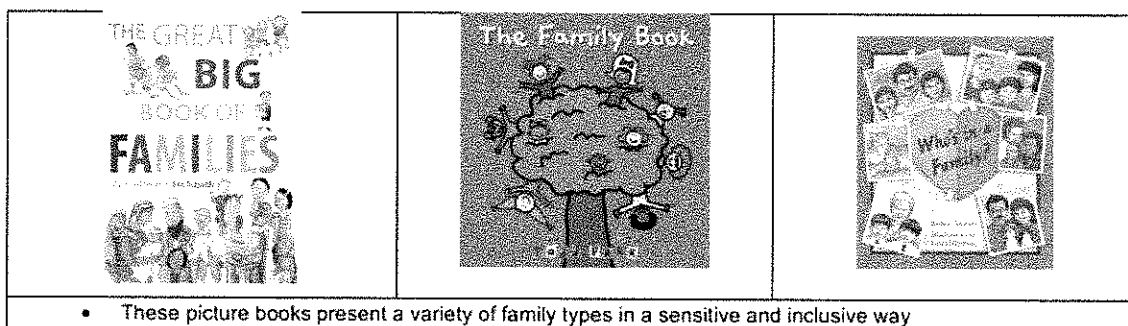
Junior and Senior  
Infants  
First and Second  
class

Third and Fourth  
class

Fifth and Sixth class

#### Myself and my family

- Identify and name the people who constitute a family and appreciate that all family units are not the same
- Identify and talk about those who live at home and recognise that homes and families can vary
- Explore and discuss different kinds of families, recognising that families vary in structure, in the way they communicate and in the way family members spend their time
- Explore and discuss families and homes and how they can vary in many ways single-parent, two-parent, step-parents, adoptive parents, foster-parents, group homes, hostels



- You can use the picture books as a 'way in' and starting point, to discussions and critical thinking around different family types or the books can be used to make all families visible so they are appreciated and accepted in an informal way
- These picture books can be used to expose children to a variety of families which will help affirm and create respect for difference
- Use of Socratic questioning will help when using these books
- Having some short factual responses prepared will also be useful too.

#### Sample Responses

A child can't have two mums or two dads! A child can't just a mum or just a dad!

**"Some families have a Mom and a Dad, or just a Mum or just a Dad and some have two moms and two dads, but what is most important is that a family is a place where there is love"**

That's weird!

**"Sometimes we think things are weird when they are different, or haven't seen them before, but it's not nice to call families weird"**

That's not a real family!

**Families come in all shapes and sizes, and what's most important about a family is that children have adults and parents who care and look after them, and that's what makes a family"**

#### Talking about home

- When asking the children about their homes ensure that all children can discuss their family types
- Represent all family types when doing family trees or examples of families

#### Asking questions

- If children, ask questions about all families always talk about what makes families special regardless of who are the parents
- Age appropriate definitions for the terms gay or lesbian can be given from Stay Safe lessons

#### Improper Language

- Don't let children use words inappropriately either intentionally or innocently especially referring to people or things as gay

#### Special occasions

- Encourage all children to discuss their special day and be sensitive on days when mother's day or father's day might mean something different