

New Ross Educate Together National School



Stay Safe Policy

Introduction

New Ross Educate Together National School teaches the Stay Safe Programme, a teaching package designed for use in Irish primary schools. It was designed and developed by the Child Abuse Prevention Programme. Under the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (2017) all schools are obliged to teach the Stay Safe Programme. The Stay Safe Programme was revised in 2016 and NRETNS implements the updated programme.

The Stay Safe Programme is the primary resource used in this school to provide education for children on abuse prevention. The programme itself is a personal safety skills programme designed for use with primary school children from Junior Infants through to 6th class. The programme seeks to enhance children's self-protective skills by participation in lessons on

- Safe and unsafe situations
- Bullying
- Inappropriate touch
- Secrets and telling
- Stranger danger.

The programme is taught as part of the SPHE (Social Personal and Health Education) curriculum and as per best practice recommendations, it will be taught on a rolling two-year cycle, usually in the second term of the year. Children from junior infants to sixth class participate in the Stay Safe Programme. The formal lessons of the programme are taught in their entirety every second year (in senior infants, second, fourth and sixth classes) in accordance with the SPHE two-year cycle plan.

Rationale for the Stay Safe Programme

Child abuse has no boundaries. It occurs at every socioeconomic level, crosses ethnic and cultural lines, and is found within all religions and at all levels of education.

Abused and neglected children can be found in almost every school in the country. Research shows that more than half of the children who are abused and neglected are of school going age.

As well as reducing children's vulnerability to abuse, the Stay Safe programme aims to increase well being and resilience by giving children knowledge, skills and strategies in an age-appropriate manner, using developmentally structured lessons and resources to empower them.

Research on the disclosure patterns of children showed that following their participation in the Stay Safe programme, children were more likely to have purposely reported the abuse, were more likely to tell their teachers, and their reports were more likely to be substantiated (MacIntyre & Carr, 1999b).

The SPHE policy will be addressed under the following headings:

1. Content of Stay Safe Programme
2. Children with Special Vulnerabilities
3. Differentiation
4. Bullying
5. Child Abuse
6. Implementing the Programme
7. Approaches and Methodologies
8. Assessment
9. Possibility of Disclosure
10. Parental Involvement
11. Staff Development

1. Content of Stay Safe Programme

- Feelings: To recognize the importance of feelings; how to express them appropriately and in particular to recognize unsafe feelings
- Friendship: Making and keeping friends and the value of friendship
- Bullying: What bullying is; strategies for dealing with bullying behavior and that it is never acceptable to bully others
- The importance of confidence and self-esteem
- How to identify and deal with inappropriate or unsafe touch
- That it is ok to say 'no' to an adult in a situation where they feel unsafe, threatened or frightened
- Identify trusted adults whom they should tell if they are feeling frightened, threatened, worried or unsafe in any way
- Understand how someone might bribe, trick or threaten them to keep a secret
- Understand that it is never their fault if they are victimized or abused
- They should never go anywhere with or take anything from a stranger
- Appropriate language for telling
- The Stay Safe rules:
Say No, Get Away and Tell
Never Keep Secrets about touch
Never go anywhere with or take anything from a stranger

The importance of building confidence and self-esteem and developing assertiveness and strong, clear communication is emphasized throughout the programme. Children are taught that it is not their fault if they are bullied or abused.

2. Children with Special Vulnerabilities

Children with special vulnerabilities are more at risk of various types of abuse and victimization

Factors associated with increased risk of child abuse include:

- The abuse of one or both parents
- Use of alcohol or drugs in the family of victim
- Having a physical disability
- Being cared for by someone other than parents
- Having a learning disability
- Having social or emotional difficulties

The reason for the added vulnerabilities of children with SEN are many and varied and include:

- Communication barriers
- Attitudes and assumptions in society that abuse does not happen to children with special educational needs
- Dependency
- Reluctance to challenge carers
- A lack of participation and choice in decision making
- Higher levels of bullying and limited personal safety programmes and personal, social and sex education (UK Dept. of Children, Schools and Families, 2009)

Children with SEN also experience bullying more frequently and are more likely to feel isolated, lonely and socially excluded (National Disability Authority, 2014).

The importance of delivering the key messages of the Stay Safe programme to vulnerable children including those with SEN, cannot be overestimated.

The Stay Safe lessons are designed for a wide diversity of learners and learning styles and facilitate an inclusive approach. For children with specific vulnerabilities or SEN, individual needs should be identified and addressed through differentiation and where necessary more targeted individual adaptations or supports should be put in place and included in the IEP.

3. Differentiation

Differentiation requires teachers to vary their approaches in order to accommodate various learning styles, ability levels and interests. The SPHE Curriculum advocates the use of a broad range of active learning methodologies as outlined earlier.

The greater the variety in the methodologies adopted by the teacher, the more avenues and entry points into learning are provided for the child. Key messages and learning intentions at the start of each Stay Safe lessons will assist teachers seeking to differentiate teaching and learning for their pupils.

As part of a differentiated approach, NRETNS values the merit of pre teaching relevant vocabulary and reinforcement of key messages as part of learning support or resource teaching time. Special needs assistants under the discretion of the class teacher, also play an important role in reinforcing and consolidating the learning of key messages.

In addition to the multimedia approach, the use of a wide variety of teaching methods and the inclusion of extension activities allow greater scope for differentiation.

4. Bullying

Bullying, as defined in the Department of Education and Skills (DES) procedures, is unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.

Bullying includes deliberate exclusion; malicious gossip; relational bullying; cyber-bullying; identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.

5. Child Abuse

Child abuse can be categorized into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time. Most abused children will experience more than one type of abuse. For example, a child who is sexually abused may also experience physical abuse and injury.

NRETNS has formally adopted and implemented, without modification, the Department of Education and Skills (DES) Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools as part of its overall Child Safeguarding Statement.

6. Implementing the Programme

The Stay Safe programme is taught in its entirety over one school year. Each topic builds on the learning from the previous topic. Teachers therefore ensure that topics are taught consecutively, beginning with Topic 1 and working through to Topic 5. NRETNS works through the programme in one block as it is more effective. NRETNS plans their SPHE programme of work to ensure that all classes are doing the programme at the same time. The Stay Safe programme utilizes a multi-media approach to enhance learning and concept acquisition.

Stay Safe Lesson Plans:

The lesson plans are divided into the five Stay Safe Topics:

- Feeling Safe and Unsafe
- Friendship and Bullying
- Touches
- Secrets and Telling
- Strangers

The content and teaching resources for the Stay Safe programme can all be accessed on the accompanying DVD and Teacher Resources are available on www.staysafe.ie/teachers/resources.htm and www.pdst.ie/staysafe

7. Approaches and Methodologies

In common with the strands of the SPHE curriculum much of the Stay Safe content is based on process and on establishing patterns of behavior. Thus, the teaching process emphasises active learning and role-play. It is not enough that children remember the personal safety skills they learn, they must also be able to put these skills into practice in their daily lives.

The lesson plans are developmentally tailored. A multimedia approach is utilized to enhance learning and concept acquisition. Concepts are introduced gradually. Each new lesson builds naturally on the previous one.

Below are some of the approaches and methodologies to be used throughout the programme:

- Class/group discussion
- Active learning
- Circle work
- Role play
- Collaborative learning
- Problem solving
- Skills through content
- Cooperative games
- Drama and art work

8. Assessment

The guidelines focus on two principal approaches to Assessment

- Assessment *of* Learning
- Assessment *for* Learning

A number of assessment methods, based on Assessment guidelines, including teacher observation, conferencing, questioning, concept mapping, self-assessment, portfolio assessment, and teacher designed tasks can be used across the programme.

9. Possibility of Disclosure

Since the underlying message of the Stay Safe programme is that children can and should tell an adult if they have a problem, it is possible that a child in the class may be prompted to confide in the teacher. Teachers should be familiar with DES procedures on responding appropriately to suspicions or disclosures of child abuse (cf. Child Safeguarding Statement).

10. Parental Involvement

Partnership with parents is an essential component in the promotion and building of key life skills. Research has shown that parental involvement in abuse prevention programmes is directly related to increased programme success. This is due to the increased communication between the parent/carer and child about sensitive issues and abuse. Also parental involvement gives children more opportunities to repeat the concepts and messages learned.

Parental participation is an essential part of the programme both in terms of reinforcement and follow-up.

Home school links (HSL) on each topic are included throughout the programme. These HSL will inform parents/carers on the topics and specific lessons being covered in class and how they can reinforce the messages at home.

Parents have the right to opt their child/children out of any of the sensitive aspects of the SPHE programme, including Stay Safe, if they so wish. Therefore, at NRTENS we inform parents/carers that Stay Safe is being implemented in the school. Parents are invited to contact the school if they have any queries or concerns about their child's participation in the programme. It is not necessary to get parental consent in writing before teaching Stay Safe. However in the event that a parent withdraws their child from participation in the programme, the school keeps a written record of their reasons for doing so.

Parents/carers are advised in advance of commencement of lessons by way of a text, note or email. Parents can familiarize themselves with the content of all Stay Safe lessons at www.staysafe.ie/teachers/resources.htm and www.pdst.ie/staysafe

11. Staff Development

Staff will be facilitated to attend CPD training in any revision of the Stay Safe programme, in order to deliver an up to date programme.

Review

It will be necessary to review this plan once every four years school years or as required to ensure optimum implementation of the SPHE curriculum in the school.

Roles and Responsibilities

The development, implementation and review of this plan will be shared by the staff of New Ross Educate Together N.S. in consultation with the Parents and the BOM who ultimately have responsibility for this policy.

Ratification and Communication

This policy is available to all parents **on the school website**. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department if requested.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

