



## Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

### Introductory Statement:

As a recognised educational facility for ‘at risk’ children, it is our aim to give pupils opportunities to explore and develop their intellectual, emotional, spiritual, physical and creative self. It is within this context, that the delivery of our relationships and sexuality education (RSE) programme will aim to reflect and respond to the individual needs of our pupils, the majority of who would have had behavioural and learning difficulties in their previous schools.

### Rationale:

It is necessary to have an RSE policy as RSE is a key element of healthy social and personal development as:

- Young people are exposed to a wide variety of messages about sexuality and sexual activity. Schools in consultation with parents/guardians need to reflect on how to provide for the needs of their students.
- The Education Act 1998 requires that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them. Section 4 of the Rules and Programme for Secondary schools requires schools to have an agreed policy for RSE and a suitable RSE programme in place. At Junior Cycle the RSE programme is part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).
- Circulars M4/95, M20/96, C37/2010 and C0043/2018 request schools to commence a process of RSE policy development.

## **Aims and Objectives:**

The broad aim of the RSE programme is to give pupils an opportunity to learn about themselves and others and to develop the skills to enable them to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development. In this way, it is anticipated that pupils will be better able to participate as active and responsible adults in the future. This will enable them to make responsible decisions, which respect their dignity and the dignity of others.

### **Objectives:**

Our RSE programme should help pupils to:

- understand and develop friendships and relationships.
- gain an understanding of sexuality.
- develop a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's own relationships with others.
- have a knowledge of, and respect for, reproduction.
- become aware of the variety of ways, in which, individuals grow and change particularly during adolescence- and to develop respect for differences between individuals.
- understand human physiology with special reference to the reproductive cycle and awareness of some of the sexually transmitted infections.

In order to meet the outlined objectives, we will ***firstly aim*** to recognise the cognitive and language abilities of individual students.

***Secondly***, the information we deliver will be age appropriate.

***Thirdly***, time frames for delivery of the RSE programme with individual groups will take in to account the length of time each pupil has been in the school and an individual record will be kept.

***Fourthly***, individual class teachers will deliver the RSE programme

***Finally***, the DLP and DDLP will be responsible for providing additional support to address any issues that could/may arise for any pupil as a result of the RSE sessions or throughout the school year.

## **Key Measures:**

### **A. Provision of training and staff development:**

Teachers are made aware of any opportunities for further professional development through participation in courses available in Education Centres or other venues. Skills, resources and expertise within the school is shared and developed through input at staff/teacher meetings. Specific RSE training is available and expected for all teachers (class teachers and Learning Support) providing SPHE and RSE tuition. Attendance and completion of training is recorded in the teacher training log maintained by the Principal.

### **B. Inclusion of Parents/ Guardians:**

Parents/Guardians are informed during the referral process that RSE is included under the SPHE curriculum. Parents /Guardians are the primary educators of their children and their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality education is seen by the school as very important. Parents /Guardians are informed via text and invited to outline any concerns about the programme content and have the right to include or exclude their child from any part of the programme. Resources are available online.

**Note:** The Education Act 1998 provides that a student is not required to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parents. Hence, parents /guardians have a right to opt their child out of the sensitive issues in RSE if they wish to do so.

### **C. Ethical/ Moral Considerations:**

#### **Confidentiality and Referral to Supportive Links:**

- **Participation:** Parents are requested to approve their children's participation in RSE classes.
- **Sensitive Issues:** Class discussion will be of a general nature, and will not be personally directed, in accordance with the previously agreed class ground rules. Inappropriate questions will not be answered in class by a teacher, or from student to student. Only questions directly pertinent to the lesson content will be addressed in

class. The SPHE/RSE teacher may also exercise his or her own professional judgement in deciding whether to answer the question privately after the class has finished. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised he/she should seek advice from the Community Worker and Family Therapist, and the DLP. As specific concerns arise further instruction may be given by the Principal and the Family Therapist.

- **Referral:** While it is acknowledged that teachers have a professional responsibility to impart the SPHE course content, the needs of students will be addressed in a caring and supportive manner. Where it is appropriate, the teacher may refer students to other supportive links within the school or outside agency as per Circular 0081/2017. As far as possible this should be done in negotiation with the student.
  
- **Circular 0081/2017: Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017**
  - ‘Every registered teacher, as a Mandated Person, has the statutory obligation to report child protection concerns over a defined threshold to the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) [...] and is required to [sic] assist Tusla in the assessment of child protection risk, if so requested.’
  - Any concerns should be reported to the Designated Liason Person (DLP) and consideration given whether ‘it is necessary for [...] the teacher to make a mandated report to Tusla.’
  
- **Confidentiality:** While an atmosphere of trust is a pre-requisite of SPHE class, the following limits of confidentiality must be observed. These limits are:
  - Child abuse – physical, emotional, sexual, neglect
  - Intention to harm self or others
  - Substance misuse
  - Underage sexual intercourse

Any disclosure will be reported to the Designated Liaison Person in compliance with the Child Protection Policy and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2011. SPHE teachers will inform students of the limits of confidentiality at the beginning of the year, remind them at necessary points throughout the year and where possible before making a disclosure.

## **D. Practical Issues:**

### **Context and timetabling:**

SPHE will be taught through a combination of contexts in St. Paul's:

- **Formal SPHE lessons;** SPHE is allocated 30 mins per week on each teacher's timetable in St. Paul's. Extra time is allocated when a particular topic needs to be covered or visiting speakers are available to deliver a topic, e.g. Teenagers and Garda (TAG Programme), Dental Hygienist visits etc.
- **RSE lessons;** Department of Education Circular M20/96 requires that schools teach RSE for six class periods in each year.

### **Visiting Speakers:**

Visiting speakers must be made aware of the schools RSE policy and the SPHE visitor guidelines as laid down by the Department of Education in circular 0043/2018.

### **Resources:**

The information to be covered in this RSE programme will be sourced primarily from the Department of Education and Science recommended resource materials. These include; age appropriate RSE programme manuals, recommended digital materials and educational materials located from other appropriate sources as and when required.

Including:

- Resource Materials for Relationships and Sexuality Education- Dept. of Education and Science (1998)
- B4udecide
- Lockers
- Busy Bodies
- Junior Cycle text books
- Webwise

This list is not exhaustive.

The core RSE topics will be selected from the list of the topics proposed by the Department of Education and science in the National Council for Curriculum and assessment document

*Relationships and sexuality education an aspect of SPHE – interim curriculum and guidelines for post-primary schools (1996).*

### **RSE School Plan**

	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>	<b>Group 3</b>
<b>Relationships and Sexuality</b> *(CC 37) *(CC 38) *(CC 39) *(CC 40)	Me as Unique and Different Friendship Changes at Adolescence The Reproductive System Images of Male and Female Respecting Myself and Others	From Conception to Birth Recognising and expressing feelings Peer Pressure and other influences Managing Relationships Making responsible decisions Health and Personal Safety	Body Image Where am I now? Relationships-what's important The 3 R's; Respect, Rights, Responsibilities Conflict STIs

#### **Related Policies:**

- Child Protection Policy.
- SPHE Policy.
- Supervision.
- Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Pupil's Code of Conduct.
- Acceptable Use Policy.
- Bullying and Harassment Policy.
- Duty of Care Policy.
- Wellbeing Policy.

#### **Reviewing and evaluating the policy:**

Ongoing review and evaluation will take place cognisance of changing information, guidelines, legislation and feedback from parents/guardians, students, teachers and others. The policy will be revised as necessary in the light of such reviews and evaluation and within the framework of school planning. The policy will be reviewed periodically or sooner if necessary.

Some practical indicators will be used to gauge the impact and effectiveness of the policy. Such indicators include the following:

- A student /teacher evaluation form may be given to some classes at the end of the RSE module. This can be used for assessment purposes and to inform report cards.
- The range of resource material available to teachers.
- The in-service training availed of by teachers.
- Students' awareness of the policy.
- Parents and Guardians awareness of the policy.
- Positive feedback is received from teachers, students, parents/guardians and members of the Board of Management.

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