



Rosary College Relationship and Sexuality Policy

Introduction

Relationship and Sexuality Education(RSE) policy is a written statement of the aims of the RSE programme, the relationship of RSE to SPHE, and the organisation and management of RSE within the school. This policy will be enacted in September 2015 after consultation between the RSE committee, the Principal, the Parents' Council, the Board of Management and the Student Council. The RSE committee consists of representatives of staff, management, parents and Board of Management:

Rosary College Mission Statement:

"We endeavour to educate the whole person, developing the full potential of each and aiming to prepare our students for whatever role they will occupy in life. In our daily life we value the principles of justice, mutual respect, equality and tolerance leading to the promotion of a positive self-image and the confidence to achieve the highest level."

Rosary College, located in Crumlin is a co-educational post primary school under the trusteeship of the Religious Sisters of Charity. We are committed to providing a holistic education with the aim of developing the academic, cultural, sporting, moral and spiritual needs of our students. This school has a very caring staff committed to the holistic development of every student in the school.

We have a very inclusive approach to education providing all our students with the opportunity to study academic and practical subjects, participate in a range of extracurricular activities as well as taking programmes in SPHE and PE. In partnership with our Board of Management, Parents' Association and Student Council we have devised comprehensive policies and procedures which deal with discipline, bullying and other issues affecting the

welfare of students. With this in mind, it is our intention that everyone feels valued and our pupils are encouraged to develop their full potential in a caring and supportive environment.

Relationship of RSE to the School's Mission Statement

“ RSE aims to provide opportunities for young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way” (*Going Forward Together* , DES, 1997) It is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy.

Rosary College is committed to providing the best educational formation possible for all our students, by providing equally for all, a broadly based curriculum. We aim to provide an education for all students which will embrace their full human development: personal, academic, physical, moral and religious.

Relationships and Sexuality Education encompasses the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, sexual identity and intimacy, contributing towards the full human development of the student.

As we seek to promote the overall development of the student, this involves the integration of Relationships and Sexuality into personal understanding, growth and development within the context of our holistic educational ethos.

As outlined by the Department of Education and Skills in Circular 0037/2010, no aspect of the RSE programme including STI's, family planning, or sexual orientation can be omitted on the grounds of religious ethos.

To what and to whom will the policy apply

The policy will apply to school staff, students, board of management, parents/ guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators. The policy will apply to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality. Discussion about relationships and sexuality also takes place in classes other than SPHE/ RSE. It is therefore important that all teachers are familiar with the RSE policy.

Definition of RSE

RSE provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality. They can learn this through processes which enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework. Young people are given opportunities to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible manner. Students are provided with information and skills to critically evaluate the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values offered today. They are encouraged to make positive, responsible choices about themselves and the way they live their lives.

Relationship and Sexuality Education encompasses the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, sexual identity and intimacy.

Association of Relationship and Sexuality Education to Social Personal and Health Education

The Education Act (1998) emphasises that schools are obliged to promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them. The SPHE programme promotes the health and well-being of young people by dealing with many issues such as self-esteem, assertiveness, communication and decision making skills. Throughout all areas of S.P.H.E students are encouraged to act in a moral, caring and responsible way and are provided with clear information so that, in the context of their own lives they are able to communicate and implement informed decisions. Sexuality is a key area of development in the life of the adolescent so as well as the specific lessons of RSE, SPHE covers areas which would be relevant to the development of a healthy attitude to sexuality in oneself and one's relationship with others

Relationships and Sexuality are key elements of healthy social and personal development in all our lives, but particularly in the life of an adolescent. The RSE programme is designed to specifically deal with these issues and encourage students to deal with their own sexuality and develop healthy relationships.

RSE is one of the ten modules to be taught in SPHE at Junior Cycle and R.S.E. is mandatory for all year groups from first year to sixth year. The course will be developmental in nature and will be age appropriate.

Aims of the RSE Programme

Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme will be taught as part of the SPHE Programme. The aims of RSE are

- To help students understand and develop friendships and relationships
- To promote an understanding of sexuality
- To promote a positive attitude to student's own sexuality and in their relationships with others
- To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction
- To enable students to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework in keeping with the ethos of the school
- To provide opportunities for pupils to learn about relationships and sexuality in a way that encourages them to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible manner.

It is acknowledged that these aims are aspirational due to the time constraints of the course.

Provision of Training & Staff Development

A number of staff members have attended training in SPHE and RSE and management will continue to support staff training in this area.

Inclusion of parents/guardians

It is recognised by the school that the parents/guardians are the primary educators of the children and their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality is seen by the school as very important. There will be information provided for parents about the content and the timing of the RSE module, in the induction pack for first years, or at the start of the academic year. Informing parents/guardians of when these topics are being taught in school will enable them to discuss any further issues at home. The RSE policy will be available to download on the school's website for parents/guardians. The RSE policy has been designed in consultation with parent representatives of the school and the views of the parents/guardians/students have been taken into account before ratification of this policy. Parents/guardians and students' views may also be taken into account when reviewing the policy.

Confidentiality

Students should be asked not to disclose personal information in SPHE/RSE class. It is important that students are made aware of the limits of confidentiality. Teachers must not guarantee confidentiality. Pupils must be informed that if a teacher becomes aware that a pupil is at risk of abuse, or in breach of the law, this information will be conveyed to the Principal and the appropriate action will be taken, as set down in the Child Protection Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools (2004).

Sexual Activity: Students should be made aware that, following the passage of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006, the age of consent for sexual activity for both males and females is 17 years of age in the Republic of Ireland.

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Current Provision in the School

The main RSE programme is delivered through SPHE lessons by class teachers at Junior Cycle. The SPHE programme is scheduled for one period per week for Junior Cycle students. At senior cycle RSE is delivered in the Religious Education Class.

Relationships and Sexuality Education is one of the ten modules of the SPHE programme which is revisited each year as students mature and their needs and abilities change. Aspects of the SPHE and RSE programmes are also addressed in subjects such as Science, Biology, Religion, Home Economics and CSPE. RSE is taught as a module over six class periods within the SPHE programme. It may be appropriate and desirable to have single sex classes for some sections of the RSE programme.

Withdrawing Pupils from the Relationship and Sexuality Education Programme

The school recognises that the parent/guardian as the primary educator has the right to withdraw their child from the RSE class if they wish to do so. The Principal may wish to ask the parents/guardians to put their request in writing or the parent/guardian may be invited to discuss this with the Principal.

Parents will be informed in writing as to the content and timing of the RSE programme.

Special Needs

Students with special needs may require extra support in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up. They may also need help in learning what is appropriate

behaviour and in setting appropriate personal boundaries. They may need to be withdrawn from an RSE lesson if the material is deemed inappropriate for the individual student. Each individual student will be considered separately depending on his/her needs. This would only be done after consultation with the parents.

Visiting Speakers

The RSE programme will be delivered openly by teachers who are known and trusted by pupils. However, visiting speakers may enhance the quality of the provision as long as they are used in addition to, not instead of a planned programme of RSE. The visitor will be provided with a copy of the RSE Policy prior to the visit. A member of teaching staff will be present with the visitor during the talk to ensure that our RSE policy is strictly adhered to.

Resources

Resources are available to teachers of SPHE/RSE in the form of textbooks, workbooks, appropriate DVDs, brochures etc. Supplementary resources are stored in the SPHE storage area in the staff room and are available for teachers who wish to use them.

Students are supplied with an SPHE textbook supplemented by other materials and activities.

Links to other School Policies

It is imperative that all school policies are consistent with one another and cohesive within the framework of the overall school plan. The RSE policy is developed in this context and takes into consideration the following policies

- SPHE Policy and Guidance Policy
- Substance Use Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child Protection Guidelines

Teachers of the relevant subject areas, such as Science, Home Economics and Religious Education will be informed of the content, and the timing of the delivery of RSE, and in so far as possible, RSE will be taught in a cross-curricular way.

Guidelines for Management and Organisation of RSE

One teacher is assigned to coordinate the SPHE programme. The Religious Sisters of Charity philosophy of education is underpinned by values seeking to promote moral, spiritual, academic, social and personal development of students. All students are cherished equally and every opportunity is given to enable students to develop powers of critical reflection thereby building independence of mind. Based on this, if controversial issues arise, teachers will aim to present facts while incorporating, where possible, the ethos of the school. All issues will be dealt with in a factual and balanced manner with emphasis on health, equality and correcting stereotypes. The Child Protection Guidelines as outlined by the Department of Education & Science will be adhered to at all times.

Ratification by the Board of Management

The RSE policy was ratified by the Board of management on _____

Reviewing and Evaluating the RSE Policy:

We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this policy.

A review of the RSE policy will take place on a regular basis and may include:

- (a) Pupil feedback (i.e. student council, survey of students, suggestion/comment box etc.),
- (b) Staff review and feedback,
- (c) Parental/guardian feedback,
- (d) Feedback from representatives of the Board of Management.

Ratified by: _____

Parents' council

Student Council Reps

Staff

Date : _____ Review Date : _____

