

CTI Clonmel

Raheen College

Gaelcholáiste Chéitinn



Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

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Our philosophy in Raheen College/Gaelcholáiste Chéitinn in framing our Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy is embodied in our School Mission Statement which is as follows:

“The role of our school is to facilitate the students and the people of Clonmel and its environs in the acquisition of general and specialised education.

We seek;

- *to encourage the development of the full person through imparting knowledge and skills and through inculcating values;*
- *to bring students to an awareness of their identity in a multi-denominational, multi-cultural context;*
- *to enable the transition to further education;*
- *to encourage the participation of parents in the education of their children*
- *to respond to the educational needs of the local community.”*

The Aims of the Relationship and Sexuality Education Programme

Relationships and sexuality education which is located in the overall framework of Social, Personal and Health Education, has as its specific aims:

- Our RSE programme aims to build on the primary programme which strives to help young people learn, at home and at school, about their own development and about their friendships and relationships with others.
- We aim to provide young people with information and skills to evaluate critically the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values offered today, in order that they will make informed positive, responsible choices about themselves and the way they live their lives.

It is acknowledged that in a course of limited duration these aims are aspirational

Relationships and Sexuality Education within Social Personal and Health Education

The Draft Guidelines for RSE (NCCA, June 1995. 1.2) state that Social Personal and Health Education is “spiral, development in nature and age appropriate in content and methodology”. The RSE programme is designed to follow this principle and pattern. Apart from the specific lessons of RSE, SPHE covers other areas which would be pertinent to the development of a healthy attitude to sexuality in oneself and one's relationship with others. SPHE deals with many issues such as self-esteem, assertiveness, communication and decision making skills — all of which can contribute to the effectiveness of the RSE programme.

Organisation and Management of RSE within the school

RSE is delivered as part of the SPHE program at Junior Cycle and as part of the RE/Wellbeing program at Senior Cycle.

This policy was developed and subsequently ratified by Board of Management in 2012. It has been reviewed and amended in 2021 by Mary Rowe (SPHE/Wellbeing Coordinator) and Elaine Begley (Guidance Counsellor)

Scope

The policy will apply to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality. Discussion about relationships and sexuality also takes place in other classes other than SPHE/RSE; it is therefore important that all teachers are familiar with the RSE policy. In particular, aspects of RSE are central to subjects such as religion, biology and home economics.

The policy will apply to school staff, students, board of management, parent/guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators.

Rationale

- Sexuality is a key element of healthy social and personal development. Young people are exposed to a bewildering 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 the students.
- The Education Act 1988 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 for all students at both junior and senior level. At junior cycle, the RSE programme is part of SPHE. At senior level it is part of Religious Education/Wellbeing.
- Circulars M4/95 and M20/96 request schools to commence a process of RSE policy development and circulars 0023/2010 and 11 7/2010 RSE show best practice.
- The effectiveness of an RSE programme is dependent on a collaborative policy process involving parents/guardians, teachers, students and members of the board of management.
- Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2017
- LAOS 2016
- Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act, 2006
- SSE Self Evaluation Guidelines 2016-2020 were all considered in the amendment of this policy

Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school

The RSE policy acknowledges the importance of SPHE/RSE being taught in the context of a whole school climate that is inclusive and respectful.

Raheen College/Gaelcholáiste Chéitinn through its academic, pastoral and spiritual undertakings strives to provide for the holistic development and welfare of each of the students in its care as outlined in our Mission Statement, ethos and vision.

Spiritual, moral and ethical issues will arise when teaching RSE. The RSE policy guides teachers in the treatment of such issues in accordance with the ethos of the school. It is important that teachers of the RSE understand that their role is to express the views of the whole school community on these sensitive issues, and not their own personal views. In this regard, it should be noted that;

- We will deliver all aspects of the RSE curriculum, including those in relation to sexual orientation, contraception, sexually transmitted infections etc. This will be done within the context in which teaching of the programme is informed by the school ethos.
- A school can express its ethos while at the same time facilitating students in discussing a range of views in relation to topics within the RSE programme.

Goals/Objectives of RSE Policy

- The policy ensures clarity and consensus on how RSE is taught in our school.
- It articulates the relationship of RSE to SPHE.
- It articulates the aims of the RSE programme.
- It clarifies the rights, roles and responsibilities of all within the school community, in relation to the RSE programme, with particular reference to school staff, students, parents/guardians and the board of management.
- It ensures that teachers, parents/guardians and students understand how the teaching of RSE is linked to the school ethos.
- It provides information on the practicalities of delivering the programme.

RSE Policy — Key Measures (content of policy)

A. Provision of Training and Staff Development

- All teachers involved in this work do not necessarily have to be ‘experts’ on the issues concerned. However, they do require sensitivity to the needs of the group, an ability to deal with questions openly/honestly and preparedness to refer to more expert advice if necessary. The skills acquired in general teaching apply also to SPHE. Furthermore, many teachers have training in related areas such as counselling. Some teachers have expert training in the specific areas of health, relationships and sexuality education.
- SPHE co-ordinator is: Mary Rowe
- The school will facilitate teachers to obtain expert training in this field, bearing in mind the overall budgetary framework and the need for the ongoing teaching and learning programme of the school to continue with as little disturbance as possible.
- Consideration is given to gender balance prior to teaching RSE .

Inclusion of Parents/Guardians

- Parent and student voice were considered in the overall development of the policy.
- Parents/Guardians are informed prior to commencement of RSE program

The Education Act 1998 (section 30, (2) (e)) provided that a student is not required to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parent or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student. Hence, parents have the right to opt their child out of the sensitive issues in RSE if they wish to do so. It is the responsibility of the school to make alternative arrangements for the student in this situation. The school will ask the parents to put their request in writing. The course content and policy are available online on the school website (www.raheencollege.ie)(www.gaelcholaistecheitinn.ie) which parents may view

Ethical/Moral Considerations-Guidelines for Teachers

Answering Questions:

While it is important to create an environment in RSE in which students can discuss issues openly, teachers may not be able to answer all questions asked by students and can set appropriate limits. Teachers should use their professional judgement guided by the age of the students, the RSE curriculum and the RSE policy for the school. Students are encouraged to write down any question which the teacher can review and answer as appropriate in the next class

Confidentiality:

While students should not be encouraged to disclose personal or private information in SPHE/RSE classes there may be times when they do need to talk about their own lives. Confidentiality should be respected unless a teacher feels that the child is at risk. In such a case the appropriate action should be taken in accordance with the procedures set down in the Children First: National Guidance for protection and welfare of children, 2017. Where a teacher has a concern, he/she are mandated to report to DLP (John McCarthy and/or DDLP (Tina Kennedy). It is important that students are made aware of the limits of confidentiality and that teachers do not give unconditional guarantees of confidentiality.

Sexual Activity:

Teachers should give young people information on the age of consent which, following the passage of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006 is 17 years of age for both males and females.

Practical Issues

- SPHE is timetabled in all junior cycle classes.
- RSE is taught to TY, 5th and 6th year within RE/Wellbeing.
- RSE is taught through the medium of English in the Gaelcholáiste to ensure complete understanding of terminology in preparation for the world in which we live.
- Boys and girls are taught together for all aspects of SPHE/RSE
- As per guidelines, RSE is taught by subject teachers and not by guest speakers.
- Students who may be pregnant will be treated with the utmost respect and compassion. All parents will have previously been invited to view the RSE policy/course content. If the parent/guardian or student has an issue, they will contact us and accommodations will be made.
- A parent/guardian who requests for the withdrawal of student(s) from the RSE programme will be advised to make an appointment with the Principal to discuss accommodations.

Links to Other Policies and Plans

The following policies and plans have been considered in the development and review of policy;

- A. Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and welfare of Children (2017)
- B. Education Act 1998
- C. Framework for Junior Cycle 2015
- D. Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines 2017
- E. Wellbeing Plan
- F. Whole school Guidance Plan
- G. Anti Bullying Policy
- H. Substance Use Policy
- I. Health and Safety Plan
- J. Code of Positive Behaviour Plan
- K. Critical Incident Management Plan
- L. Special Education Needs Plan
- M. Literacy and Numeracy Plan

Implementation Arrangements, Roles and Responsibilities

- ❖ The Board of Management is assigned the role of co-ordinating implementation of this policy.
- ❖ Principal is assigned role of timetabling, ensuring provision of RSE requirement is met.
- ❖ SPHE Co-Ordinator: Mary Rowe
- ❖ SPHE and RSE teachers: A comprehensive list of all those teaching SPHE (see SPHE Folder, updated annually)

Resources

The school will purchase appropriate RSE teaching materials which have been identified by staff as useful and which have been approved by the principal and by PDST/HSE/DES.

No teacher is allowed to show material that has not been approved.

Monitoring the implementation of the policy

Effective policy requires constant monitoring and evaluation to ensure successful implementation and to review what adjustments may be necessary from time to time. In order that the tasks of monitoring and evaluation are effective considerations of the following will apply:

Monitoring

The SPHE Co-Ordinator will monitor policy implementation. The terms of reference are as follows; prepare a short written report/evaluation for the Board of Management and staff on the implementation of the policy at key stages. At the reporting stage the Board, and in its turn, the staff, should discuss any reactions, concerns, suggestions that arise or that may arise during the course of implementation.

Reviewing and Evaluating the Policy

The policy will be reviewed and evaluated at certain pre-determined times under the direction of the Board of Management. Ongoing review and evaluation will take 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 review and evaluation within the framework of school planning.

To review and evaluate the policy, it will be necessary to gauge the impact and effectiveness of

the policy by examining the extent to which:

- RSE is being successfully taught through SPHE and R.E. for all relevant students.
- Where SPHE may not be timetabled, eg at Senior cycle, ensuring that these students are receiving RSE
- Resource materials are available to teachers
- Appropriate in-service for teachers is available and relevant teachers are availing of it
- Staff is aware of the policy
- Students are aware of the policy
- Parents/ guardians are aware of the policy
- Feedback is received from teachers, other school staff, students, parents/guardians, members of the Board of Management.

USE: the role of the teacher

How a teacher facilitates the RSE class and the relationship established with students are key elements in determining the effectiveness of RSE. The same is true for the whole SPHE programme.

A. Atmosphere

While all subject areas on the curriculum demand that students are respected and valued, it is essential to the success of the RSE programme that a supportive atmosphere be created and maintained in the classroom. The atmosphere should be relaxed and more informal than in other subject areas.

B. Language and tone

This supportive atmosphere is created by the use of appropriate language by the teacher and the use of a non-judgmental tone. The language of encouragement should be used where possible and student input reinforced and built into the lesson in a creative and constructive way.

C. Student-teacher relationship

Teachers of SPHE and RSE must be seen to be comfortable with the range of topics which might be covered in the programme. Students must see teachers as genuine and authentic people. Teachers of RSE must communicate an openness to the students' own opinions and ideas. At the same time ground rules for effective classroom management must be negotiated with students, agreed and constantly monitored.

RSE: training

All involved in the development and delivery of a programme of RSE in a second level school will require the support of a range of training and in-career development opportunities. Teachers who have already had training in the area of SPHE will be a valuable resource for others who are undertaking the delivery of RSE.

Support and training will be needed in the following areas:

Programme content

Teachers will need a high degree of familiarity with the materials being used in the school's RSE programme. Training in the physical aspects of human sexuality diagrams etc. - is one area which may require attention. Training should also help teachers to be at ease with their own sexuality.

Student/Teacher relationship

The creation and sustaining of the classroom atmosphere outlined above is a specialist task requiring particular skills. Training in these skills will be necessary, particularly for those who have had no experience of or training in SPHE.

RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY EDUCATION IN RAHEEN COLLEGE & GAELCHOLÁISTE CHÉITINN

- RSE teachers will always try to make RSE lessons current, relevant and age appropriate.
- There may be cases when slight changes to the outline plan are necessary in response to changes in the law, updated guidelines or issues which may arise with a particular year group.
- All lessons will be taught with suitable resources recommended for teaching RSE in Irish schools.
- The RSE module of SPHE will always be preceded by the Friendship module.
- Notification will be sent to parents/guardians prior to commencing the RSE module.
- On the 5th lesson, teachers will give students the opportunity to write any questions they may have in relation to RSE. These can be answered as appropriate in the last lesson.

<p><u>First year lessons:</u></p> <p>(1) Class Rules for RSE, physical changes in the body, emotional and social changes during puberty.</p> <p>(2) Human reproductive system – Male</p> <p>(3) Human reproductive system – Female & menstruation</p> <p>(4) Sexual Intercourse and conception</p> <p>(5) Peer pressure, Healthy friendships and Consent.</p> <p>(6) Questions & Answers</p>	<p><u>Fourth year lessons:</u></p> <p>(1) Online Sexual Coercion and exploitation as a crime. Consent Laws.</p> <p>(2) How online sexual coercion and exploitation occurs and how it affects young people.</p> <p>(3) Responding to sexual exploitation and victim blaming.</p> <p>(4) Transgender identity. Prejudice and discrimination.</p> <p>(5) Questions & Answers</p>
<p><u>Second year lessons:</u></p> <p>(1) Building a healthy relationship & relationship pressures.</p> <p>(2) The influence of friends, social media and mass media on sexuality and relationships</p> <p>(3) Pregnancy & stages of pregnancy</p> <p>(4) The law on sexting and sharing of intimate content. Consent Laws.</p> <p>(5) When online sharing goes wrong and victim blaming</p> <p>(6) Understanding Gender and using correct terminology. Questions & Answers</p>	<p><u>Fifth year lessons:</u></p> <p>(1) What we value in relationship/healthy relationships. LGBTQ+</p> <p>(2) The influence of self-esteem on relationships</p> <p>(3) Human reproduction and fertility</p> <p>(4) Contraception methods</p> <p>(5) Sexually Transmitted Infections</p> <p>(6) Questions & Answers</p>
<p><u>Third year lessons:</u></p> <p>(1) Consent Laws. Sharing of intimate content.</p> <p>(2) Rights and responsibilities in relationships</p> <p>(3) Sexual orientation and coming out to self/others</p> <p>(4) Teenage pregnancy and contraception Cervical, Ovarian & Testicular Cancers</p> <p>(5) Prejudice and Discrimination towards gender and sexual orientation.</p> <p>(6) Questions and Answers</p>	<p><u>Sixth year lessons:</u></p> <p>(1) Understanding & communicating boundaries.</p> <p>(2) Consent Laws and decision making</p> <p>(3) Understanding male & female fertility and infertility.</p> <p>(4) Sexually Transmitted Infections</p> <p>(5) LGBTQ+</p> <p>(6) Questions & Answers</p>

(1) In the absence of Transition Year in Raheen College, Lessons 1&2 from Fourth Year lessons will be incorporated into Third Year lessons. Lessons 4&5 will be incorporated into Sixth Year Lessons. The increase of class time from 40 minutes to 58 mins will allow for this.

(2) Provision for SEN:

SEN Coordinators and ASD Coordinators will be given a copy of Lesson Plans and list of appropriate resources. If a student chooses to opt out of the RSE class with the larger group, the coordinators will deliver the RSE at a suitable level and facilitate any questions which may arise. The parent/guardian will be informed that the student has chosen to opt out of the class instruction.

Ratified by BOM on: 16/6/21

Signatures:


Chairperson


Secretary