

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy. Passed at Bom 9-9-15

Introduction

The 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 was developed after consultation between the SPHE teachers, the Principal, a parent, students and the Board of Management.

School Information

Ard Scoil Rath Iomghain is an ETB, co-educational, multi-denominational, multicultural post primary school located in Rathangan, Co. Kildare. 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 is a dynamic and vibrant centre of teaching and learning. 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. 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. The school motto is ARD, Achieve, Respect and Develop which also aptly describes the aims of SPHE and RSE.

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.

Scope:

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

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. Relationships and Sexuality Education seeks to provide children with opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of relationships and human sexuality, through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework. (Pg 7, Interim Guidelines).

Relationship of RSE to SPHE

The Education Act (1998) emphasises that schools are obliged to promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them. As part of the SPHE programme students are encouraged to develop their own self confidence and build relationships with others. The aim of the SPHE programme is to promote physical, mental and emotional health and well being. It also encourages the development of a healthy attitude to sexuality. 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 relationships.

RSE is one of the ten modules to be taught in SPHE at junior cycle and 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 students 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 ways that encourage them to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

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

Key Measures

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. 2. 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. The Policy will be included in the information pack on open night. Prior notice of the commencement and content of the first year module will be given to parents / guardians with the Christmas reports (see appendix 1).

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 a parent representative of the school and the views of the parents/guardians have been taken into account before ratification of this policy. Parents/guardians views may also be taken into account when reviewing the policy.

Ethical/Moral considerations:

Answering questions: While it is important to create an environment in SPHE/RSE in which students can discuss issues openly, teachers may not be able to answer all questions asked by students and can set limits. It may not be appropriate to deal with a student's explicit questions in a classroom situation e.g. questions on oral sex or abortion. The teacher may say that it is inappropriate to answer the question in class and may exercise his/her professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, in deciding whether to answer the question privately after class has finished. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised, he/she should seek advice from the Principal.

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. In circumstances where a teacher becomes aware that a pupil is engaging in underage sexual activity, the teacher must refer this immediately to the designated liaison person (DLP) i.e. the Principal.

Offering Advice:

The school's function is to provide a general education about sexual matters and not to offer individual advice or counselling on aspects of sexual behaviour. However, teachers may provide pupils with education and information about where and from whom, they can receive confidential sexual advice and treatment, e.g. their doctor. Advice offered should not be directive and should be age appropriate to the student.

Family planning/Contraception:

The subject of family planning is covered within the senior cycle RSE programme. However, the topic may need to be addressed before senior cycle. Students will be provided with information about methods of contraception. This topic will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issues in a non-directive way.

Sexuality:

The subject of sexual orientation is included in the RSE curriculum at senior cycle. The topic may need to be addressed before senior cycle. Homosexuality is dealt with in the context of all RSE discussions as a normal part of life and not as a separate entity, it should be discussed in a clear and open manner.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs):

While awareness of STIs is one of the objectives of the second year SPHE/RSE syllabus, STIs are mainly addressed in senior cycle. This topic will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner.

Practical issues:

SPHE is timetabled once a week for Junior Cycle students. RSE is taught as a module over six class periods within the SPHE programme. Senior cycle students receive RSE lessons as part of the Religion programme.

RSE/SPHE class groups may be as many as 30 students. Boys and girls will be taught together in their class groups. It may be appropriate and desirable to have single sex classes for some sections of the RSE programme.

Withdrawing pupils from the RSE programme:

The school recognises that the parent/guardian 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. We respectfully invite the parent/guardian to give reasons for withdrawal as sometimes this can resolve misunderstandings. Parents may be offered access to appropriate information or resources. All students must receive RSE at Junior and Senior level, therefore students cannot be removed from RSE classes for resource etc.

Special Needs:

Students with special needs may need more help than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up: they may also need help in learning what behaviours are and are not acceptable, and in being warned and prepared against abuse by others. 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.

Using visiting speakers:

The RSE programme will be delivered openly by teachers who are known and trusted by pupils. However visitors 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. This topic is dealt with further in the overall SPHE policy in line with department guidelines.

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 work room and are available for teachers who wish to use them. Students are supplied with an SPHE workbook 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

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

Roles and responsibilities in implementing policy:

All partners, including Board of Management, Parents/Guardians, School Management and teaching staff, have roles and responsibilities in ensuring the implementation of the RSE Policy in our school. Teachers delivering the RSE programme will attend training provided by the SPHE support service.

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.

Appendix 1.

ARD SCOIL

RATH IOMGHÁIN

1st years will be receiving their RSE classes in S.P.H.E. Please read this RSE booklet, if you have any concerns or question please contact Ms. Kavanagh.

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION.

THE FULL RSE POLICY WAS GIVEN TO PARENT/GUARDIANS ON OPEN NIGHT AND IS ALSO AVAILABLE ON THE SCHOOL WEBSITE.

WWW.ARDSKOILRATHANGAN.IE

SCHOOL MISSION

STATEMENT

ACHIEVE ,RESPECT, DEVELOP

This school being a source of pride in the community aspires to the holistic development of it's students embracing the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual dimensions of their lives.

Students will be challenged and encouraged to achieve their full potential through the recognition and reward of their effort and responsibilities, allowing them to feel confident in their ability to take their place as valued members of our society. Cultural differences will be respected.

The good name and reputation of the school as an institution must be nurtured and protected for the benefit of all pupils. Each of the Partners, teachers, parents and students has roles and responsibilities which must be fulfilled if successful educational outcomes are to be achieved.

Social, personal and health education

Social, personal and health education (S.P.H.E) contributes to developing the work of the school in promoting the health and well being of children and young people. This happens in the context of their emotional, moral, social and spiritual growth, as well as their intellectual, physical, political,

religious and creative development. A supportive school

climate, where the needs and well being of all members of the school community are considered, is essential to the best possible provision for S.P.H.E..

Social, personal and health education looks at issues such as relationships at home and in school, building self-esteem, and learning skills of communication, decision making and expressing feelings in an appropriate way. It also includes giving clear information on a range of topics, including healthy eating, alcohol, drugs, human growth and development, safety and social responsibility, and environmental issues.

Relationships and sexuality

Relationships and sexuality education (R.S.E.) is a life long process of acquiring knowledge and understanding of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. This education is delivered consciously by parents, teachers, peers, adults and the media.

At post primary level the programme builds on the primary school programme and aims to provide young people with information and skills to critically evaluate the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values offered today, and so make positive, responsible choices about themselves and the way they live their lives.

IN SCHOOL, R.S.E WILL BE TAUGHT IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL, PERSONAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND IN SENIOR LEVEL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

OVERVIEW OF YEAR 1

Modules:

Topics:

SEPTEMBER 2015

Belonging and integrating

Coping with change

Joining a new group

Appreciating difference

Bullying is everyone's business

Coping with loss

Self Management

Organising myself

Organising my work at home and in school

Balance in my life

Communication Skills

Express yourself

Learning to listen

Passive, Assertive and Aggressive communication

Physical Health

Body care

Healthy Eating

Exercise

Friendship

Making new friends

A good friend

Relationships & Sexuality

Me as unique and different

Friendship

Changes at Adolescence

The reproductive system

Images of males and females

Respecting myself and others

Emotional Health

Recognising feelings

Respecting my feelings & the feelings of others.

Influences & decisions

My Heroes

Substance Use

Why use Drugs?

Alcohol: the facts

Smoking and its effects

Smoking: why? Why not?

OVERVIEW OF YEAR 2

Modules:

Topics:

SEPTEMBER 2015

Belonging and integrating	Looking back. Looking forward Group Work Family ties
Self Management	What motivates me? Study Skills
Communication Skills	Assertive communication
Physical Health	Body care and Body image.
Friendship	The changing nature of friendship
Relationships & Sexuality	From conception to birth Recognising & expressing feelings and emotions Peer pressure and other influences Managing relationships Making responsible decisions Health and personal safety.
Emotional Health	Self-confidence Body Image
Influences & Decisions	Positive and negative influences Making decisions
Substance Use	The effects of Drugs Alcohol and its effects Alcohol: Why? Why not? Cannabis and its effects Cannabis: Why? Why not?
Personal Safety	Accidents at home and in school Feeling threatened

OVERVIEW OF YEAR 3

Modules:

Topics:

SEPTEMBER 2015

Belonging and integrating	Goal-setting for 3rd year Work contract
Self Management	Organising my time Planning for effective study Coping with examinations
Communication Skills	Learning to communicate Communication in situations of conflict
Physical Health	Physical exercise Relaxation Diet
Friendship	Boyfriends and Girlfriends
Relationships & Sexuality	Body Image Where am I now? Relationships—Whats important? The 3 R'S: Respect, Rights and Responsibilities Conflict
Emotional Health	Stress Feelings and moods
Influences & Decisions	Making a good decision
Substance Use	Ecstasy: the realities Heroin: the realities
Personal Safety	Recognising unsafe situations Violence Help agencies.

Topics for senior cycle students will build on.....

elements covered in junior cycle and will treat issues in ways suitable for the young adult

SEPTEMBER 2015

Topics will include:

Human growth and development:

Fertility and family planning,

a deeper understanding of pregnancy and the developing foetus.

Human sexuality:

Treating women and men with equal respect, sexual harassment,

Sexual abuse, rape, legal rights: voluntary and statutory agencies,

Making moral and healthy choices regarding sexual activity.

Human relationships:

An awareness of what constitutes a loving relationship,

the long term commitment involved in marriage,

parenting and family life.