



RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE) POLICY

St. Paul's Secondary School is a co-educational stand alone rural School of approximately 340 students.

Our School Mission Statement

St. Paul's School was founded by the Mercy Sisters but is now under the trusteeship of CEIST. In St. Paul's, the academic and personal development of each individual is nurtured in a caring and safe environment. We strive to enhance the self-esteem of each individual in an atmosphere of mutual respect. As a Catholic School, we endeavour to apply the core values of the Gospel through all aspects of School life.

Definition of RSE

RSE, in our School, aims to support the work of the parents/guardians who are the primary educators. RSE is a developmental process through experiential learning in which pupils participate to help cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, especially in the area of sexuality and relationships. RSE involves the whole person and is a life long process.

Relationship of RSE to SPHE

The RSE Programme follows the principle and pattern of the SPHE Programme in that it is developmental in nature and age, appropriate in content and methodology. Apart from the specific RSE lessons, the themes and topics covered in SPHE are 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.

The aims of Our Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme

Relationships and sexuality education has as its specific aims:-

- **To help pupils understand and develop friendships and relationships.**
- **To promote an understanding of sexuality.**

- **To promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's relationship with others.**
- **To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction.**
- **To enable pupils to develop attitudes and values towards their own sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework in keeping with the Policy of the School.**
- **To provide opportunities for pupils to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.**

In a course of limited duration, it is acknowledged that these aims are aspirational.

Guidelines for the management and organisation of Relationships and Sexuality Education in our School.

Arrangements regarding the teaching of the Programme and the deployment of staff will be made by the Principal.

Informing and Involving Parents/Guardians:

Parents/Guardians are the primary educators of their children and their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality is seen by the School as very important. This Policy has been designed in consultation with Parents Association representatives and the views expressed by parents/guardians will be taken into account when reviewing the Policy. A copy of this Policy will be made available to any parent/guardian on request to the School Office.

Offering Advice:

The School's function is to provide a general education about sexual matters and issues and not to offer individual advice, information or counselling on aspects of sexual behaviour and contraception – however sources of professional information and advice will be identified when appropriate. 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 or other suitable agency. Advice offered should not be directive and should be appropriate to the age of the pupil.

Explicit Questions:

It may not be appropriate to deal with some explicit questions in class. Teachers may choose to say that it is not appropriate to deal with that question at this time. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised, he/she should seek advice from the SPHE Co-Ordinator of the Principal. When deciding whether or not to answer questions, the teacher should consider the age and readiness of the students, the RSE Programme content, the Ethos of the School and the RSE Policy.

Confidentiality:

It is School policy that in circumstances where a pupil is considered at some risk of any type of abuse or in breach of the law, the teacher must refer this immediately to the Principal. The Principal will decide whether to inform the parents/guardians and/or appropriate authorities.

The following is also School policy:-

- **teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality;**
- **pupils must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the Principal and possibility to parents/guardians if the Principal decides that it is in the best interests of the pupil to notify parents/guardians.**
- **Teachers must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard the information**
- **Teachers must indicate clearly to pupils when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential – the pupil can then decide whether to proceed or not.**

The Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary Schools state in 4.1.1. and 4.2.1.

4.1.1. If a member of staff receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse, he/she should, without delay, report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person in that school. A written record of the report should be made and placed in a secure location by the Designated Liaison Person. The need for confidentiality at all times, as previously referred to in Chapter 1 Paragraph 1.2 of these guidelines, should be borne in mind. The supports of the School should continue to be made available to the child.

4.2.1. If the Designated Liaison Person is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation, he/she should report the matter to the relevant Health Board immediately.

The division between biological and non-biological aspects of Sex Education:

1. Relevant sections of this Policy are made available to parents/guardians in the School and it is the parents'/guardians' right to withdraw their child from sensitive aspects of RSE – parents/guardians will always be provided with a full copy of this Policy following a request to do so.
2. Issues such as over population and birth control are met in a minor way in subjects such as Geography and RE. However, as any discussion is limited and set within the context of the other subject concerned, it does not constitute part of the RSE Programme.
3. Parents/Guardians do not have to give reasons for withdrawal, but we respectfully invite them to do so – sometimes we can then resolve misunderstandings. Once a parent's/guardian's request to withdraw is made, that request must be complied with until revoked by the parent/guardian.

What we do if a request for withdrawal from the RSE Programme is made by a parent/guardian:-

- (a) we discuss the nature of the concerns with the child's parent/guardian;
- (b) We consider whether the Programme can be amended or improved in a way that will reassure parents/guardians – care is taken not to undermine the integrity of the RSE Programme and the entitlement of the other pupils.
- (c) We attempt to ensure that where a pupil is withdrawn, there is no disruption to other parts of their education.
- (d) We point out that pupils who have been withdrawn are vulnerable to teasing – we therefore attempt to cause minimal embarrassment to the pupil and minimal disruption to the Programme.
- (e) We also point out that pupils may receive inaccurate information from their peers;
- (f) We offer the parents/guardians access to appropriate information and resources.

Visiting speakers and others:

The School acknowledges that the classroom teacher is the best person to deliver SPHE and RSE. However, visitors can enhance the quality of the provision as long as they are invited in addition to, not instead of a planned programme of RSE.

Guidelines as per D.E.S. Circular 0023/2010

- **“Visitors to the classroom or School, particularly those engaging directly with students, should be aware of relevant School policies, including the School’s Child Protection Policy, RSE Policy and Substance Use Policy. Any such visit must be carefully planned in advance in line with the relevant whole-school SPHE/RSE Programme(s) and Policies.**
- **Talks/programmes delivered by outside agencies or speakers must be consistent with and complementary to the School’s Ethos and SPHE/RSE Programme(s). Visits should be planned, researched and implemented in partnership with School personnel.**
- **Relevant teachers need to liaise with and be involved with all visitors and external agencies working with the School and the whole staff needs to be made aware of same.**
- **It is strongly recommended that parents/guardians should be consulted and made aware of any such visiting people or agencies to classrooms/schools.**
- **The School’s SPHE/RSE Co-Ordinator may also help in the process of whole-school planning and co-ordination to support the effective implementation of SPHE/RSE.**
- **It is of the utmost importance that classroom teachers remain in the classroom with the students and retain a central role in delivery of the core subject matter of the SPHE/RSE Programme(s). The presence of the classroom teacher should ensure that the School follows**

appropriate procedures for dealing with any issue(s) that may arise as a result of the external input(s).

- **All programmes and events delivered by visitors and external agencies must use appropriate, evidence-based methodologies with clear educational outcomes. Such programmes are best delivered by those specifically qualified to work with the young people for whom the programmes are designated.**
- **All programmes, talks, interventions and events should be evaluated by students and teachers in terms of the subject matter, messages, structure, methodology and proposed learning outcomes”.**
- **In order to inform the visitor of the precise requirements of a group and to make better use of the time of the visitor, it is advisable for the group to draw up questions in advance and these should be forwarded to the visitor. This will involve the pupils in the visit and will make the experience more relevant for them – it also facilitates planning.**
- **The School Office should be informed of the date and name of the visitor.**
- **The visitor should be welcomed at the main door by a pupil from the class.**
- **At the end of the session, a vote of thanks should be given by a pupil and the visitor escorted to the main door.**

Homosexuality:

Teachers do not promote any one life-style as the only acceptable one for society and therefore, it is inevitable and natural that homosexuality will be discussed during a programme of sex education. One of the advantages of exploring issues concerning homosexuality is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions and address prejudice. Discussion of homosexuality should be appropriate to the age of the pupils and kept within the Ethos of the School.

Contraception:

The topic will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issues in a non-directive way and kept within the Ethos of the School.

Special Needs:

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

Resources:

The School is committed to providing relevant RSE resources for teaching the RSE course. These will have been identified by staff as useful and which have been approved by the Principal, within the normal budgetary framework and as general School resources allow.

Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the RSE Programme:

We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this Programme. Specifically important to the RSE Programme are:-

- (a) **pupil feedback;**
- (b) **staff review and feedback;**
- (c) **parental feedback**

RSE THEMES AND TOPICS

<u>HUMAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT</u>	<u>HUMAN SEXUALITY</u>	<u>HUMAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT</u>