



CBS Thurles

Relationships and Sexuality Policy

MISSION STATEMENT:

To create a Christian, caring community of learning in which each member

- Is encouraged to recognise and develop his/her talents and abilities to the full
- Is respected as a unique human being and
- Enjoys a sense of confidence and belonging.

DEFINITION OF RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE):

RSE is a developmental process through experiential learning in which pupils participate to help cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships.

RELATIONSHIP OF RSE TO SPHE:

The *Draft Guidelines for RSE* (NCCA, June 1995, 1.2) state that Social Personal and Health Education is “spiral, developmental 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.

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 cycle. At Junior Cycle, the RSE programme is part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). It is the responsibility of the Board of Management to ensure that an RSE programme is made available to all students.

‘In deciding to include a Relationships and Sexuality Education programme (RSE) as part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) in school curricula, the right and duty of parents to provide for the religious, moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children is acknowledged. While the home is the natural environment in which RSE takes place most parents look to the schools for support in fulfilling their obligations to their children in this area of development. Consequently the school is seen as playing a supportive and complementary role to the home in this task. It is envisaged that this will be achieved by involving parents with management and teachers and, where appropriate, with pupils, in a collaborative exercise towards school policy development’.

Dept. of Ed. Circular M4/95 RSE

Circulars [M22/00](#) and [M11/03](#) required schools to introduce the SPHE Junior Cycle Curriculum on a phased basis, with full implementation by September 2003.

In 1997 the Department of Education and Science issued '[Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy Guidelines](#)' to assist schools with the process of developing a policy for RSE.

In CBS Thurles the RSE Programme will be delivered within the context of our school's SPHE Programme. SPHE provides students with a unique opportunity to develop skills and competencies, to learn about themselves, to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, their personal lives and their social development. SPHE develops the work of the school in promoting the health and well-being of students.

Within this context, RSE aims specifically to provide structured opportunities for students to acquire a knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) aims to provide opportunities for children and young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

RSE has as its specific aims:

- To help young people understand and develop friendships and relationships
- To promote an understanding of sexuality
- To promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and to one's relationships with others
- To promote a knowledge of and respect for reproduction
- To enable young people to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in amoral, spiritual and social framework.

- To provide opportunities for pupils to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

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

The management of RSE in CBS Thurles

- 1. Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff will be made by the RSE co-ordinator in consultation with the Principal.**

Our RSE Programme will be structured with specific involvement and links to subjects such as Religious Education, Science, Biology, Physical Education, CSPE and English.

The RSE component will take approximately 5-6 classes over each school year.

Those involved in teaching it will draw up the RSE Programme.

The programme will be in line with the NCCA Curriculum and Guidelines. The curriculum and the guidelines, are available in the school for parents who wish to see them.

In delivering the programme teachers will show sensitivity to the needs of the group and the school.

The school's management will provide a commitment to the programme by facilitating its implementation through teacher recruitment and training, ongoing in-service, timetabling and consultation.

The post holder (Ms. Kathryn O'Brien) with responsibility for RSE, shall liaise with SPHE teachers. The programme will be delivered by teachers timetabled for SPHE at junior level and by those timetabled for RE at senior level.

The approach to teaching of topics within RSE will involve giving students clear information, building up their self-esteem and helping them to learn to communicate, to make decisions and to express feelings in an appropriate way.

- 2. Withdrawing pupils from the RSE programme**

Parents 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 request to withdraw is made, that request must be complied with until revoked by the parent.

3. **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 agencies. Advice offered should not be directive and should be appropriate to the age of the pupil.

4. **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 RSE co-ordinator or 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.

5. **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 and/or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling.

The school follows these guidelines

- a) Teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality.
- b) Pupils must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the Principal and possibly to parents if the Principal decides that it is in the best interests of the pupil to notify parents
- c) Teachers must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard the information
- d) 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.

6. Using visiting speakers and others

a) It is agreed that most of the RSE programme is best discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by the pupils. However, visitors can enhance the quality of the provision as long as they are used in addition to, not instead of a planned programme of RSE.

b) The RSE Co-ordinator will provide the visitor, well in advance of the visit, with a copy of this RSE policy. After gaining approval from the Principal for the visit the organiser makes the visitor aware of the ethos of the school and the manner of delivery of the RSE programme. Issues to consider are:

- i) The degree of explicitness of the content and presentation;
- ii) Will the visitor be accompanied by teaching staff?
- iii) Will the staff take an active role in the visitor's activities?
- iv) How will the visitor be prepared for the visit?
- v) How will the visit be built upon and followed up?

c) Visitors should be given advance notice of the composition of the class and an idea of how their contribution fits into the scheme of work.

d) 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.

e) The Office should be informed of the date and name of the visitor.

f) Where applicable, refreshments should be arranged with the catering staff.

g) The visitor should be welcomed at the main door.

h) At the end of the session a vote of thanks should be given by a pupil and the visitor escorted to the main door after refreshments.

i) A written acknowledgement of their contribution should be sent to the visitor.

7. Sexual Orientation

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

8. **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.

9. **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.

10. **Ongoing support, development and review**

Training:

(a) 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 a preparedness to refer to more expert advice if necessary. The skills acquired in general teaching apply also to health education. 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 and will be encouraged to train other teachers.

(b) 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.

11. **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, within the normal budgetary framework and as general school resources allow.

There is no prescribed resource for RSE, however, the following are recommended:

- SPHE Resource materials for Relationships and Sexuality Education prepared by the NCCA and approved by the Department of Education and Science (1999)
- Trust (RSE) Senior cycle
- On your own two feet
- B4U Decide
- Growing up LGBT
- Cancer Awareness Programme
- Mental Health Matters
- Be safe Be wise

- **Web sites:**
- www.sphe.ie
- www.pdst.ie
- www.sess.ie
- www.healthpromotion.ie
- www.webwise.ie
- www.thinkcontraception.ie
- www.tes.ie
- www.ted.ie
- www.Kahoot.ie
- www.mentimeter.ie
- www.teni.ie
- www.crisispregnancy.ie
- www.glen.ie
- www.belongto.org

12. Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the RSE programme

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

Approved by the Board of Management
October 2014