

COLÁISTE / GAELCHOLÁISTE CHOILM

BALLINCOLLIG

CO. CORK

**SCHOOL POLICY ON RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY
EDUCATION**

Policy 2013

Ratified by Board of Management March 14th 2013

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

Introduction

Coláiste/Gaelcholáiste Choilm's RSE policy reflects the core values and ethos of the school, as outlined in the school's mission statement below.

Mission Statement

'In Coláiste Choilm we endeavor to create the context in which the miracle of growth can happen for each person in our school'

RSE is a developmental process through experiential learning in which pupils participate to help cultivate a healthy attitude towards the area of sexuality and relationships. A stable, secure learning environment is an essential requirement to achieve this goal. This policy has been developed in line with the mission, vision and aims of our School which has at its core, the care of the student

In Coláiste/Gaelcholáiste Choilm we aim to build an inclusive, warm, caring, respectful and compassionate school atmosphere in which every person feels accepted, trusted and valued.

Spiritual, moral and ethical issues will arise when teaching RSE. Teachers of RSE understand that their role is to deliver all aspects of the RSE curriculum. The teaching of the programme is informed by the school's ethos.

Scope

This policy applies 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 school staff, students, board of management, parents/ guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators are familiar with the policy.

Rationale

The effectiveness of an RSE programme is dependent on a collaborative policy process involving all teachers, parents/guardians, members of the board of management and students. The following points give recognition and rationale to the process

- 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 their students.
- The [Education Act, 1998](#) 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 cycle. At Junior Cycle, the RSE programme is part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).
- Circulars [M4/95](#) and [M20/96](#) request schools to commence a process of RSE policy development.
- The effectiveness of an RSE programme is dependent on a collaborative policy process involving teachers, parents/guardians, members of the board of management and students.
- Circular 0037/2010 require schools to develop a RSE policy and programme, and to implement them for all students from First Year to Sixth Year.
- Access to sexual and health education is an important right for students under the terms of the Article 11.2 of the European Social Charter.

Aims and Objectives

Aims (Aspirational)

- To help young people understand, develop and respect friendships and relationships
- To promote an understanding and respect towards sexuality

- To promote a positive attitude and acceptance to one's sexuality and the sexuality of others
- To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction
- To enable our students to develop positive attitudes and values in a moral/spiritual/social context

Objectives

- The policy will ensure clarity and consensus on how RSE is taught in the school.
- It will articulate the relationship of RSE to SPHE.
- It will articulate the aims of the RSE programme.
- It will clarify 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/trustees.
- It will ensure that teachers, parents/guardians and students understand how the teaching of RSE is linked to the school ethos.
- It will provide information on the practicalities of delivering the programme.

Key Measures

A. Provision of Training and Staff Development

- The co-ordinator for SPHE 2017/2018 is Niamh Spillane. The role of the co-ordinator is as follows
 - Convening meetings of the SPHE Department (one per term)
 - Support for teachers (particularly those new to the subject)
 - Organisation and updating of department file and resources
 - Co-ordinating the evaluation of the programme at end of school year and re-draft if required
 - Attendance and input at Pastoral Care meetings/ Liaising with others working in the Pastoral Care area year heads, assistant year heads, tutors, chaplain, guidance counsellors etc.
 - Overseeing the SPHE department's input into relevant themed weeks or campaigns e.g. Health and Fitness week and Anti-Bullying week
 - Liaising with management regarding the needs and requirements of the SPHE programme
- In Coláiste/Gaelcholáiste Choilm, teachers will be consulted prior to being timetabled to teach SPHE/RSE and are encouraged and facilitated to attend CPD in order to enhance their skills in the area of SPHE. The SPHE/RSE teacher functions as a facilitator of learning. The emphasis is on the student's own attitude and values and on teaching the skills of informed decision making. The SPHE Guidelines state: 'All teaching is challenging, but teaching an SPHE programme is a particular challenge demanding a high degree of sensitivity. Those involved in the SPHE programme in a school will need continuing support from their colleagues, from their Principal and the Board of Management, and from a range of other agencies that are in a position to offer in-career support.'

- A resource area with books and teaching materials is provided for SPHE in the north wing. (See Appendix 1 for list of RSE resources)

B. Inclusion of Parents/Guardians

- Parents are the primary educators of their children and their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality is very important. This policy has been designed in consultation with Parents' Association representatives and the views expressed by parents will be taken into account when reviewing the policy.
- Parents/Guardians of incoming first years are given information on the content of the SPHE/RSE programme as part of the induction process. This includes a leaflet designed by the school outlining the content of the RSE curriculum that will be covered at junior and senior cycle. (See Appendix 2). For more information, parents/guardians are encouraged to access www.sphe.ie. This RSE policy is available on the school website. A hard copy of the policy is available in the office upon request.

C. 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 appropriate limits. Students may ask questions about issues which are not included in the curriculum. On these, and on all questions, teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, the RSE curriculum and the RSE policy for the school.
- **Confidentiality:** While students should not be encouraged to disclose personal or private information in SPHE/RSE classes, there may be times when they do talk about their own lives. It is important that students are made aware and teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality. Confidentiality is respected unless a teacher becomes aware that a child is at risk, in which case the appropriate action should be taken e.g. follow the procedures in accordance with Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017 (See Appendix 3).

The Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary schools states;

4.1.1 If a member of staff receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been abused or neglected, or is being abused or neglected, or is at risk of abuse or neglect he/she shall, without delay, report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person in that school.

In cases of under-age sexual activity, P10 of the [Child Protection Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools](#) (2017) state: '*In all cases where a school becomes aware of underage sexual intercourse the school shall take appropriate steps to inform the child's parents.*'

In Coláiste/Gaelcholáiste Choilm, the Designated Liaison Person is Michelle Sliney and the Deputy Designated Liaison Person is Áine Higgins.

- **Family Planning:** The post-primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines state that the subject of family planning should be covered within the Senior Cycle RSE programme.

The RSE programme requires that young people are provided with information about methods of contraception.

- **Sexual Orientation:** The post-primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines include the subject of sexual orientation. There is a lesson on sexual orientation in the RSE Senior Cycle Resource Materials on P151. RSE training courses delivered by the SPHE Support Service provide teachers with further materials. The school may decide the topic needs to be addressed before Senior Cycle.
- **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. There is a lesson on STIs in the RSE Senior Cycle Resource Materials on P103. Given that rates of STI transmission are increasing, it is important that the subject is addressed.

D. Practical Issues

Time Allocation

- Junior Cycle SPHE
All first, second and third years have one period of 40 minutes of SPHE per week. At least 6 class periods per year is allocated to RSE and is delivered in term 2.
- Senior Cycle
RSE is incorporated into transition year and senior RE classes and also in Social Education as part of the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme.

Structure of Class Groups

- Classes remain mixed for all aspects of SPHE and RSE. Some times depending on the needs of the group, the class can be divided according to gender. Teachers have the flexibility to facilitate this, as class groups are split in two at junior cycle.

The Role of Outside Speakers

- While visitors to the classroom can be immensely valuable as part of SPHE, ***the delivery of the programme remains the responsibility of the teacher.*** In light of this, where visitors/outside agencies are used to support SPHE, they will be required to familiarize themselves with the school RSE policy and SPHE visitor guidelines in the SPHE handbook available on the SPHE website. Teachers will be involved at all stages and will be present during presentation.

Students with Additional Needs

- Students with additional needs may need more support in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up. Teachers will work in consultation with SNA and/or SEN department
- The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's 'Guidelines for Teachers of Students With General Learning Disabilities' contains comprehensive guidelines on teaching SPHE to students with mild general learning disabilities at primary and post-primary level, and to students with moderate and severe and profound general learning disabilities. These guidelines are available on www.ncca.ie.
- A RSE resource list for students with learning difficulties is made available to teachers on SPHE notice board in the resource room (see appendix 4).

Students who may be pregnant

- If a teacher is aware that a student is pregnant they will inform the student in advance of teaching the RSE module so the student can decide whether to participate.

Withdrawal from RSE programme

- Relevant sections of this policy are made available to parents on the school website together with details about the parents right to withdraw their child from sensitive aspects of RSE – as per The Education Act 1998. Parents will be provided with a full copy of this policy following a request to do so.
- For parents who have concerns regarding their child's participation in any aspect of the programme we invite them to discuss this with the Principal. We will respect and accommodate parental decision.

Links to Other Policies and to Curriculum Delivery

The RSE policy is delivered within the framework of our overall school plan and policies. These policies include:

- Child Protection Policy
- Guidance Plan
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Substance Use Policy
- Pastoral Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Acceptable use Policy

Cross - curricular links

Aspects of RSE are delivered across the curriculum in particular; Religious Education, Science, Biology and Home Economic. In Coláiste Choilm/Gaelcholáiste Choilm we endeavour to deliver a full and balanced RSE programme from First Year through to Sixth Year.

Ratification and Implementation Date

This RSE policy was devised in consultation with the SPHE support service, school staff, students, Board of Management and parents/guardians. The process began in September 2012 and was ratified by our Board of Management on 14th March 2013. The ratified policy will be published on the school website.

Implementation

- This policy will be published on the school website and will be available in school office on request.
- Staff will receive a copy of policy.
- RSE teachers will be brought through the policy initially by SPHE co-ordinator and in September of each year.
- The implementation of this policy will be highlighted in staff memo.

Monitoring the implementation of the policy

- SPHE department meeting in September: At the start of each year SPHE teachers will decide when and how RSE elements of the course will be covered with 1st to 3rd years.
- RE department meetings - RE teachers will decide when and how senior cycle RSE will be covered with 5th and 6th year students
- Discussion at subject department meetings re resources, outside speakers, teaching methodologies.

- SPHE co-ordinator will meet regularly with Principal to discuss CPD, resources and areas which need to be addressed.

Reviewing and evaluating the policy

This policy is constantly under review due to the nature of the implementation

The following practical indicators will be used to gauge the impact and effectiveness of this policy.

- RSE is being successfully taught through SPHE for all relevant students where SPHE may not be timetabled, e.g. at Senior Cycle, that these students are receiving RSE
- resource material is available to teachers
- appropriate in-service for teachers is available and relevant teachers are availing of it
- students and parents/guardians are aware of the policy
- positive feedback is received from teachers, other school staff, students, parents/guardians, members of Board of Management and trustees.

The following may support the process of review and evaluation:

- o a confidential survey of students and staff
- o feedback from student council or student body
- o parent/guardian feedback at parent/teacher meetings

An overall formal review of the policy with a view to amending it if necessary will be undertaken at 5 year intervals.