



Naas
Community
College

Naas Community College RSE and SPHE Policy

Introduction

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

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, as outlined in RSE: Interim Guidelines (1996), is designed to follow this principle and pattern. Apart from the specific lessons of RSE which look at the three themes for Post-Primary (human growth and development; human sexuality; human relationships), Social Personal Health Education (SPHE) at Junior Cycle 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. At Senior Cycle, RSE is taught as a stand-alone module.

Aims of RSE

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

- 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 students to develop attitudes and values toward their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework in keeping with the policy of the school

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

RSE Topics for Junior Cycle will include:

- An understanding of physical and emotional changes at puberty
- An understanding and respect of what it is to be male or female
- Personal Safety
- An awareness of infection (including HIV/AIDS)
- An appreciation of the roles of men and women in society
- An awareness of discrimination
- Sexual orientation
- Developing skills regarding making and maintaining good relationships and friendships
- Family roles and responsibilities
- Group behaviour and resolving conflict
- An understanding of how peer pressure works

RSE Topics for Senior Cycle

Students will build on the elements covered in Junior Cycle and issues will be treated in ways suitable for the young adult. The development of themes at Senior Cycle will fall under three headings:

Human Growth and Development

Understanding the structure and functions of sex organs, Awareness of fertility, Awareness of the importance and methods of family planning, Understanding pregnancy and the development of the foetus, An understanding of the relationship between safe sexual practice and sexually transmitted infections with particular reference to HIV/AIDS

Human Sexuality

An understanding of what it means to be male or female, consideration of male and female roles in relationships and in society, exploration of some issues pertaining to equality, understanding the concept of sexual harassment and its different forms, skills for making choices about sexual activity

Human Relationships

Understanding the nature of peer pressure, developing skills for resolving conflict, development of an awareness of the complex nature of love and loving relationships, understanding of marriage as a loving commitment, deeper awareness of the importance of family life

Aims of SPHE

SPHE contributes to developing the work of the school in promoting health and well-being of children and young people. This happens in the context of their emotional, moral and spiritual growth, as well as their intellectual, physical, political, religious and creative development.

SPHE provides the student with a unique opportunity to develop the skills and competencies to learn about themselves, to care for themselves and others, and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development. The skills and attitudes acquired enable students to participate as active and responsible adults in society and make responsible decisions which respect their dignity and that of others.

Aims of SPHE at Junior Cycle

- To enable students to develop personal and social skills
- To promote self-esteem
- To enable students to develop a framework for responsible decision-making
- To provide an opportunity for reflection and discussion
- To promote physical, mental and emotional health and well being

The curriculum for SPHE is presented in ten modules, each of which appears in each year of the programme.

- Belonging and integrating
- Self management
- Communication Skills
- Physical Health
- Friendship
- Relationships and Sexuality
- Emotional Health
- Influences and Decisions
- Substance Use
- Personal Safety

Guidelines for the management and organisation of RSE

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

Informing and Involving Parents

Parents are the primary educators of their children and their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality is seen by the school as very important. Relevant sections of this RSE policy will be included in the school's *Information for Parents* booklet, published annually in August. 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. A copy of this policy will be made available to any parent on request to the school Office.

A letter giving prior notice of the commencement and content of the first year module will be sent to parents / guardians. Informing parents/guardians of when these topics are being taught in school will enable them to discuss any further issues at home.

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. However, sources of professional information and advice will be identified when appropriate. Teachers may provide students 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 student.

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 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.

Confidentiality

It is school policy that in circumstances where a student 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.

Principal will decide whether to inform the parents and/or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling.

The following is also school policy:

- **teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality;**
- students 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 student to notify parents;
- teachers must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard the information;
- teachers must indicate clearly to students when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential - the student 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.

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 student is engaging in underage sexual activity, the teacher must refer this immediately to the designated liaison person.

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.

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.

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.

The division between biological and non biological aspects of sex education

The school policy is that the Science Department deals primarily with the biological aspects of reproduction. Home economics also deal with the social and emotional aspects.

Timetabling issues

SPHE is timetabled twice a week for 1st and 2nd year students and once a week for 3rd year 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 Senior Cycle SPHE (Well Being) programme.

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 students 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. 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.

Using visiting speakers and others

It is school policy that most of the RSE programme is best discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by the students. 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.

Prior approval by the principal must be sought by teachers in advance of extending an invitation to any visitor.

The SPHE Co-ordinator will provide the visitor, well in advance of the visit, with a copy of this RSE policy and make the visitor aware of the ethos of the school and the manner of delivery of the RSE programme. Issues to consider are:

- the degree of explicitness of the content and presentation;
- will the visitor be accompanied by teaching staff?
- will the staff take an active role in the visitor's activities?
- how will the visitor be prepared for the visit?
- how will the visit be built upon and followed up?

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.

Presentations by visitors must be supplied to the school in advance of their visit.

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 students in the visit and will make the experience more relevant for them - it also facilitates planning.

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

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

The visitor should be welcomed at the main door.

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

A written acknowledgement of their contribution should be sent to the visitor and could appear on the School website.

A teacher must always be present in the room during the visit and in no circumstances should students be left alone in a room with a visitor.

Special Educational Needs

Children with SEN 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.

Ongoing support

Training

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 RSE education. Some teachers have expert training in the specific areas of health, relationships and sexuality education and will be encouraged to train other teachers. The school will facilitate teachers to obtain expert training in this field. Teachers of Junior Cycle RSE should, where possible, have completed RSE training and teachers at Senior Cycle should, where possible, have completed the TRUST programme.

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.

The following resources are used within the programme:

- Busy Bodies- Adolescent development programme
- b4udecide.ie Relationships and Sexuality Education Resource Materials for Teachers
- b4udecide.com
- belong2.com
- stand up resources
- SPHE 1,2,3 by Nollaig OGrady (Edco)
- Healthy living resources for students and teachers- Year 1,2,3
- My Selfie and the wider world- Webwise Primary anticyber bullying teachers handbook
- webwise- post technology in education- teachers handbook
- #UP2US Anti-bullying Kit
- Trust Programme- Senior Cycle only

Monitoring and Reviewing Procedures

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

- Student feedback;
- staff review and feedback;
- parental feedback.

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 20th January 2016

Signed: _____
Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: _____
Principal

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date of next review: January 2017