

# Coláiste Phobal Ros Cré

## Relationship & Sexual Education Policy (RSE)



**etb**

Bord Oideachais agus  
Oiliúna Thioibraid Árann  
Tipperary Education and  
Training Board

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## 1. RSE Policy

Policy produced after a process of consultation between staff, Board of Management, parent's council and student council. The policy will apply to all aspects of teaching & learning about relationships and sexuality within our school. Discussion about relationships and sexuality also takes place in classes other than SPHE/Friends for Life/Ways to Wellbeing e.g. Science, Biology, Religious Education, Home Economics etc. and it is therefore important that all teachers are familiar with our RSE policy. The policy will apply to all school staff-teaching staff and non-teaching staff, to students, Board of Management, parents/guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators.

## 2. Mission Statement

Coláiste Phobal Ros Cré is committed to delivering a high-quality education to all. Coláiste Phobal Ros Cré is committed to providing a holistic education in a caring environment to all our students. Our philosophy is to encourage all students to strive to reach their full potential, in partnership with parents and the wider community. Our RSE policy affirms the significance of integrated and holistic human development which fosters in students an awareness of and a capacity for healthy and fulfilling human relationships.

## 3. Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education

RSE is a life-long developmental process of acquiring knowledge and an understanding of human relationships and sexuality. It is primarily the responsibility of the parents and family. RSE gives pupils formal opportunities, through experiential learning, to cultivate healthy attitudes and values towards themselves and others, promoting the overall development of the person, and the integration of sexuality into personal life.

## 4. Relationships and Sexuality Education within Social Personal and Health Education

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.

**Dept. of Ed. Circular M4/95 RSE** : '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 complimentary 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'.

In Coláiste Phobal Ros Cré, RSE will be delivered within the context of our school's SPHE – Friends for Life – Ways to Wellbeing Programmes and RSE module at senior cycle. These programmes provide students with a unique opportunity to develop skills/competencies, learn about themselves, care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, their personal lives and their social development. These programmes enhance the work of the school in promoting the health and well-being of students. Additionally, each programme offered is age appropriate. 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 help students think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

## 5. The aims of our Relationships and Sexuality Education programme

Relationships and sexuality education in the overall framework of Social, Personal and Health Education, Friends for Life & Ways to Wellbeing aims (aspires) to:

- To help students 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 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 helps them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

## 6. Why do we need a RSE programme?

According to the 1998 Education Act the aim of education is to contribute towards the development of all aspects of the individual and RSE is a required part of this aim. While parents have the primary responsibility for RSE, schools also have a role to play in this process through our structured programme. Our students need to be enabled to critically evaluate the range of information, opinions, attitudes and values they encounter in everyday life in matters concerning relationships and sexuality.

The following are some reasons why RSE needs to be formally taught:

- Students may receive informal and unsupervised information about relationships and sexuality which may be inadequate, inappropriate and often misleading.
- Students may be exposed to a variety of sexual practices and attitudes through the traditional and social media
- Students may become sexually active at an earlier age than expected
- To meet the demands of a changing society

RSE emphasises the importance of self-awareness and self-esteem in understanding these changes. It emphasises the development of ones' ability to interact respectfully with others. It provides students with an opportunity to understand the different types of relationships and attitudes, values and life skills that support the healthy development of these relationships. Students can develop an understanding of familial, cultural and religious values and consider how these values support healthy informed choices in relation to relationships, sexuality and sexual health.

At Coláiste Phobal Ros Cré we are aware that for various reasons and at different times young people may need extra support in coping with the physical and emotional aspect of growing up. To provide the appropriate support, the school expects parents to make us aware where these circumstances exist. Parents are invited to speak to the Principal, who in collaboration with the Guidance Counsellor, the Year Head, the class tutor, and/or class teacher will offer the support needed. Each case will be dealt with sensitively.

## 7. Guidelines for the management and organisation of Relationships and Sexuality Education in our school

### 7.1. Teaching the programme:

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

Curricula delivered are in line with the NCCA Curriculum and Guidelines. Relevant Department plans are available in the school for parents who wish to see them.

The methodologies used are expected to be child-centred, appropriate to the age and stage of development of the students. Active learning methods are favoured in SPHE/Friends for Life/Ways to Wellbeing to encourage engagement and learning. Teaching methods include:

- Group Discussions
- Case Studies
- Brainstorming
- Role-Play
- Art Work
- Narrative Expression
- Games; Ice Breakers
- Debates
- Project Work
- Visitors/guest speakers

The programme will be delivered by teachers timetabled for SPHE/friends for Life/Ways to wellbeing at junior level and senior level.

### 7.2. Informing and Involving Parents:

Parents are the primary educators of their children. This policy has been designed in consultation with our Parents Council/Board of Management and the views expressed by

parents will be considered when reviewing the policy. A copy of this policy will be made available on the school website

### 7.3. Withdrawing pupils from the RSE programme:

Parents have the right to withdraw their child from RSE class(or parts off).

Under section 9(G) of the Education Act 1998, students who are aged 18 or over, also have the right to withdraw from the RSE programme (or parts of).

Issues such as over population, birth control and other sexual matters are met in a minor way in subjects such as Geography and Religious Education. 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.

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. (See also appendix 1)

### 7.4. Offering Advice:

The school's function is 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 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 (further information is available from the Guidance Counsellor).

### 7.5. Explicit Questions:

It is unlikely to be appropriate to deal with a student's explicit questions by dealing with it in front of the whole class. The teacher may also exercise his or her own professional judgement in deciding whether to answer the question privately after the class has finished. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised he/she should seek advice from the Guidance Counsellor or the Principal.

### 7.6. Confidentiality:

In circumstances where a student is considered at some risk of any type of abuse (e.g. moral or physical) or in breach of the law, the teacher must refer this immediately to the Designated Liaison Person (Principal & Ms. Leyne) in accordance with current Child Protection Law

### 7.7. 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.

### 7.8. 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 teaching and learning. In this regard all guests must be in accordance with *Coláiste Phobal Ros Cré procedures on Visitor/Guest Speakers* (March 2018). Heads of Departments will liaise with department colleagues and school management before visitors are invited to our school.

Issues to consider are:

- Ensuring visitors are compliant with the legal requirements of the Child Protection Guidelines and Garda vetted
- 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 notice of the composition of the class and an idea of how their contribution fits into the scheme of work
- To inform the visitor of the precise requirements of a group
- The visitor must sign in at School reception

### 7.9. LGBTIQ

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. Teaching about sexual orientation is not avoided although teachers take care not to advocate one orientation over another, correct false ideas, assumptions and address prejudice. Discussion of sexuality should be appropriate to the age of the pupils.

#### 7.10. Contraception / Abortion / Sexually Transmitted Infections

These topics will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issues in a non-directive way.

#### 7.11. Special Needs

The relevant subject areas and departments are responsible to cater for Special Educational Needs within each class. This is done with the support of the SEN co-ordinator and National Frameworks

## 8. Ongoing support, development and review 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. Teachers are trained in these areas before being assigned a class.

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.

## 9. Resources:

Resources are organised according to year group

- Junior Cycle textbooks
- Senior Cycle: Ways to wellbeing textbook

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)
- ✓ B4U Decide
- ✓ Growing up LGBT
- ✓ Mental Health Matters ✓ Be safe Be wise ✓ Web sites:
- ✓ [www.sphe.ie](http://www.sphe.ie)
- ✓ [www.pdst.ie](http://www.pdst.ie)
- ✓ [www.sess.ie](http://www.sess.ie)
- ✓ [www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie)
- ✓ [www.webwise.ie](http://www.webwise.ie)
- ✓ [www.thinkcontraception.ie](http://www.thinkcontraception.ie)
- ✓ [www.tes.ie](http://www.tes.ie)
- ✓ [www.ted.ie](http://www.ted.ie)
- ✓ [www.Kahoot.ie](http://www.Kahoot.ie)
- ✓ [www.mentimeter.ie](http://www.mentimeter.ie)
- ✓ [www.teni.ie](http://www.teni.ie)
- ✓ [www.crisispregnancy.ie](http://www.crisispregnancy.ie)
- ✓ [www.glen.ie](http://www.glen.ie)
- ✓ [www.belongto.org](http://www.belongto.org)



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.

## 10. Links to other policies and Curricular/Extra-Curricular Activities

- Links to related school policies ○ Within the framework of the overall School Plan, there are relevant school policies that are already in place, that complement the aims of our RSE policy:
  - Child Protection Policy
  - Anti-Bullying Policy
  - Code of Behaviour
  - Substance Use Policy
  - Green Schools
  - Healthy Eating
- **Links to Curriculum delivery:** RSE are delivered across the curriculum, through subjects such as Religious Education, Science, Biology, Home Economics and Social Education, Art work displays around the school.
- **Links to Extra-Curriculum delivery** the school supports SPHE/RSE informally by creating a supportive school climate where the aims of the programme are modelled through our:
  - Cáirde programme
  - Prefect programme
  - Student Council


## 11. 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:

- Student feedback;
- Staff review and feedback; □ Parental feedback.

## 12. Ratification of Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management at regular intervals.

Principal  Date: 17/9/2020

Chairperson Board of Management  Date: 17/9/2020

Date of next review: September 2022.

## 13. Appendices

### Appendix 1: Request by Parent for withdrawal from RSE

What we do if a request for withdrawal from the RSE programme is made by a parent/or student over the age of 18.

- a)** We discuss the nature of the concerns and if appropriate attempt to reassure them (initially such discussion takes place at a meeting with the Year Head and SPHE/friends for Life/Ways to wellbeing Co-ordinator. The Deputy Principal and / or Principal may become involved if necessary);
- b)** We consider whether the programme can be amended or improved in a way that will reassure parents/students. Care is taken not to undermine the integrity of the RSE programme and the entitlement of the other pupils, e.g. it may be appropriate and desirable to have single sex classes for some sections of the RSE programme;
- c)** We attempt to ensure that where a student is withdrawn there is no disruption to other parts of their education;
- d)** students who have been withdrawn: we therefore attempt to cause minimal embarrassment to the student and minimal disruption to the programme;
- e)** We also point out that students may receive inaccurate information from their peers
- f)** We offer the parents access to appropriate information and resources.

## Appendix 2: Letter to Parents re RSE policy

### **Re: RSE Policy**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am writing to inform you about the SPHE/friends for Life/Ways to wellbeing Programmes which provide a unique opportunity for students to develop skills and competence, to learn about themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development.

Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) is one module within the S.P.H.E. curriculum. It is a developmental process through which pupils participate to cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships. Additionally, our school offers relationship education in Friends for life as well as Ways to Wellbeing.

We would like to have your input in our policy development. Please visit our school website to view the draft policy. You will locate this under downloads/school policies. Feedback can be e-mailed to [colaistephobal@tipperaryetb.ie](mailto:colaistephobal@tipperaryetb.ie)

Yours sincerely,

Michael O'Connor

Principal