



Coláiste Phádraig CBS

RSE – Relationships and Sexuality Policy.

School Name: Coláiste Phádraig CBS.

Address: Roselawn, Ballydowd, Lucan, Co Dublin.

Coláiste Phádraig is a Voluntary Roman Catholic Secondary School under the Trusteeship and the Patronage of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. The school is grant aided by the Department of Education & Skills and is a single sex all boys school.

School Management: The Board of Management of Coláiste Phádraig is a statutory Board appointed pursuant to the provisions of the Education Act 1998.

Mission Statement: Coláiste Phádraig is operated according to the religious and educational philosophy of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust Charter (ERST). We strive to live up to Christian values and show genuine concern for our school community. Our core aims are to provide a broad and comprehensive education and to recognise the needs and develop the talents of each person. We strive to enrich all those with whom we are privileged to come in contact, we strive to succeed.

Ethos: Inspired by the vision of Blessed Edmund Rice, the Christian Brother School prioritises education in a living faith whereby students grow to appreciate the life and mission of Jesus Christ. His aim was to show special concern for the poor and underprivileged and develop a curriculum which promotes the harmonious growth of the whole person.

Coláiste Phádraig aims to encourage the development of the spiritual, moral, intellectual, social creative and physical qualities of each student. This school is made up of Trustees, Board of Management, Principal, Deputy Principal, Teaching Staff, Ancillary Staff, Parents and Students. The central purpose of the school is the religious, moral, intellectual, physical, and social development of the students. Such a purpose is best achieved in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

RSE - Relationships and Sexuality:

RSE - Relationships and Sexuality Education encompasses the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, sexual identity, and intimacy, contributing towards the full human development of the student. As outlined by the Department of Education and Skills in Circular 0037/2010, no aspect of the RSE programme including STI's, family planning, or sexual orientation can be omitted on the grounds of religious ethos. As we seek to promote the overall development of the student at Coláiste Phádraig, this involves the integration of Relationships and Sexuality into personal understanding, growth, and development within the context of our overall teaching.

Introduction:

The RSE policy is a written statement of the aims of the RSE programme, the relationship of RSE to SPHE, and the organisation, management and teaching of RSE within Coláiste Phádraig. In this policy document, all references to gender are taken to be inclusive, and the term *parent* is taken to include *guardian*.

To what and to whom will the policy apply?

This policy will apply to school staff, students, board of management, parents / guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators. The policy will apply 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 all teachers in Coláiste Phádraig are familiar with the RSE policy.

The aims of our Relationships and Sexuality Education programme:

- a) To help students understand and develop friendships and relationships.
- b) To promote an understanding of sexuality.
- c) To promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's relationship with others.
- d) To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction.
- e) To enable pupils to develop attitudes and values toward their sexuality in a moral, spiritual, and social framework in keeping with the policy of the school.
- f) 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.

Whilst the school will do its best to achieve these aims, it must be pointed out that due to time constraints, they may not *all* be achieved.

Key Measures:

Provision of training & staff development.

A number of staff members will be offered training in SPHE and RSE and management will continue to support staff training and CPD in this area.

Informing parents.

It is recognised by the school that the parents / guardians are the primary educators of the children. Their role as educators concerning relationships and sexuality is seen by the school as very important. There will be information provided for parents about the content and timing of the RSE units of learning throughout the academic school year. Informing parents / guardians when these topics are being taught in school will enable them to discuss any further issues at home.

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 limits. It may not be appropriate to deal with a student's explicit questions in a classroom

environment. The teacher may say that it is inappropriate to answer the question in class, and may exercise his / her professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, in deciding whether to answer the question privately after class has finished. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised, he / she will seek advice from the Principal / Deputy Principal.

Confidentiality.

Students will be asked not to disclose personal information in SPHE / RSE class. It is important that students are made aware of the limits of confidentiality. Teachers will **not** guarantee confidentiality. Students will be informed that if a teacher becomes aware that a pupil is at risk of abuse, or in breach of the law, this information will be conveyed to the Principal and the appropriate action will be taken, as set down in the *Child Protection Guidelines for Post-primary Schools (2004)*.

Sexual Activity.

Students will 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 pupil is engaging in underage sexual activity, the teacher must refer this immediately to the designated liaison person (DLP) - the Principal.

Offering Advice.

The school's function is to provide a general education about sexual matters and not to offer individual advice or counselling on aspects of sexual behaviour. However, 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. Advice offered will not be directive and will be age appropriate to the student.

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 whilst looking at all sides of the issues.

Homosexuality.

Homosexuality will be discussed as part of the RSE programme. One of the advantages of exploring issues concerning homosexuality is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions, and address prejudice. The *Equal Status Act 2000* and the *Equality Act 2004* prohibit discrimination across nine groups including sexual orientation. The post primary RSE guidelines include the subject of sexual orientation at both junior and senior cycle. The topic may also be addressed under the issue of homophobic bullying. It is left to a teacher's own discretion to deal with this topic in an age-appropriate and open manner.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs).

Awareness of STIs is one of the learning outcomes of the junior cycle SPHE / RSE programme. It will be dealt with in an age-appropriate level during junior cycle. However, the topic of STIs is mainly addressed at senior cycle. This topic will also be dealt with in an age-appropriate and open manner.

Additional Needs.

Children with special educational / additional 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 appropriate and/or acceptable. They may need extra support during the delivery of the RSE programme, which will be provided to the best of our ability within Coláiste Phádraig.

Practical Considerations.

- Resources will be stored within the school and shared amongst all SPHE / RSE teachers.
- RSE is part of the SPHE short course at Junior Cycle. SPHE is timetabled as follows - two 40-minute class periods per week for first- and second-year students and one 40-minute class period per week for third-year students.
- Senior cycle RSE will be taught as part of a dedicated RSE module / programme during the time-tabled Religious Education classes. It will be seen as separate to the

rest of the programme. (An outside-speaker may be booked to speak to students. If this is the case, students' parents will be informed in advance about this speaker. The speaker will be booked by a member of the Senior-Religious-Education Team).

- The Transition Year Programme will include RSE which will be delivered by an outside speaker. (This speaker will be booked by the Transition Year Co-ordinator / Well-being Team and parents / guardians will be informed in advance of delivery of this programme).

Reporting to Parents.

Any issue that the SPHE / RSE teacher feels the need to report to parents, will be done through the Principal, the Deputy Principal, or the Guidance Counsellor. The personnel involved will keep an incident report on the concern that arose. This will be dealt with in a sensitive and confidential manner.

Appendix 1 - *What we do in Coláiste Phádraig if a request for withdrawal from the RSE programme is made by a parent:*

- a) We try to discuss the nature of the concerns with the child's parent and if appropriate, attempt to reassure them. Initially, such discussion may take place by means of a meeting with the SPHE / RSE teacher. The Principal or Deputy Principal may be involved too, if necessary. This is dependent on the parent's willingness to engage with the school.

- b) We will consider whether the programme can be amended or improved in a way that will reassure parents. However, the programme may only be changed in a way that will benefit all students, and in keeping with the most recent and up-to-date junior / senior cycle specification, as laid out by the Department of Education and Skills.

- c) We will attempt to ensure that where a student is withdrawn, there is no disruption to other parts of their education.

- d) We will point out that students who have been withdrawn are vulnerable to teasing. We will therefore attempt to cause minimal embarrassment to the student and minimal disruption to the programme.

- e) We will also point out to parents that students may receive inaccurate information from their peers.

- f) We will offer the parents access to appropriate information and resources.

- g) It is the responsibility of the parents / guardians to inform the school of their wishes.

- h) If a parent / guardian wishes to withdraw their son / ward from the RSE programme, then it is the parent / guardian's responsibility to organise supervision for their son / ward.

Appendix 2 - Links between RSE and Junior Cycle SPHE with reference to the updated Junior Cycle SPHE Specification, 2023.

Schools are required to teach RSE as part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) in each year of the Junior Cycle SPHE programme.

RSE is an integral part of Junior Cycle SPHE and Well-being curricula. It aims to help young people 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.

At this age, students are exposed to a lot of information about sex, sexuality, and relationships from a variety of sources. RSE provides the context within which students can learn about the physical, social, emotional, and moral issues related to relationships, sexual health, sexuality, and gender identity including where to source reliable information.

(Junior Cycle Well-being Guidelines, 2021).

The SPHE short course at Junior Cycle is made up of 4 strands. RSE encompasses Strand 3.

Strand 3 – Relationships and Sexuality - Learning Outcomes:

(In keeping with the updated SPHE specification, 2023; the 11 learning outcomes, as detailed below, will be delivered over the course of the three years at Junior Cycle).

By the end of the Junior Cycle RSE programme, students should be able to:

- 3.1** reflect on the values, behaviours and skills that help to make, sustain, and end relationships respectfully with friends, family, and romantic/intimate relationships.
- 3.2** examine benefits and difficulties experienced by young people in a range of relationships - friendships, family relationships, and romantic/intimate relationship.
- 3.3** identify signs of healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships.
- 3.4** appreciate the importance of setting healthy boundaries in relationships and consider how to show respect for the boundaries of others.
- 3.5** consider the importance of taking care of their reproductive health.

3.6 appreciate the breadth of what constitutes human sexuality, and how sexual orientation and gender are experienced and expressed in diverse ways.

3.7 explore the pressures to become sexually intimate and discuss ways to show respect for people's choices.

3.8 appreciate the importance of seeking, giving, and receiving consent in sexual relationships, from the perspective of building caring relationships and from a legal perspective.

3.9 explain the importance of safer sexual activity with reference to methods of contraception and protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

3.10 discuss the influence of popular culture and the online world, in particular, the influence of pornography, on young people's understanding, expectations, and social norms in relation to sexual expression.

3.11 demonstrate how to access and appraise appropriate and trustworthy advice, support and services related to relationships and sexual health.

All resources used for teaching and learning in Junior Cycle SPHE / RSE are based on the RSE Toolkit as laid out by the Department of Education and Skills (www.curriculumonline.ie).

Appendix 3 - Transition Year RSE Programme.

The Coláiste Phádraig Transition Year Programme includes the delivery of Accord's *Relationship and Sexuality Programme for Secondary School Students*.

This programme is delivered either over one full school morning, or three sessions of one and a half hours duration, delivered over three weeks depending on timetabling in any given school year.

The workshops are interactive, and all facilitators are skilled in the delivery of this programme and encourage participation by all students within the group.

The objectives of the programme are:

- To reach a fuller understanding of all aspects of relationships.
- To improve communication skills.
- To learn to deal with conflict more effectively.
- To understand the impact of family of origin on relationships and to increase self-awareness.
- To facilitate discussions on the impact of children, responsibility, commitment, and expectations.
- To give practical information on reproduction, sexually transmitted infections etc.
- To assist the students in making informed choices.

This programme is a unique opportunity for students to discuss all aspects of sexuality and relationships with a trained facilitator in a safe and respectful environment. The class teacher will remain in attendance throughout and will over-see the delivery of this programme.

Appendix 4 – Senior Cycle RSE Programme.

Students at Senior Cycle are typically 15-18 years of age. They will all be at different stages of emotional, social, and physical development. They will bring a wide range of life experiences to their learning in RSE. The class teacher is therefore best placed to discern which resources are best suited to the needs of the class group in question.

RSE at Senior Cycle is based on the following units of learning:

- Self-Awareness and Personal Skills.
- Relationships.
- Sexual and Reproductive Health.
- Sexual Identity.
- Personal Rights and Personal Safety.
- Being Health Literate.

All resources used for teaching and learning in the Senior Cycle RSE Programme are taken from the NCCA RSE Toolkit – (www.curriculumonline.ie)

Policy Approval and Review.

Coláiste Phádraig's Relationships and Sexuality Policy is reviewed on an on-going basis.

This policy can be viewed on the school website – www.colaistephadraig.ie

This policy has been approved by the school's Board of Management.

Signed:_____.

(Chairperson, Board of Management).

Date:_____.

