



**Grange Post-Primary School**  
**Iarbhunscoil na Gráinsí**  
windows of opportunity

## **Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy Statement**

Enacted after consultation between staff, parent representatives, Principal and Board of Management.

In this policy document all references to gender are taken to be inclusive and the term “parent” is taken to include “guardian”.

### **A. School**

1. The school is a co-educational, academically non-selective day school,

### **B. Our School Philosophy**

1. The school encourages its pupils to consider and assess different viewpoints in relation to issues of morality. The experience gained through the working out of this policy and through respecting the needs of minority groups and individuals enriches the whole life of the school.
2. The school gives its pupils the opportunity to explore the humanities, sciences, arts, business studies and technical subjects. In addition it provides religious, moral and physical education in order to meet its founding objectives of supporting pupils in achieving their full academic potential and preparing them for participation in civic society and working life.
3. A code of conduct has been published after consultation with parents, staff and pupils and the following excerpts illustrate how the ethos of the school operates on a daily basis:
  - *Discipline is founded on the principles of respect for people, environment, property and safety. All rules follow from these basic principles which are intended to create and maintain a happy and stable community.*
  - *The best way in which the school can operate with the maximum happiness and fulfillment for everybody is if the maximum courtesy and respect is shown for other people. Pupils at the school are expected to respect the dignity of other pupils, teachers and other staff in the school and have the right to expect that their own dignity will be respected.*

**C. *Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education***

1. 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.

**D. *Relationships and Sexuality Education within Social Personal and Health Education***

1. 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.

**E. *The aims of our Relationships and Sexuality Education programme***

1. Relationships and sexuality education which is located in the overall framework of Social, Personal and Health Education, has as its specific aims:
  - a) To help pupils 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 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

**F. *Guidelines for the management and organisation of Relationships and Sexuality Education in our school***

1. Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff will be made by the Principal.
2. **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 or on the school website.

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 counseling on aspects of sexual behavior and contraception - however sources of professional information and advice will be identified when appropriate. 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 SPHE coordinator 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 designated liaison person. The Principal will decide whether to inform the parents and/or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counseling. The RSE / SPHE class is not the context for disclosure of personal information.

In cases of Under age sexual activity we will refer to pg. 10 of the child protection guidelines where it states,

"in all cases where a school becomes aware of underage sexual intercourse the school shall take appropriate steps to inform parents / guardians"

According to the criminal law sexual offences act 2006 17 years is the legal age of consent for both male and female.

The following is also school policy:

- 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 judgment 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. **The division between biological and non - biological aspects of sex education:**

The school policy recognizes that the Science and home economics Department deals with the biological aspects of reproduction but these are also to be covered within RSE.

7. **Withdrawing pupils from the RSE programme:**

1. Relevant sections of this policy are made available to parents in the school publication entitled *Information for Parents* together with details about the parent's right to withdraw their child from sensitive aspects of RSE – parents will always be provided with a full copy of this policy following a request to do so. The school can not be responsible for a student who is withdrawn from SPHE hearing what happened in the class from other students. RSE can also be part of the general SPHE programme within modules such as personal safety, substance abuse and decision making.

2. Issues such as over population and birth control are met in a minor way in subjects such as Geography and RE. 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.

3. 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).

8. **Using visiting speakers and others**

a) It is school policy that most of the RSE programme is taught by 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 SPHE coordinator 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 and could appear in the School Newsletter.
- k) The SPHE / RSE teacher will be present during a talk by a visitor.
- l) All parents will be notified about any guest speaker coming into the school and will have the option to withdraw their child from the talk.

9. **Homosexuality**

Teachers do not promote any one life-style as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that homosexuality will be discussed during a programme of sex education. One of the advantages of exploring issues concerning homosexuality is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions and address prejudice. Discussion of homosexuality should be appropriate to the age of the pupils. The equal status act 2000 and the equality act 2004 prohibit discrimination across 9 groups including sexual orientation. The Post primary RSE guidelines include the subject of sexual orientation at senior cycle. This may be addressed before senior cycle under the issue of homophobic bullying.

10. **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. The post primary RSE curriculum states that the subject of family planning should be covered within the senior cycle RSE programs. However the school can use its discretion regarding the age of which students receive any aspect of the RSE program, for example SPHE /RSE teachers may decide to provide some information on family planning earlier than senior cycle.

11. **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 behavior are and are not acceptable, and in being warned and prepared against abuse by others.

## 12. Resources

Resources are stored within the school and shared among all SPHE / RSE teachers.

RSE will be part of the SPHE curriculum for Junior cycle students. SPHE is timetabled a 30 minute class period each week for first, second and third year students.

Modules from the senior cycle RSE program will be delivered to senior cycle students as part of the Guidance Classes.

A variety of teaching methods will be used where appropriate.

Teacher can avail of in-service training in the area of SPHE / RSE where the need arises.

## G. Ongoing support, development and review

### Training:

1. 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.
2. 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.

### 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 resources used will be in line with the school ethos, values and policy.

### 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:

- a) Pupil feedback;
- b) Staff review and feedback;
- c) Parental feedback.

### Reporting to Parents

Any issue that the SPHE / RSE teachers feels that needs to be reported to parents will be done through the Principal, the designated liaison officer or the Guidance Counsellor. The personal involved will keep an incident report on the concern that was reported. This will be locked and kept confidentially in the school.

**Formulated in November 2010**

**Ratified By: BOM 26<sup>th</sup> Jan 2011**

**Date for Review : June 2012**

## **Appendix 1**

What we do if a request for withdrawal from the RSE programme is made by a parent:

- a) We discuss the nature of the concerns with the child's parent and if appropriate attempt to reassure them (initially such discussion takes place at a meeting with the Year Head and SPHE Coordinator, the Principal may become involved if necessary)
- b) We consider whether the programme can be amended or improved in a way that will reassure parents - 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 pupil is withdrawn there is no disruption to other parts of their education,
- d) We point out that pupils who have been withdrawn are vulnerable to teasing - we therefore attempt to cause minimal embarrassment to the pupil and minimal disruption to the programme;
- e) We also point out that pupils may receive inaccurate information from their peers;
- f) We offer the parents access to appropriate information and resources.
- g) It is the responsibility of the school to make alternative arrangements for the student in the situation. It is the responsibility of the parents and guardian to inform the school of their wishes. The school requires that the parents put their request into writing.