

Coláiste Abbáin



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Coláiste Abbáin

Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy 2019

Mission Statement

Coláiste Abbáin endeavours to provide quality education for all students in a caring, disciplined and respectful environment. We aim to prepare students for life and responsible citizenship and motivate them towards the achievement of their full potential.

Introduction

Relationships and Sexuality are key areas in the healthy social and personal development of all individuals. This is particularly true for adolescent development as adolescence is a time of great physical, psychological and emotional change and growth. Coláiste Abbáin seeks to build on the work done in primary school in the area of RSE. RSE is incorporated into our SPHE (Junior Cycle), TY (Squashy Couch) and 5th and 6th year Life skills programme. We seek to educate our students in social personal and health skills and to help them to grow in understanding of their development, sexuality and relationships and to enjoy good living and healthy relationships.

Scope

- The policy applies across the curriculum, it is therefore necessary that all teachers are familiar with the RSE policy
- The policy applies to school staff, students, Board of Management, parents/guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators.

Rationale

- Young people are exposed to a bewildering variety of messages about sexuality and sexual activity. We seek to educate our students in social, personal and health skills and to help them to grow in understanding of their development, sexuality and relationships and to enjoy good living and healthy relationships.
- 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 requests schools to commence a process of RSE policy development.

Aims/objectives

The RSE programme aims:

- To help young people 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 and respect of reproduction
- To enable young people to develop healthy attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral spiritual and social framework
- To assist all members of the school community to fulfil their responsibilities in relation to the RSE programme within the context of the school ethos and climate.

The objectives of the RSE programme should enable the students to:

- Acquire the understanding and skills necessary to form healthy friendships and relationships
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness and the skills necessary for building and maintaining self-awareness.
- Raise awareness of the different ways people grow and change throughout life, especially during adolescence.
- To develop respect for difference in individuals and a belief that all people are equal
- Understand human physiology with respect to the reproductive cycle, human fertility and sexually transmitted infections.
- Have an appreciation of the value of family life and the responsibilities of parenthood.
- Develop strategies for decision making and actions consistent with personal integrity and respectful of the dignity and rights of others
- Develop skills for coping with pressure from peers and other sources of pressure, conflict and threats to personal safety.

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| Key Measures |
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A. Provision of Training and Staff Development

- A SPHE co-ordinator is in place and has a clear understanding of the role.
- Teachers are released to attend SPHE/RSE training
- All teachers of SPHE/RSE have access to the SPHE and RSE teaching materials and resources.

B. Inclusion of Parents/ Guardians

The RSE policy and programme is available on the school website

Note: The Education Act 1998 (section 30, subsection 2e) provides that a student is not required to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the

parent or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student. Hence parents have a right to withdraw a student from the RSE classes a parent/guardian must inform the school of their request in writing at the beginning of the school year.

C. Ethical /Moral Considerations

The school's RSE policy provides guidance for teachers on the moral and ethical framework within which schools will be taught.

- **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. Teachers should use their own 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 private lives. Confidentiality should be 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 set down in the

Child Protection Procedures and Guidelines for Post- Primary schools 2017 or the School's Substance Use Policy, notify parents etc.

- **Sexual Activity:** It is advisable for teachers to give young people information on the age of consent which following the passage of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006, is 17 years of age for both males and females.
- **Family Planning:** The RSE programme requires that young people are provided with information about methods of contraception. Fertility and contraception are dealt with in a comprehensive, sensitive and respectful manner.
- **Homosexuality:** The post-primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines include the subject of sexual orientation. There is a lesson on sexual orientation in the RSE Senior Cycle programme. The issues of homosexuality and transgender individuals are addressed in the context of respecting difference and a belief in equality for all irrespective of their gender, age, race, demographic, class or sexual orientation. If and when these topics are introduced to the class group it is left up to the discretion and the professional judgement of the teacher and the specific class group he/she is teaching SPHE to in Junior Cycle. There may be a need to address these issues if bullying behaviour is considered likely. Both homosexuality and transgender are dealt with at 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 dealt with in Senior Cycle. There is a lesson on STIs in the RSE Senior Cycle Resource Materials.

Given the rates of STI transmission are increasing, it is important that the subject is addressed in schools.

It is important that students are made aware of the limits of confidentiality and that teachers do not give unconditional guarantees of confidentiality.

D. Practical Issues

- SPHE is timetables for one period per week for all Junior Cycle classes and is part of our wellbeing hours. All students receive 6 periods of RSE instruction each year as part of this programme.
- Provision is made for teaching RSE to Transition Years within the Squashy Couch sexual health course (6 weeks 1 hour sessions).
- Provision is made for teaching RSE to fifth and Sixth Years (6 week period each year)
- Outside speakers are directed to our RSE policy and the SPHE Handbook for schools www.sphe.ie online
- Any parental requests for the withdrawal of students from the RSE programme should be put in writing at the beginning of the school year and submitted to the principal.

Relevant school policies already in place, being developed or reviewed should be examined with reference to the RSE Policy and any implications which it has for them should be addressed. Similarly the implications of other school policies for the RSE policy also need to be considered.

Links to other policies and to the curriculum delivery

Links to school policies/procedures

- Code of Behaviour
- Child Safe Guarding Statement
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Substance Misuse Policy
- Guidance Procedures

Links to the curriculum delivery

In addition to the delivery of the stated programmes as outlined in this policy aspects of RSE are delivered across the curriculum through subjects such as Science, Biology and Home Economics.

Implementation Arrangements, Roles and Responsibilities

The principal is responsible for co-ordinating implementation of the policy in consultation with the co-ordinators of the relevant subjects and other individuals who have roles in the school. This is carried out

- Where relevant in the planning of subjects
- In meetings of Year Heads
- In meetings with the Student Support Team
- As part of the school's Guidance Plan

Reviewing and evaluating the policy

The policy will be reviewed and evaluated every three years under the direction of the Board of Management. The review and evaluation will take cognisance of changing information, guidelines, legislation and feedback from parents/guardians, students, teachers and others. The policy will be revised as necessary.

The following policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 02/10/19

Chairperson of BOM

Principal

Date

Date

Review Date : Sept 2022