

Relationship & Sexuality Education Policy



Coláiste Bríde, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford.

Ratified by the Board of Management

Signed: _____
Chairperson,
Board of Management

Review Date: 11th February, 2019

Signed: _____
Secretary,
Board of Management

MISSION STATEMENT

*“We are working to promote a secure and caring environment,
Where Respect, Responsibility and Christian commitment grow,
Drawing forth the positive of each individual”*

Coláiste Bríde is a Catholic School founded by the Mercy Order under the trusteeship of CEIST. It has a long tradition of academic excellence and is committed to the development of the whole student. It offers a curriculum designed to meet fully the needs of the student.

The school wishes to cater for the academic, spiritual, moral, aesthetic, interpersonal and physical needs of the student. The characteristics of the school are the pursuit of tolerance, compassion and a sense of justice and equality for all.

We aim to develop in each student, confidence, self-respect and respect for others.

The school and its staff value its partnership with parents in meeting the personal and educational requirements of students and staff alike.

The core values of CEIST are :

Promoting Spiritual and Human Development

We believe a knowledge of and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ gives meaning and purpose to our lives.

Achieving Quality in Teaching and Learning

We are committed to excellence and to continually improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Showing Respect for Every Person

We respect the unique and intrinsic value of every person.

Creating Community

Our schools are faith communities of welcome and hospitality where Gospel values are lived and where there is special care for those most in need.

Being Just and Responsible

We seek to act justly and responsibly in all our relationships

Mission Statement

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Scope of this Policy

This 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 are familiar with this RSE policy. The policy will apply to school staff, students, Board of Management, parents, visiting speakers and external facilitators.

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

Rationale

The Department of Education circulars M4/95, M20/96, M22/00, M11/03, M27/2008 and C37/2010, all of which are available at www.education.ie, require schools to develop a Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) policy and programme, and to implement them for all students from First Year to Sixth Year.

The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017 state that the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme, including the relationships and sexuality module, is a “mandatory part of the curriculum for all students in the junior cycle of post-primary schools and must be fully implemented”.

The Procedures also state that “all post-primary schools are also required to have a Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme at senior cycle”.

The Board of Management of Coláiste Bríde recognises its responsibility to ensure that RSE programme is taught throughout junior and senior cycle.

Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. This education is delivered consciously and unconsciously by parents, teachers, peers, adults and the media.

Building on the work done in primary school, Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) at post-primary level seeks to provide opportunities for young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that will enable them to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

As a Catholic school, and in keeping with our mission statement, we wish to support parents in this important aspect of their daughter’s education and preparation for life. In the school setting RSE is an integral part of general education provision, which seeks to promote the overall development of the person and which includes the integration of sexuality into personal understanding, growth and development.

Relationships and Sexuality Education Provision

In its broadest sense, RSE is a whole-school responsibility and all members of this community share responsibility for modelling relationships that are characterised by justice and respect. At a more formal level, RSE is dealt with in the context of certain subjects; Science, Home Economics, English, C.S.P.E., Religion, and population demographics/social studies within the Geography syllabus. However, to ensure an adequate response to the needs of all students, specific provision for RSE is made within the Social, Personal, and Health Education programme at Junior Cycle and during a six-class programme at Senior Cycle.

Junior Cycle RSE Provision:

The Department of Education and Skills has approved the recommended syllabus for SPHE at junior cycle.

As a life skills programme, SPHE aims to:

- Enable students to develop personal and social skills
- Promote self-esteem and self-confidence
- Enable students to develop a framework for responsible decision making
- Provide opportunities for reflection and discussion
- Promote physical, mental and emotional health and well-being.

The RSE programme forms part of the SPHE programme. The Guidelines for RSE (NCCA) 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. The content of the school’s SPHE programme includes a wide range of topics such as self-esteem, self-identity, assertiveness, motivation, effective communication, decision-making skills, bullying, healthy eating, hygiene and safety – all of which can contribute to the effectiveness of the RSE programme.

Currently, SPHE is taught as part of the Junior Cycle programme under the umbrella of the Wellbeing programme. One class period per week is timetabled for the Junior Cycle classes. A 6-week RSE programme is delivered in these classes.

Senior Cycle RSE Provision:

- Transition Year students receive one class of SPHE a week. They will be provided with a minimum six weeks of RSE in these timetabled classes. Transition Years also receive additional workshops by external organisations to complement the provision of RSE.
- 5th year students will be provided with a minimum six weeks of RSE during their timetabled religion classes. Religion teachers will deliver the RSE programme in these

classes. In addition, 5th year students have one timetabled SPHE class per week. 5th year students will receive 6 additional RSE classes at these times. Religion teachers will work in conjunction with the SPHE teachers to deliver the 5th Year RSE programme.

- 6th year students will be provided with a minimum six weeks of RSE during their timetabled religion classes. Religion teachers will deliver the RSE programme in these classes.

The aims of our Relationships and Sexuality Education programme

RSE, which is part of the overall framework of Wellbeing /SPHE / Health Education, has as its specific aims:

- 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, and in keeping with the policy of the school
- To provide opportunities for students to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways which help them to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

It is acknowledged that in a course of limited duration these aims are aspirational.

Objectives

RSE should enable students to:

- Acquire the understanding and skills necessary to form healthy friendships and relationships.
- Develop a positive sense of self awareness, and the skills for building and maintaining self-esteem.
- Become aware of the variety of way in which individuals grow and change especially during adolescence and to develop respect for differences between individuals.
- Understand human physiology with reference to the reproductive cycle, human fertility and sexually transmitted diseases.
- Understand sexual development and identity and explore aspects of sexuality including stereotyping, gender issues and cultural influences on sexuality.
- Value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood.
- Develop strategies for decisions and actions consistent with personal moral integrity and respectful of the rights and dignity of others.
- Develop skills for coping with peer pressure, conflict and threats to personal safety.

RSE Programme

First Year

Unit 1: Having a Friend and Being a Friend

Unit 2: Sexuality, Gender Identity and Sexual Health: Changes at adolescence - What's happening inside your body?

Unit 3: Sexuality, Gender Identity and Sexual Health

Second Year

Unit 1: Relationships: Having a Friend and Being a Friend

Unit 2: The Relationship Spectrum

Unit 3: Sexuality, Gender Identity and Sexual Health

Unit 4: Media influences on Relationships and Sexuality

Third Year

Unit 1: Having a Friend and Being a Friend

Unit 2: The Relationship Spectrum

Unit 3: Sexuality, Gender Identity and Sexual Health

Unit 4: Media influences on Relationships and Sexuality

Transition Year

Unit 1: Relationships:

- Recognising your emotions, how to deal with them and their effect on your body
- Loving relationships and loving qualities
- Intimacy and marriage

Unit 2: Human Sexuality:

- Influences and values
- Decision making
- Responsible relationships

Unit 3: Human growth and development

- Human reproduction

Fifth Year

Unit 1: Relationships:

- Keeping your cool in conflict and how to resolve conflict in a relationship
- Self-esteem and being yourself
- Boundaries and communicating boundaries

Unit 2: Human Sexuality:

- What is sexuality?
- Sexual orientation
- Changing roles in society
- Human Growth and development

Unit 3: Consent:

- Rape-myths and truths
- Rape and sexual assault
- Sexual abuse and how to deal with it

Unit 4: Human Sexuality: (5th Year SPHE/Mental Health class)

- Contraceptive methods
- Sexually Transmitted Infections

Sixth Year

Unit 1: Relationships:

- When we feel hurt
- Loss and coping with loss
- Life support and family lines

Unit 2: Human Sexuality

- Gender and identity

Unit 3: Human Growth and development

- Unplanned pregnancy
- Fertility
- Health care before and after pregnancy
- Transmission of STIs

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

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.

This policy has been designed in consultation with Parents' Association/ Board of Management representatives and the views expressed by parents will be considered when reviewing the policy. A copy of this policy will be made available on our website www.colaistebride.ie and to any parent on request to the school Office.

The school requests that parents and students complete a survey in relation to topics they wish to be covered from year to year. The school will do its utmost to provide students with information they deem to be important under the heading of RSE within the time allocated. Relevant information is made available to parents in advance of the RSE programme commencing each year.

Withdrawing pupils from the RSE programme

- a) In advance of the RSE programme commencing, parents will be informed about the topics to be covered and 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.
- b) 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 has been made to withdraw from the RSE programme, that request must be complied with until revoked by the parent.
- c) If students are withdrawn from all or part of the RSE programme, arrangements will be made where possible between parents and management for their care while the programme is in progress.
- d) 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.

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 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. Advice offered should not be directive and should be appropriate to the age of the student.

Sensitive Issues

It is natural that students may ask questions about sensitive issues in RSE, but it may not be appropriate to deal with some questions in class, including explicit questions. Teachers may choose to say that it is not appropriate to deal with that question at this time.

The teacher has the responsibility to set clear boundaries to ensure the classroom is a safe place for everyone, including themselves. While there are no definitive guidelines, the teacher should bear the following in mind when making decisions about where to set limits:

- Age and readiness of the students
- School ethos
- This RSE policy
- RSE Curriculum Guidelines.

If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised, he/she should seek advice from the Principal.

Confidentiality

The normal limits of confidentiality will apply to any information coming to the attention of the teacher. Any concerns about a student's welfare will be dealt with discreetly and sensitively within the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017 issued by the Department of Education and Science.

It is a legal requirement for teachers, as mandated persons, that in circumstances where a pupil is considered at some risk of any type of abuse, that this information is immediately referred to the DLP or DDLP as per the Child Protection Procedures.

The following is school policy:

teachers must never promise absolute confidentiality;

pupils must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the DLP / DDLP and possibly to parents if the Principal decides that it is in the best interests of the pupil to notify parents;

teachers must use their professional judgement, with due consideration to our school's Child Safeguarding Statement and the Children First Act (2015), to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard the information;

teachers, as mandated persons, have a legal requirement to immediately refer abuse against a child whether emotional, physical or sexual, to the DLP or DDLP

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.

Consent

Pupils should be provided with information on the age of consent which is seventeen years of age for both males and females. The Child Protection Procedures 2.1.6 state "In all cases where a school becomes aware of underage sexual intercourse the school should take appropriate steps to inform the child's parents".

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 but within the teaching of RSE biological terms will be used and there may be a cross-over of content within both areas. This may provide an opportunity for cross-curricular co-operation and team teaching

Using visiting speakers

- a) It is school policy that the RSE programme is best discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by the pupils.
However, visitors can enhance the quality of the provision if they are used in addition to, not to replace a planned programme of RSE. RSE teachers will remain in the room with their class while there is a visiting speaker in.
- b) All visitors should provide a valid Garda Vetting Declaration as per the school's Vetting Policy.
- c) Upon approval from senior management, the RSE teacher 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 age appropriateness 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?
- d) Visitors should be given advance notice of the composition of the class and of how their contribution fits into the RSE programme.

Special Educational Needs

To ensure learning activities are meaningful, relevant and achievable for all students, the RSE teacher will respond to student's diversity by using differentiated approaches and methodologies.

However, some students with special educational 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 acceptable, and in being warned and prepared against abuse by others. Appropriate additional resources may be required for students with special educational needs. Where deemed necessary, additional supported may be provided to SEN students in conjunction with the SEN coordinator.

Training

Training:

- Teachers involved 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 preparedness to refer to more expert advice if necessary.
- Teachers that have expert training in the specific areas of health, relationships and sexuality education will be encouraged to support other teachers.
- The school will facilitate teachers to obtain expert training in RSE.

Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the RSE programme:

The school will provide 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.

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

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

Feedback is sought as part of our ongoing school self-evaluation to inform future planning.

The Board of Management of Coláiste Bríde is committed to playing an active role in the implementation of this policy and undertakes to review and revise it, considering changes to legislation, experience and other relevant developments.

Appendix 1

Special Educational Needs Resource List

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's 'Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities' contains comprehensive guidelines on teaching SPHE to students with mild general learning disabilities at primary and post primary level, and to students with moderate and severe and profound general learning disabilities.

Available from NCCA, 24 Merrion Square, Dublin 2. Tel 01 661 7177. www.ncca.ie
Email: info@ncca.ie

The Department of Education and Science does not endorse the use of any of the resources listed below. It is the responsibility of those using additional resources for RSE to ensure that the content is appropriate to the needs of the school, in line with school policy and suitable for school programmes as outlined by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

RSE Resource Materials

- 'Talking Together About Sex and Relationships.' A practical resource for schools and parents working with young people with learning disabilities. Leslie Kerr Edwards and Lorna Scott. Go to: www.fpa.org.uk, click on 'Shop' then on A-Z of publications
- Sexuality and Learning Disability: A Resource for Staff. Claire Fanstone and Zarine Katrak Go to: www.fpa.org.uk, click on 'Shop', then on A-Z of publications.
- 'Let's Do It.' Creative activities for sex education for young people with learning difficulties. Over 80 drama-based activities developed by Image in Action. R. Johns, L. Scott and J. Bliss. Go to: www.imageinaction.org and click on 'Resources'
- 'Living Your Life.' A sex education and personal development resource for special educational needs. Dr. A. Craft. Brook Publications. Go to: www.brook.org.uk and click on 'Publications'
- 'Becoming a Woman' A teaching pack on menstruation for people with learning disabilities. Emma Cooper, Pavilion. Go to: www.pavpub.com, click on 'Training Materials', then on 'Learning Disability'.
- 'Talk To Me' A personal development manual for women and girls with Down syndrome, and their parents. Free download available from: www.dsanw.org.au and enter 'Talk To Me' into Search
- Body Board. Go to: www.headonltd.co.uk and click on 'Products'

- 'How Did I Begin' Picture book with simple explanation of how babies are made. Mick Manning and Brita Granstrom. Franklin Watts ISBN 978-0-7496-5661-4 Available from bookshops.
- Anatomically correct boy and girl dolls are available from Findel Education Limited, Unit 11 Naas Road Business Park, Dublin 12. Tel 01 427 3100
RSE Related Materials
- 'Stay Safe' Personal Safety Skills for Children with Learning Difficulties. Go to www.staysafe.ie
- 'People Skills for Young Adults with a Mild Learning Disorder' Go to: www.chalkface.com and click on 'PSHE'
- 'Talkabout Relationships' Building self-esteem and relationship skills. Alex Kelly, Speechmark. Available from 'Outside the Box'. Go to www.otb.ie and go to 'Product Search'

Resources for Parents

- 'Talking Together About Growing Up' A workbook for parents of children with learning disabilities. Lorna Scott and Lesley Kerr Edwards. Go to: www.fpa.org.uk, click on 'Shop', then on 'A-Z of Publications'
- 'How Did I Begin' (see above)
- 'Let's Talk About Where Babies Come From' Robbie H Harris, Walker Books. For parents and carers who wish to talk to children aged 8-12 about sex relationships and growing up. Available from bookshops