



Relationships & Sexuality Education Policy (RSE)

November 2019

EDUCATE TOGETHER AFFIRMS THAT:

<p>Multi-denominational schools have the right to be treated no less favourably than other schools within the Irish educational system, in accordance with their needs and their identity.</p>	<p>Children of all social, cultural and religious backgrounds have a right to an education that respects their individual identity whilst exploring the different values and traditions of the world in which they live.</p>	<p>Parents are entitled to participate actively in decisions that affect the education of their children. In particular they have the right to decide what kind of school reflects their conscience and lawful preference.</p>
<p>The state has a duty to take the identity of the multi-denominational sector fully into account when deciding on policy that affects the establishment and development of schools.</p>		

and COMMITS ITSELF TO:

Support the establishment of schools which are:



<p>Multi-denominational i.e. all learners having equal rights of access to the school, and children of all social, cultural and religious backgrounds being equally respected.</p>	<p>Learner-centred in their approach to education.</p> <p>Co-educational and committed to encouraging all children to explore their full range of abilities and opportunities.</p>	<p>Democratically run with active participation by parents in the daily life of the school, whilst positively affirming the professional role of the teachers.</p>
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and in areas where the demand for such a school exists:



<p>Promote fuller awareness and recognition of the identity of the multi-denominational sector at all levels in Irish society and abroad.</p>	<p>Participate in appropriate structures and activities concerned with the future development of education in Ireland and abroad.</p>	<p>Promote a future where multi-denominational education will be as freely available to parents as any other educational option they may choose.</p>
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Introductory Statement

This version of Galway Educate Together Secondary RSE Policy was initiated in September 2019 by the SPHE Team and School Management.

Our School Philosophy

Students who attend Galway Educate Together Secondary School will be encouraged to reach their full potential mentally, physically, emotionally and socially, in an atmosphere and environment in which they feel safe, valued and secure and in which respect for self and others is the norm. Our school operates under the direct patronage of Educate Together and there are four underlying principles which form our ethos.

We are a co-educational school, democratically run, multi-denominational and child centred.

We strive to create an ethos of respect, inclusion, accountability and of commitment to relationships.

This RSE policy works in conjunction with the Galway Educate Together Secondary School, SPHE Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Code of Positive Behaviour and Child Protection Documents.

Relationships and Sexuality Education

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. It is a developmental process through experiential learning in which pupils participate to cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships.

RSE Aims and Objectives

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 of and respect for reproduction
- to enable young people to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral and social framework.

Objectives

RSE 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 for building and maintaining self-esteem
- become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change especially during adolescence and to develop respect for difference between individuals
- understand human physiology with particular reference to the reproductive cycle, human fertility and sexually transmitted infections
- understand sexual development and identity and explore aspects of sexuality including sex role 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

Some of these objectives are supported by the SPHE Programme and by the broader curriculum taught at Junior Cycle in the school.

Scope

The policy applies to all aspects of teaching and learning about Relationships and Sexuality. Discussion about Relationships and Sexuality also takes place in classes and activities other than SPHE/ RSE; it is therefore important that all teachers are familiar with the RSE policy.

The policy will apply to school staff, students, the Board of Management, parents /guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators.

Current School Provision

At Galway Educate Together Secondary School the teaching and learning for RSE takes place within the subject Social Personal & Health Education SPHE at Junior Cycle. Other subjects support aspects of RSE at different stages. These include Home Economics, Science, Ethical Education and Civic Social & Political Education.

Management and organisation of RSE in the school

Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff will be made by the Principal. Teachers will follow the guidelines and lesson plans drawn up by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

- SPHE will be timetabled for Junior Cycle Classes for one hour per week and out of the SPHE programme 4 x1hour periods will be assigned to RSE.

Board of Management

The Board will ensure that the ethos and values of the Patrons are reflected in the formulation of the RSE (and SPHE) policies.

Classroom Issues

Participation

SPHE is part of Wellbeing on the Junior Cycle Curriculum, all students attend SPHE for one hour per week. Relationships and Sexuality (RSE) is one module of the programme.

- In the case of RSE, parents/guardians are informed before the RSE module begins. If parents require further discussion/clarification, this is accommodated by the SPHE teacher.
- The Education Act, 1998 (section 30, subsection (2)(e)) provides that a student is not required to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parent/guardian or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student. Hence parents/guardians have the right to withdraw their child from sensitive issues in RSE if they wish to do so on the understanding that as parents/guardians they are taking full responsibility for this aspect of their education. Parents/Guardians do not have to give reasons for withdrawal, but the school respectfully invites them to do so as sometimes we can resolve misunderstandings.
- If a parent/guardian wishes to withdraw their child from RSE class they must put this in writing to the SPHE teacher. Following this they will be invited to meet with the teacher to discuss their concerns. Once a parent/guardian's request to withdraw is made and the meeting has taken place, that request must be complied with until revoked by the parent/guardian.
- Parents/Guardians will be responsible for supervising their child off campus at this time for the RSE class should they decide to withdraw from RSE classes.

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 and should set appropriate limits. Inappropriate questions will not be answered by a teacher in class. Students may ask questions about issues which are not included in the curriculum. On these and all questions asked teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, together with the student's emotional maturity, the RSE Curriculum and RSE policy for the school.

Management of Information

It is the school's policy that if a teacher receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a pupil is being abused (as defined in Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare

of children), the teacher should in the first instance, report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP).

The DLP will follow up using the Department of Education & Skills' *Child Protection Procedures for Post Primary Schools*.

- Teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality
- Students must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the Principal and possibly to Parents / Guardians if the Principal decides that it is in the best interest of the student to notify parents
- Teachers must indicate clearly to students when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential - the student can then decide to proceed or not.

Where the matter is reported to the DLP and he or she is satisfied on advice that there are reasonable grounds for suspicion or allegation, a report should be made to the HSE as per in accordance with the Department of Education & Skills' *Child Protection Procedures for Post Primary Schools*.

The Principal will report to the Board of Management as per section 4.3 of the Department of Education & Skills' *Child Protection Procedures for Post Primary*.

It is essential that all times the matter be treated in the strictest confidence and not discussed except among the parties mentioned above.

Visiting Speakers

Galway Educate Together Secondary School recognises that visiting speakers/facilitators play a valuable role in supplementing, complementing and supporting our programme.

Visitors/visiting groups are required to adhere to the following guidelines for good practice:

- All visits will be planned in line with the relevant whole-school SPHE/RSE programmes.
- Visitors to the school will be made aware of the SPHE/RSE policy and other policies as relevant.
- Talks/programmes delivered by external speakers/agencies must be consistent with the ethos of Galway Educate Together Secondary School and the SPHE/RSE programmes. All visits must be planned with school personnel.
- A teacher(s) must remain in the classroom with the student group.
- All programmes and events delivered by visitors and external agencies must use appropriate, evidence-based methodologies with clear educational outcomes. Such programmes are best delivered by those specially qualified to work with young people for whom the programmes are designed.

- All programmes, talks, interventions and events should be evaluated by students and teachers in terms of subject matter, messages, structure, methodology and proposed learning outcomes.

Confidentiality

At the start of each academic year, students are informed that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed and that information may have to be passed on as the discretion of the SPHE teacher to the Designated Liaison Person (Principal) or relevant authorities Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy Principal).

Sexual Activity

Teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, together with the student's emotional maturity, the RSE Curriculum and the RSE policy for the school while dealing with the topic of sexual activity. It is advisable that teachers give young people information on the age of consent which, following the passage of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act, 2006, is 17 years for both male and females.

Family Planning

The post primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines state that the subject of Family Planning should be covered within the Senior Cycle RSE programme. The RSE Programme requires that young people are provided with information about the methods of contraception. Teachers should use their professional judgement guided by the age of the students together with the student's emotional maturity, the RSE Curriculum and the RSE policy for the school, while dealing with the topic of family planning.

LGBT+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender)

The post primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines include the subject of sexual preference and gender identity.

Sexually Transmitted Infections

Creating awareness of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's) is undertaken in second level schools. Information on STI's is mainly addressed in the senior cycle. Teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, together with the student's emotional maturity, the RSE Curriculum and RSE policy for the school, while dealing with the issue of sexually transmitted Infections.

Special Needs

Young people with special needs may require more help than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up. The SPHE teachers will work with the SEN department in providing the appropriate RSE programme for all students.

Links to Other School Policies

School policies being examined or reviewed, should be considered with reference to the schools RSE Policy; while the implications of other school policies for the RSE policy also need to be considered such as Child Protection Policy.

Professional Learning Experiences

The SPHE Supports Service provides training to teachers in SPHE and RSE on an ongoing basis. Teachers who teach SPHE and RSE are required to attend this in-service when made available to them.

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 resources allow.

Monitoring of policy

The implementation of the RSE policy will be monitored at SPHE/RSE department meetings and other meetings deemed necessary by the Principal or Board of Management. In the short term it will be reviewed annually as the school grows and as the current cohort of students move on up into Senior Cycle.

Evaluating and Reviewing the RSE Programme

The school will review this policy in 2020/2021 school year and following that periodically after its ratification by the Board of Management. The RSE policy may be reviewed and amended, prior to that date, where necessary. All stakeholders will be informed of any changes to the policy.

This policy has been drafted in conjunction with the School Ethos and other relevant policies of the School such as the Child Protection Procedures and documents as well as Circular 0023/2010.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on : January 20th 2020