



St Paul's Secondary School

Care - Inclusion - Respect

RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY EDUCATION POLICY

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St. Paul's Secondary School, Greenhills, Dublin 12

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

St. Paul's is a Catholic Secondary School for girls, founded in 1965 by the Sisters of Charity of St. Paul the Apostle, and now under the Trusteeship of Le Chéile Trust www.lecheiletrust.ie

Mission Statement and Ethos

The aim of St. Paul's Secondary School is to help students to become well-balanced and mature persons through a programme that caters for the spiritual, moral, intellectual, physical and aesthetic potentialities of the individual.

This policy is written in a spirit of caring for the students in an all-encompassing holistic manner, in keeping with the ethos of the school and our motto: *Omnibus Omnia* meaning 'all things to all'.

St. Paul's Secondary School is a place where students should feel at ease while relating to one another and to adults in an open, respectful and trusting atmosphere. There is an honoured place for academic excellence and for cultural and aesthetic appreciation. We consider that pupils' ability to communicate is central to their learning.

The Scope of this Policy

This policy will apply to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality. Since discussions about relationships and sexuality take place in classes other than SPHE/RSE, it is important that all teachers are familiar with the RSE policy.

This policy will apply to school staff, students, board of management, parents/guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators.

Definition of Relationship and Sexuality Education

Relationship and Sexuality Education is a developmental process of experiential learning which aims to help pupils cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships.

“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.

In Irish schools, RSE will provide structured opportunities for pupils to 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.

This approach gives opportunities to children and young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible manner.... At post primary level, this means building on the primary programme and providing young people with information and skills to critically evaluate the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values offered today, and to make positive, responsible choices about themselves and the way they live their lives.

Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy Guidelines, DES 1997

The Aims of the RSE Programme

In St. Paul’s, RSE will be located within the overall framework of religious education and SPHE. The specific aims of the RSE programme are:

- to help the pupils to 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 provide opportunities for pupils to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that may help them to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way;
- to enable pupils to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in the context of a moral, spiritual and social framework.

Objectives of the RSE Programme

RSE should enable the students to:

- explore personal thoughts, values, attitudes and feelings about relationships;
- develop an understanding of the different types of relationships, what is important in them and the skills to enhance relationships;
- promote empathy with others who have different cultural values, attitudes and beliefs about family, relationships, sex and sexuality;
- develop students' knowledge, understanding and skills in support of sexual reproductive health;
- develop students' understanding of sexuality and sexual orientation and the importance of an inclusive environment;
- develop personal and interpersonal skills which support beginning, maintaining and ending relationships;
- develop skills for coping with peer pressure, conflict and threats to personal safety.

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in the School

Class Organisation and Timetabling

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

Circular M11/03

All second level schools must timetable Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) as part of the Junior Cycle Core Curriculum from September 2003. The time allocation recommended is the equivalent of one class period per week.

Circular 0037/201

All second level schools must implement Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) as an element of SPHE at junior cycle and as an RSE programme in senior cycle, even in the absence of a timetabled SPHE class. The time allocation recommended is six periods of forty minute classes per year.

In St Paul's RSE is timetabled in the following way:

All junior cycle classes, 1st, 2nd and 3rd year are timetabled one class of SPHE per week. Junior cycle RSE Programme is delivered during six of these classes.

All Transition year students have a double period of SPHE for a fifteen week module. Senior cycle RSE Programme is delivered during three of these double periods.

All 5th year students have one class of SPHE per week. RSE is taught in six of these classes. LCA2 students have one class of SPHE per week. RSE is taught in six of these classes.

SPHE is not a timetabled class for 6th year students but these students receive ten classes of RSE/SPHE during non-exam religion time. An SPHE teacher delivers six classes of RSE and four classes of SPHE. At the beginning of the school year the dates and times of these ten classes are decided between the Religion and SPHE/RSE teachers.

Child Protection

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 age for consent is 17 for boys and girls for heterosexual and homosexual sex. All students of RSE are made aware of the limits to confidentiality that should a teacher become aware that a student is at risk they are obliged to pass this information on to the DLP. However should a student who is not at risk choose to confide in a teacher about something, the teacher and should keep this information to him or herself.

Relationship of RSE to the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme

The Draft Guidelines for RSE (NCCA, June 1995) 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. RSE is addressed within the SPHE programme.

The aims of the SPHE programme are:

- to enable the students to develop skills for self-fulfilment and living in communities;
- to promote self-esteem and self-confidence;
- to enable the students to develop a framework for responsible decision making;
- to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion;
- to promote mental and emotional health and wellbeing.

These aims are achieved with the support of the SPHE Support Service.

With such support, students may be enabled to participate as active and responsible adults in the personal and social dimensions of society and to make responsible decisions that respect their own dignity and others. There is a growing recognition that RSE and SPHE (delivered to our junior cycle students) is as important as any other area of the curriculum.

St Paul's RSE Programme Content

The RSE programme as taught in St. Paul's is the programme set out by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

- The RSE programme discusses such topics as relationships, values, peer pressure, conflict and decision-making.
- The Programme is student centred and is delivered in a pastoral care context.
- It includes an anti-bullying strategy which emphasises respect for the rights and dignity of others.
- Visits by speakers on topics such as drugs, alcohol misuse, hygiene and sexual health form an integral part of the programme.

The SPHE Subject Policy has detailed lesson plans of the RSE topics taught to students. The following is an outline of topics covered in the programme:

Junior Cycle

YEAR 1

- Friendship
- Changes at adolescence
- The Menstrual Cycle
- The Reproductive System
- Images of Male and Female

- Respecting myself and others

YEAR 2

- From conception to birth
- Recognising feelings and emotions
- Peer pressure and other influences
- Managing relationships
- Making responsible decisions
- Health and personal safety

YEAR 3

- Respectful Relationships- what's important
- Wants, Needs, Rights and Responsibilities
- Responsibilities in Relationships
- Contraception and Sexually transmitted Infections (STIs)
- Sexual Orientation

Senior Cycle

RELATIONSHIPS

- What we value in relationships
- Healthy relationships
- Self esteem
- The influence of self esteem
- Understanding boundaries
- Communicating boundaries
- Intimacy

HUMAN SEXUALITY

- Sexuality
- Sexual orientation and Gender Identity

- Influences and values
- Decision making
- Responsible relationships

SEXUAL HEALTH

- Human reproduction and fertility
- Contraception
- Unplanned pregnancy
- STIs
- STI transmission

Parental Rights and Responsibilities

The school wishes to support parents/guardians in this important aspect of their daughter's education and preparation for life. We believe we have a complementary role in preparing young people for their place in society. The school encourages parents/guardians to ensure that students participate in the RSE programme.

St. Paul's Secondary school is committed to working with parents/guardians and acknowledges that parents have, by law, the primary responsibility for the education of their children.

Parents/Guardians have the right to be fully informed and to express their views about the programme. Parents/Guardians of incoming first years will have an opportunity to examine textbooks and materials used in the delivery of the programme from Junior through to Senior Cycle. Parents/guardians may exercise their right to have their daughter/s withdrawn from the RSE programme. In such cases, the school must be informed in good time and in writing.

Ethical/ Moral Considerations

Answering Questions:

While it is important to create an environment in SPHE/ RSE classes in which issues can be discussed openly, teachers may not be able to answer all questions asked by students and can set appropriate limits. When deciding whether or not to answer questions, teachers should use their professional judgement, taking into account the age of the student, the RSE curriculum and the RSE policy.

Confidentiality:

Confidentiality will be respected unless a teacher becomes aware that a student may be at risk of any type of abuse, in which case the matter must be referred to the Designated Liaison Person for child protection.

Teachers should inform students about the legal limits of confidentiality. Students cannot be given a promise of absolute confidentiality. Teachers should indicate clearly to students when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential.

The school's *Child Protection Policy* will be fully adhered to at all times.

Sexual Activity:

When addressing the issue of sexual activity, teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age and emotional maturity of the students. It is advisable for teachers to give students information on the age of consent which, according to the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006 is 17 years of age for both males and females.

Family Planning:

The post-primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines state that the subject of family planning should be covered in the Senior Cycle RSE programme.

Sexual Orientation:

The post primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines include the subject of sexual orientation. The Equal Status Acts 2000 - 2011 and the Equality Act 2004 prohibit discrimination across nine grounds, including sexual orientation. To promote inclusivity, sexual orientation needs to be discussed in a clear, open and respectful way in the classroom.

Special Needs:

Students 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 to differentiate between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and in being equipped to deal with potentially abusive situations.

Links to other School Policies

- Child Protection Procedures
- School Guidance Plan
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Substance Use Policy

- ICT Policy
- Acceptable use Policy
- Critical Incident Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Code of Behaviour

Staff Development and Training

All SPHE teachers are encouraged to register with the SPHE website (www.sphe.ie) for in-service. The school will support the training and professional development of teachers delivering the programme.

Monitoring of Policy

The implementation of the RSE policy will be monitored by the SPHE/RSE department and where deemed necessary by the Principal or the Board of Management.

Evaluating and Reviewing the RSE Programme

The school and Board of Management will review this policy periodically.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on: 25th March 2019

Signed: _____
Chairperson: Board of Management

Signed: _____
Principal/Secretary: Board of Management

Date: _____

Date: _____

Appendices

1. Resources used for RSE
2. Teachers teaching RSE who have attended the RSE Training Days

Appendix 1: Resources used for RSE:

Junior Cycle

RSE Curriculum Guidelines

- Healthy Living (HSE)
- Healthy Times (HSE)
- Healthy Choices (HSE)

Senior Cycle

RSE Curriculum Guidelines

- TRUST: Talking Relationships Understanding Sexuality Training
- Be4udecide.ie
- Working Things Out
- BodyWhys
- Lockers: Information and Resources for Schools Around the Sharing of Explicit Self-Generated Images.
- Growing Up LGBT
- Mental Health Matters
- Marie Keating Cancer Awareness Pack

Appendix 2: List of teachers with RSE Training

Jennifer Allen
Bridget Boland
Eimear Byrne
Katie Cluskey
Claire Creggy
Shirley English
Maria Fleming
Lisa Gardiner
Jane Heaney
Shauna Keenan
Ailish King
Elaine Lalor
Amanda Leahy
Linda Leslie
Mairead Masterson
Eleanor Moloney
Anne O'Neill
Grainne O'Toole
Fiona Phelan

Nicola Talbot
Geraldine Watters
Tracy Weldon