

SAINT CATHERINE'S COLLEGE

Coláiste Chaitríona, Ard Mhacha



Relationships and Sexuality Policy

Revised June 2020

RSE Policy – Links to other school policies

The RSE Policy relates to other major school policies, which can be viewed on the school website, and include:

- Digital Safety Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy (including cyber, homophobic and verbal)
- Code of Conduct
- Child Protection Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy
- Mobile Phone Policy
- Drugs Education/Misuse of Substances Policy

Policy formation and consultation process

The RSE Policy has been revised by the school's Pastoral Vice-Principal in conjunction with the school's Designated Teacher for Child Protection in light of the following recent publications:

- Equality Act 2006 Chapter 3
- Marshall Report and Implementation Plan November 2014
- RSE Guidance Post-Primary (CEA) 2015
- Circular No 2015/22 RSE Guidance (DENI)
- Every School a Good School: Together towards improvement
- Sexting and the Law (SBNI)

The following stages of consultation have been carried out:

- A Curriculum Audit Dec 2015 (Appendix 1)
- Staff Survey May 2016 (a) Key Pastoral Team
(b) Whole Staff (Appendix 2)
- Pupil Survey – Student Leadership Team and School Council (Appendix 3)

Further consultation

- Draft RSE Policy – available to parents/staff for consultation on school website (August 2016)
- Ratified by Board of Governors (September 2016)

The final RSE Policy will be available on the school's website, hard copies available from school office on request.

The RSE Policy and its implementation will be reviewed annually by the Pastoral Committee and will take into account any future recommendations.

Contact Person (s) for comment/feedback on Policy

- Mrs D. Moore – Vice-Principal – Pastoral
- Miss C Mc Call – Senior Teacher -Designated Teacher for Child Protection

Saint Catherine's College – Educational Philosophy

Saint Catherine's College bases its philosophy on the tradition of the International Society of the Sacred Heart. As a Sacred Heart School, we seek to educate the whole person as a responsible member of society, confident of personal worth, with a strong faith in Christ, active in living out Christ's call to know and share his love. The school is a community – all of whose members have inherent and therefore equal dignity. To be true to itself a tradition must constantly adapt itself. The youth of today and tomorrow require an education different to that of previous generations. Saint Catherine's College is committed to ongoing adaptation and wise innovation in order to keep through to its purpose.

Introduction and Rationale of the RSE Policy

The RSE Programme in Saint Catherine's College seeks to provide young people with formal opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality and relationships and how to develop the skills and values they need to initiate and sustain healthy, mature and Christian relationships within a moral, social framework.

Definitions

The nature of RSE necessitates a defining of its unique terminology and an understanding of the terms used within the context of Catholic teaching:

Relationships and Sexuality Education is a life-long process of acquiring knowledge, understanding and skills and developing one's beliefs attitudes and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. *(This reflects the definition given in the Relationship and Sexuality Education Guidance – An update for Post-Primary Schools – 2015)*

Sexuality

People are sexual beings. Sexuality is about much more than its biological aspects. It concerns the innermost being of the human person. We believe sexuality is a gift from God. It is the drive within every person to give and receive love and affection. Our sexuality changes and permeates all our relationships.

Morality is essentially linked with behaviour and what we actually do. It is also directly connected with experience, faith and decision making.

Ethics are the mere principles that a person uses to guide and to judge their actions.

Values

The attitudes, beliefs, virtues and principles which inform one's behaviour e.g. respect for self, honesty with self and others.

Personal Morality is about each of us taking responsibility for the choices we make. We endeavour to ensure that our pupils make moral decisions and develop an "informed conscience".

Morals and Values

Mindful of the Catholic principles on which Saint Catherine's College was founded and the diverse cultural groups in the school, pupils are taught RSE within a framework that encourages the following:

- A respect for self and others, regardless of sexual orientation and an appreciation of the need to treat all with dignity and respect
- A respect for the right of others to hold different views from oneself without aggression or antagonism
- An acknowledgement and understanding of diversity regarding religion, culture and sexual orientation
- A recognition that, within relationships, rights, duties and responsibilities are involved
- An appreciation that friendships and relationships should be based on self and mutual respect, honesty, trust and commitment
- An understanding that exploitation in any relationship is wrong
- An appreciation that non exploitation, self-discipline and self-restraint are important values in developing responsible behaviours in sexual matters
- A recognition of the positive benefits of a permanent, committed, sexual relationship with one person
- An acknowledgement of singleness and celibacy as a valuable and fulfilling option

Aims of RSE

In line with our school ethos and CCEA guidelines, the Relationships and Sexuality Programme aims to:

- Help young people to appreciate their uniqueness, dignity and full potential as sons and daughters of God
- Promote a better understanding of diversity and inclusion
- Promote responsible behaviour and the ability to make informed decisions
- Help young people to understand and develop positive and respectful friendships and relationships
- Promote a Christian vision of sexuality, that is, a vision that promotes unselfish love and commitment
- Help young people to understand that sexuality is a Gift from God and promote a positive attitude to one's sexuality and that of others
- Help young people to recognise and challenge inappropriate behaviour
- Increase young peoples' awareness of sexual health and promote knowledge and understanding of human reproduction
- Help young people keep themselves safe in the digital world
- Provide reliable, accurate and timely age-appropriate information

Relationships and Sexuality Education in today's social context.

All young people have the right to high quality Relationships and Sexuality Education that is relevant to their lives today. In Saint Catherine's College we aim to respond to an ever-changing society and the pressures and dangers to which young people today may be exposed to by addressing in particular:

Child Sexual Exploitation:

- by raising awareness and identifying concerns about Child Sexual Exploitation(CSE)
- helping pupils to recognise potentially exploitative and dangerous situations and teaching them how to take preventative action (Marshall Report 2014)

Domestic Violence / Sexual Abuse

- Helping young people to explore these sensitive issues in an age-appropriate way and develop appropriate behaviour to protect themselves (DHSSPS 2013)

Promoting safety in the digital world

- Cyber bullying, the use of chat rooms, online grooming, access to inappropriate images and sexting are just some of the ways in which online and digital technology can affect the lives of young people
- Over one third of young people would prefer to explore issues around sex and sexual identity online rather than ask a teacher, or a parent or a carer (NSPCC Wanless 2013)

OBJECTIVES OF RSE

In line with our school ethos and CCEA guidelines the Relationships and Sexuality Education Curriculum attempts to enable pupils to:

- Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth
- Develop within pupils an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well-being of others
- Provide opportunities for pupils to explore the moral and ethical issues surrounding sexuality
- Develop an awareness of differing family structures
- Become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change and understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity
- Develop personal skills which will help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships
- Develop coping strategies to protect themselves and others from various forms of exploitation and abuse
- Acquire and use an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development
- Understand human physiology with particular reference to the reproductive cycle, human fertility and sexually transmitted infections and diseases
- Understand sexual development and identify and explore aspects of sexuality including, stereotyping, gender issues and cultural influences on sexuality
- Develop skills to deal with peer pressure and influence others positively
- Enable pupils to understand the influence that messages from their peers and the media can have on their own values
- Prepare pupils to cope with the social, physical and emotional challenges of growing up as a means to prepare them for adult life.

Inclusive Learning for all through RSE

RSE should:

- Be relevant, accessible and age appropriate to all young people
- Be set in a moral framework which is inclusive with respect to culture, religion, sexual orientation and social background

- Seek to develop and clarify values and attitudes towards sex, sexuality and relationships and to encourage respect for and empathy with the values and attitudes of others
- Foster respect of diversity of cultural identity and encourage pupils to be aware of traditions and beliefs of others, promoting respect, mutual understanding and tolerance
- Include activities to allow all to talk about their interests, attitudes, emotions, concerns, feelings
- Explore sexual orientation and stereotyping from a range of perspectives

The Co-ordination of RSE in Saint Catherine's College

Roles and Responsibilities

- The Board of Governors examines and ratifies the school's revised RSE Policy
- The Principal ensures the implementation and regular review of the RSE Policy
- The Vice-Principal (Pastoral) and Designated Teacher for Child Protection/Senior Teacher co-ordinate the school's approach to RSE and ensure our current provision conforms to the DE Circular 2015/22 and the Revised Guidance for Post-Primary Schools issued by CCEA in 2015
- A core team of teachers is responsible for the co-ordination of all issues relating to the RSE Policy and RSE Programme development which comprises:
 - Vice-Principal (Pastoral) / Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection
 - Designated Teacher for Child Protection
 - Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection/Sociology/English Teacher
 - Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection/Home Economics Teacher
 - Deputy Teacher for Child Protection/English Teacher
 - Deputy Teacher for Child Protection/Head of Pastoral IMU
 - Teacher in Charge of LLW
 - School Chaplain

This team is responsible for:

- Auditing the existing RSE Programme (Appendix 1 & 2)
- Ensuring the RSE Programme is taught effectively and is appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils
- Attending in-service training and disseminating appropriate information to other staff members
- Liaising with outside agencies
- Organising training for staff as and when appropriate

Teaching Staff

- Teachers should act as positive role models to pupils
- Teachers may provide general educational advice to all pupils as part of the curriculum

- Teachers should recognise that in cases where medical advice is sought this should only be given by qualified medical professionals
- Teachers should follow school procedures regarding access to school-based counselling services
- Teachers should follow school policy regarding safeguarding issues/disclosures

Staff Training

This is organised by the Vice Principal (Pastoral)/Designated Teacher for Child Protection/Teacher in Charge of LLW in consultation with the Principal, EA, Diocesan Advisors and CPSS advisers.

The Delivery of RSE

Teaching Methodologies

The RSE and PD Programmes are developmental and the lessons and resources used are appropriate to the age and maturity of pupils. Teachers deliver the programmes with care and sensitivity and are empathetic to the personal and emotional circumstances of individual pupils.

Pupils' knowledge, attitudes and beliefs, together with their capacity to understand issues, are taken into account. Particular attention is paid to children with special educational needs where physical development many outstrip emotional maturity to ensure the programmes are delivered effectively.

RSE is delivered to single-gender classes in the Main School and in mixed-gender classes in the Irish Medium Unit. Whole Year Group talks are mixed-gender but from time to time a session directed specifically at boys may be organised.

The Pastoral Vice Principal, in conjunction with the RSE core team, including the Teacher in Charge of LLW, ensure all resources used are in harmony with the school's ethos and are age appropriate for pupils.

Confidentiality and Child Protection Issues

The child's right to privacy will be respected at all times by the teacher and all other pupils in the class. A key role agreed in advance of any discussion is that no pupil or teacher will be expected to ask or answer any personal questions. Staff cannot give any guarantee to confidentiality to pupils around issues relating to Child Protection. A teacher must follow the school's Child Protection procedures in the case of a disclosure which might suggest that a pupil is at risk or is actually suffering from any kind of abuse by immediately informing the Designated Teacher for Child Protection.

Dealing with sensitive issues and responding to pupils' questions

Due to the sensitive nature of some of the issues in RSE, teachers have the right to state that, for personal reasons, they do not wish to give a personal opinion on the issue raised.

If pupils raise issues or ask questions that are offensive to some or are above the maturity level of the class, the teacher will not answer the question in class. If the teacher feels that the question asked is a genuine one, he/she may suggest that the pupil ask their parents. If the question asked raises Child Protection issues, this will be referred to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection.

Terminology used in the delivery of RSE

All staff teaching RSE related issues will use the proper biological name for body parts and body functions so that these are given the status and respectability they warrant. The use of common slang words will be avoided.

Specific issues addressed through RSE

The Status of the Family

The school supports and promotes the institutions of marriage and family in keeping with our Catholic ethos and value system while remaining aware of and sensitive to the different types of family backgrounds from which our pupils come.

The Centrality of Abstinence

Sexual abstinence before marriage and fidelity within it will be presented as a positive and desirable option and an achievable reality.

The Sacredness of Life

We believe that from the moment of conception the embryo is a human being and must be recognised as having the rights of a person. In line with the school's ethos, the value and sanctity of life will be actively promoted and will influence our teaching on abortion and casual sex.

Sexual Orientation

No one in our school community will be treated unfairly or be isolated in any way on the grounds of their sexual orientation. All members of the school community will be valued and cared for and everyone will be treated with dignity and respect. Homophobic bullying, in any form, including any demonstration of negative attitudes towards lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender students or those who are perceived to be such, will not be tolerated by the school and will be dealt with in line with our Anti-Bullying Policy.

The Role of Parents/Guardians

At Saint Catherine's College, we recognise and fully respect that parents/guardians have the primary duty and right to be the first and principal educators of their children. We see ourselves as supporting and helping parents/guardians to fulfil this responsibility.

RSE in school is intended to supplement and complement what goes on at home. We are fully aware that an RSE programme in school is greatly diminished in its effectiveness if it does not have parental input and support at all stages.

While there is no statutory parental right to withdraw a child from classes in RSE, the school will try to take account of any parental concerns raised and will, as far as possible, make alternative arrangements for any pupil whose parents/guardians wish him/her to be excused from particular RSE sessions. The pupil's withdrawal, however, will always be at the discretion of the school.

The Taught RSE Programme

Cross-Curricular approach

Excellent work in the area of RSE is carried out by a number of departments within the school and include: Religious Studies, Science, Home Economics, Child Development, English and Drama, Health and Social Care (see Appendix 4)

Learning for Life and Work Classes

RSE is taught in KS3 through the PD strand of LLW using INSYNC materials.

Topics covered include:

- Feelings and emotions
- Morals, values and Beliefs
- Managing Influences and Making Decisions
- Managing Change
- Safety and Managing Risk
- Relationships and Sexuality

RSE is taught in Years 11 and 12 also through the PD strand of LLW using materials devised by CEA. Topics include:

- Withstanding External Pressures
- Healthy Relationships
- Responsibilities of Parenting (See Appendix 5)

RSE is also delivered via the wider pastoral programme which encompasses weekly, Year Group assemblies and the Sixth Form Living Faith Programme.

From time to time throughout the year, normal timetable is collapsed to facilitate talks/presentations/workshops delivered by a range of outside agencies on RSE related issues (see Appendix 6)

The Use of Outside Agencies

The external agencies which work in partnership with the school in the delivery of RSE include Love for Life, NIABF, The Rainbows Project, Cara Friend, CINI, PSNI, Nexus and Women's Aid. Steps are taken by the school to ensure that professionals from any statutory or voluntary organisation deliver material which supports the school's RSE programme and adheres to the values and ethos of our school. To this end, before confirming any visit to the school, external agencies are required to sign a Service Level Agreement, in which they agree to adhere to the school's ethos and policies, including that for RSE. In addition, agencies must submit their own Mission Statement, proof of accreditation and evidence of the necessary checks essential for those working with students (see Appendix 7)

Note:

At least one teacher from the school will always be present when an external agency facilitates a talk/workshop.

Evaluation and Monitoring

The outside agency, pupils and attending staff are invited to provide an evaluation of the content/delivery at the end of each presentation (see Appendix 8 & 9). Feedback provided is evaluated by the school's Pastoral Committee and used to plan/organise future events.

The School's Pastoral Committee regularly reviews, evaluates and updates the RSE Policy and programme and reports to the school Principal. Feedback received from pupils, teachers and parents is taken into account.