

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

Castlerea Community school

The school is a co-educational, academically non-selective school with an enrolment varying between 350 and 450 students.

C.C.S mission statement:

Castlerea Community School is dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in education in a caring environment of mutual respect so as to foster the full potential of its students and staff. In partnership with parents we strive to create a desire for lifelong learning, respect for the individual, an awareness of the needs of the disadvantaged, concern for the environment and an appreciation of our own unique culture.

Introduction

An RSE policy is a written statement of the aims of the RSE programme, the relationship of RSE to SPHE, and the organization and management of RSE within the school. The following policy has been drafted by the policy committee, in conjunction with SPHE teachers, the Religion department, the Parents Council, and the Students Council. This RSE policy is the accumulation of two years of consultation, collaboration and research, and it is hoped that this document is comprehensive and informative and will provide guidance and direction to all in the teaching of RSE.

Scope:

The 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 the RSE policy. Furthermore, the policy will apply to school staff, students, board of management, parents/guardians, visiting speakers.

Rationale for inclusion of Relationships and Sexuality Education in the Curriculum

Education aims to contribute towards the development of all aspects of the individual. It is in this context that Social, Personal and Health Education, encompassing Relationships and Sexuality Education, is being included as part of the curriculum of Primary and Post-Primary schools.

Relationships and Sexuality Education in the formal education system is mandatory in line with Child protection procedures. Educational groups, including the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, teacher unions and national parent representative bodies, support the need for such a formal programme in schools, from primary through second level. Aspects of

contemporary life also point to the need for a soundly based Relationships and Sexuality Education programme.

R.S.E.

Relationships and Sexuality Education is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. In the school setting RSE is an integral part of the general educational provision, which seeks to promote the overall development of the person and which includes the integration of sexuality into personal understanding, growth and development. The RSE programme provides opportunities for young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them to think and act in a moral, caring and in a responsible and inner-directed way.

RSE in the school aims to support the work of parents, who are the primary educators of their children in this area.

Schools also appreciate that parents, peers, adults and the media deliver this education consciously and unconsciously.

Relationship of RSE to SPHE

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 *Draft Guidelines for RSE* (NCCA, June 1995, 1.2) 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.

What the School currently provides

In its broadest sense, RSE is a whole-school responsibility and all members of this community share responsibility for modeling relationships that are characterized 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, to which one class period is apportioned each week for **junior cycle students**.

The programme for **Senior students** was evaluated in 2019 and involves 1 timetabled class period per week throughout 5th year. This is delivered through a modular system of three blocks – Body Right programme on the awareness of sexual violence and its prevention (following specific training by one teacher, assisted by another), Human Growth & Development and an understanding of Human Relationships and Sexuality, each rotating throughout the year. In 6th year, the learning from 5th year is supplemented by delivery during RE classes and through guest speakers. RSE at Transition Year is delivered through guest speakers. Both LCA 1 and LCA 2 classes are integrated for RSE with the mainstream 5th and 6th year groups.

The aims of our Relationships and Sexuality Education programme

Relationships and Sexuality education, which is in the overall framework of Social, Personal and 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.

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

1. Delivery of the programme:

Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff will be made by the principal.

2. 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. Relevant sections of the RSE policy will be included in the school's Information for Parents section on the school website www.castlereacs.com This draft policy was designed as a vehicle for consultation with the parents' council representatives and the views expressed by parents will be taken into account when reviewing the policy.

3. 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 counseling on aspects of sexual behavior 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.

4. Explicit Questions:

It may not be appropriate to deal with some explicit questions in class. Teachers may choose to say that it is not appropriate to deal with that question at this time. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised, he/she should seek advice from the SPHE coordinator or the Principal. When deciding whether to answer questions the teacher should

consider the age and readiness of the students, the RSE programme content, the ethos of the school and the RSE policy.

5. Confidentiality:

The school will work within the guidelines of the “The Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary Schools” in all areas of child protection, as well as in the area of confidentiality:

Paragraph 4.1.1: If a member of staff receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse he/she should, without delay, report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person in that school. A written record of the report should be made and placed in a secure location by the DLP. The need for confidentiality always, as previously referred to in Chapter 1 paragraph 1.2 of these guidelines, should be borne in mind. The supports of the school should continue to be made available to the child.

6. The division between biological and non-biological aspects of sex education:

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

7. Withdrawing pupils from the RSE programme:

- ❖ · Relevant sections of this policy will be made available on the school website www.castlereacs.com together with details about the parent’s right to withdraw their child from many aspects of RSE; Parents will always be provided with a full copy of this policy following a request to do so.
- ❖ · Issues such as over population, birth control and other sexual matters are met in a minor way in subjects such as English, Geography and Religious studies. 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.
- ❖ · 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 to withdraw is made, that request must be complied with until revoked by the parent.

8. Using visiting speakers and other non-teacher staff:

- a) It is school policy that most of the RSE programme is best discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by the students. However, visitors can enhance the quality of the provision as long as they are used in addition to, not instead of, a planned programme of RSE. The Class SPHE teacher will always remain in class and take a central role while a speaker is present (DES circular 0023 2010)
- b) The SPHE coordinator 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 organizer 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 degree of explicitness 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?
- c) Visitors should be given advance notice of the composition of the class and an idea of how their contribution fits into the scheme of work.
- d) In order to inform the visitor of the precise requirements of a group and to make better use of the time of the visitor it is advisable for the group to draw up questions in advance and these should be forwarded to the visitor. This will involve the students in the visit and will make the experience more relevant for them – it also facilitates planning.
- e) The office should be informed of the date and name of the visitor
- f) Where applicable, refreshments should be arranged with the catering staff.
- g) The visitor should be welcomed at the main door.
- h) A written acknowledgement of their contribution should be sent to the visitor and could appear in the school newsletter.

Sensitive issues

School ethos will inform how these topics are delivered

9. Sexual orientation

Teachers do not promote any one lifestyle as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that sexual orientation will be discussed during a programme in relationships and sexuality education. One of the many advantages of exploring issues concerning sexual orientation is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions and address prejudice. Discussion must be appropriate to the age of the students.

When delivering the programme teachers are aware of school policy in the area of (a) Antbullying in particular homophobic bullying. (b) The equality Act. (c)Sexual harassment policy,

10. Contraception

This topic cannot be omitted on the grounds of School ethos and as such will be discussed in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issues in a non-directive way.

11. Abortion

This topic will be discussed in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issues in a non-directive way.

12. Special Educational Needs

Children with special needs may require support in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up: they may also need more help in learning what sorts of behavior are and are not acceptable, and in being warned and prepared to protect themselves from abuse by others. Appropriate resources may be required for students with special needs.

Ongoing support, development and Review

Training:

1. All teachers involved in this work 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. The

skills acquired in general teaching apply also to health education. Furthermore, many teachers have training in related areas such as counseling. Some teachers have SPHE support services training in the specific areas of health, relationships and sexuality education

2. The school will facilitate teachers to attend in-service annually provided by SPHE support services to obtain training in this field, bearing in mind the overall budgetary framework and the need for the ongoing teaching and learning programme of the school to continue with as little disturbance as possible.

Resources:

Within budgetary constraints, all resources needed in terms of time, finance and personnel, will be made available to develop and support the RSE programme in the school. The programme will be supported by the SPHE support service and the school's team within the Health Promotion Service of the HSE West. The core resource materials for SPHE are as follows:

- North Western Health Board SPHE Programme.

- On My Own Two Feet Substance Abuse Prevention Programme. Department of Education and Science, Department of Health and Children, Mater Dei Counseling Service (1994).

- Resource Materials for Relationships and Sexuality Education, Junior Cycle, Department of Education and Science (1998).

Busy Bodies DVD (junior cycle), TRUST DVD (Senior Cycle)

- Teachers on occasions may use other materials deemed suitable and appropriate for student needs and in accordance with school ethos.

Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the RSE Programme.

The policy will be reviewed every two years

We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the programmes.

Specifically, important to the RSE Programme are:

- ❖ Student feedback.

- ❖ Staff review and feedback.
- ❖ Parental feedback
- ❖ B.O.M review and feedback.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Castlerea Community School on 23rd June 2015. Following review, this policy was amended and ratified by the Board of Management on 9th June 2020.

Signed: _____

Date: 9th June 2020

Ms. Madeline O'Connell

Chairperson, BoM

Appendix: 1

Topics for RSE at Junior Cycle include:

Human Growth and Development

- an understanding of physical and emotional changes at puberty.
- fertility, conception, pregnancy and birth.
- sexually transmitted infections.
- an awareness of the consequences and implications of sexual activity.

Human Sexuality

- understanding and respecting what it is to be male or female.
- an appreciation of the roles of women and men in society.
- awareness of discrimination.
- personal safety.
- sexual orientation.

Human Relationships

- developing skills regarding making and maintaining good relationships and friendships.
- family roles and responsibilities.
- group behaviour and resolving conflict.
- an understanding of how peer pressure works.

Topics for RSE at senior cycle include:

Human relationships

- Exploration of what we value in a relationship.
- The influence of self-esteem on relationships
- Understanding boundaries and how to communicate them
- Coping with hurt and loss.
- an awareness of what constitutes a loving relationship.
- the long-term commitment involved in marriage.
- parenting and family life.

Human Growth and Development

- fertility and family planning.
- a deeper understanding of pregnancy and the developing foetus.

Human sexuality

- treating women and men with equal respect.
- sexual harassment.
- sexual abuse, rape, legal right: voluntary and statutory agencies.
- making moral and healthy choices regarding sexual activity.

Body Right – a programme developed by Dublin Rape Crisis Centre to raise awareness about sexual violence amongst young people and to assist in its prevention through equipping them with the awareness and skills they need to make positive choices and to protect themselves

- The nature and impact of sexual violence
- Understanding Consent
- Supporting young people affected by sexual violence
- Sexting- sharing of intimate images by electronic means

Appendix 2:

Relevant Legislation

School staff need to familiarise themselves with relevant legislation.

- eg Age of consent

The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006 established a common age of consent to sex at **17 for males and females** whether it is a heterosexual or homosexual relationship. A person under the age of 17 may agree to but cannot consent to having a sexual relationship. If a person is convicted of having sex with a minor s/he may be imprisoned for up to ten years in the case of a 15 or 16-year-old, or up to life for a child under the age of 15. A girl aged less than 17 years cannot be convicted of an offence by having sexual intercourse.

- Equality act 2004
- Children and Family relationships bill 2015
- Criminal Law (Rape) (Amendment) Act 1990

The consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions is required for any prosecution of a child under the age of 17 years for this offence. A person who is convicted of this offence and is not more than two years older than the victim is not subject to the requirements of the [Sex Offenders Act 2001](#). This means they will not have their name placed on the Sex Offenders Register.

A girl aged under 17 years who has sexual intercourse may not be convicted of an offence on that ground alone.

- Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998
- Criminal Justice Act 2006

Reckless endangerment of children

The Criminal Justice Act 2006 provides for a new offence of reckless endangerment of children. This came into effect on 1 August 2006.

This offence may be committed by a person who has authority or control over a child or an abuser and who intentionally or recklessly endangers a child by:

- Causing or permitting any child to be placed or left in a situation which creates a substantial risk to the child of being a victim of serious harm or sexual abuse or
- failing to take reasonable steps to protect a child from such a risk while knowing that the child is in such a situation.

This offence may be prosecuted only by the Director of Public Prosecutions. The penalty is a fine (no upper limit) and/or a maximum of 10 years imprisonment.