

CBS ROSCOMMON

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

UPDATED: MAY 2019



Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy Statement

Introduction

CBS Roscommon is Catholic Boys' Voluntary Secondary School under the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST). Our ethos is to promote the happiness, dignity and self-worth of each student, inspiring them to become transformational leaders within the community. CBS Roscommon is committed to the provision of a broadly-based education in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, balancing vision with realism which facilitates personal growth and development among students, staff and community. Students in CBS Roscommon, have the opportunity to explore the humanities, sciences, arts, business studies and technical subjects. In addition, the school provides religious, moral and physical education in order to meet its founding objectives of supporting pupils in achieving their full academic potential and preparing them for participation in civic society and working life. A code of behaviour has been published after consultation with parents, staff and pupils and aims to create a structured, calm and ordered atmosphere. This develops healthy mutual relationships of respect with authority, which helps students to develop vital life skills.

A. Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education

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

B. 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.

C. 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.

D. Relationships and Sexuality Education within Social Personal and Health Education

The aim of the Relationships and Sexuality Education programme in Ireland is, according to the policy guidelines (Department of Education 1997: 4), to help children 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. The programme does not seek to tell children and young people what they should think, say and do in their sexual lives, nor does it proclaim that sex outside of the contexts of intimacy or marriage is wrong. Guidelines (NCCA 1997a, b) emphasise relationships rather than sexuality and outline a curriculum that is clearly oriented toward helping children to develop self-esteem and self-confidence. The RSE programme seeks to foster students' personal and sexual development holistically, with reference to the range of social and societal influences that can potentially impact on how young people think and feel about, their personal (family and peer), romantic and sexual relationships. 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. SPHE deals with many issues, such as; self-esteem, self-awareness, assertiveness, communication and decision-making skills – all of which can contribute to the effectiveness of the RSE programme.

E. What the school currently provides

- 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.
- For Senior Cycle students, RSE is incorporated into the Religious Education programme, with cross-curricular links to other subjects.
- RSE is delivered to the Junior Cycle students predominantly as part of the SPHE curriculum, with cross-curricular links to other subjects. There is one period a week dedicated to SPHE.

F. The aims of our Relationships and Sexuality Education programme are:

- 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, spiritual and social framework

G. The objectives of our Relationships and Sexuality Education programme are to 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, 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 that are respectful of the rights and dignity of others
- Develop skills for coping with peer pressure, conflict and threats to personal safety

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

- a. Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff will be made by the Principal
- b. Informing and involving parents:
 - i. 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.
 - ii. This policy has been designed in consultation with the Parents Association and the views expressed by parents will be taken into account when reviewing the policy.
 - iii. A copy of this policy will be made available to any parent on request to the School.
- c. Offering advice:
 - i. 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.
- d. Explicit Questions
 - i. 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 said question at this time. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised, he/she should seek advice from the Principal / SPHE coordinator.

- e. Confidentiality
- i. It is school policy that in circumstances where a pupil is considered at some risk of any type of abuse or in breach of the law, the teacher must refer this to the Principal as per status as “mandated persons” in line with child Protection Guidelines.
 - ii. The following is also school policy:
 1. Teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality
 2. Student must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the Principal and possibly to parents if the Principal decides it is in the best interest of the student to notify parents
 3. Teachers must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard the information
 4. Teachers must indicate clearly to pupils when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential: the student can then decide whether to proceed or not. See Child Safe guarding Statement.
- f. The division between biological and non-biological aspects of sex education
- i. The school policy is that the Science Department deals primarily with the biological aspects of reproduction.
- g. Withdrawing pupils from RSE Programme
- i. Parents do not have to give reasons for withdrawal, but we respectfully invite them to do so, so that we can resolve any mis-understanding re the programme/clarify aims/objectives.
- h. Using visiting speakers and others
- i. It is the policy of the school 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. (All visiting speakers must have Garda vetting)
 - ii. The SPHE/Wellbeing Coordinator will provide the visitor, 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 be considered are:
 - The degree of explicitness of the content and presentation?
 - Will the teacher be accompanied by teaching staff?
 - Will the staff take an active role in the visitor’s activities?
 - How will the visitor be prepared for the visit?
 - How will the visit be built upon and followed up?
 - iii. Visitors should be given advance notice of the composition of the class and an idea of how their contribution will fit into the scheme of work. 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 which can then be forwarded to the visitor. This will

involve the students in the visit, therefore enhancing the relevance of the visit while it also facilitates planning.

- iv. The office should be informed of the date and the name of the visitor. The visitor should be welcomed at the main door. At the end of the session a word of thanks should be given by a student and the visitor escorted to the main door. A written acknowledgement of their contribution should be sent to the visitor.

v.

- i. Homosexuality

Teachers do not promote any one life-style as the only acceptable one for society. Therefore, it is inevitable and natural that homosexuality will be discussed during a programme of sex education. One of the advantages of exploring issues concerning homosexuality is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions and address prejudice while also promoting our core values in CBS Roscommon of respect, dignity and tolerance. Discussion of homosexuality should be appropriate to the age of the pupils.

- j. Contraception

- i. This topic will be dealt with in an age-appropriate open manner, looking at all sides of the issue in a non-directive way.

- k. Additional Educational Needs

- i. Children with additional 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 types of behaviour are/ are not acceptable/appropriate. Teachers will adapt the RSE programme/differentiating the lessons where necessary.

I. Ongoing support

Training

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. Many teachers have training in related areas of health, relationships and sexuality education and will be encouraged to train other teachers. The school will facilitate teachers to engaged in CPD and obtain expert training in this field.

Resources

The school will provide appropriate RSE teaching materials which have been identified by staff as useful and which have been approved by management, within the normal budgetary framework and as general school resources allow.

Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the RSE programme: We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this programme. Specifically, important to the RSE programme is; i) Pupil feedback, ii) Staff review and feedback iii) Parental feedback.