

OUR LADY'S SECONDARY SCHOOL



RSE Policy

School Context

Our Lady's Secondary School is a Voluntary Catholic School under the trusteeship of CEIST. The school is Co-Educational and currently has approximately 730 students and over 60 teachers as well as a range of ancillary and support staff. The school has a Board of Management composed of Trustee Nominees, Teacher Nominees and Parent Nominees. The Board of Management delegates the day-to-day running of the school to the Principal. The school supports the principles of inclusiveness, equality of access and parental choice in relation to enrolment. In supporting these principles it also recognizes the rights of the Trustees CEIST, the Religious and Educational Philosophy of the Sisters of Mercy and the funding and resources available.

Mercy Philosophy of Education

Inspired by the vision of Catherine McAuley, Mercy Education is committed to holistic development and to the achievement of the full potential of each student, particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalised. It is a process informed and influenced by the teaching and example of Jesus Christ and is conducted in an atmosphere of care, respect and joy. Mercy Education is committed to ongoing whole school development in collaboration and partnership with the Board of Management, Staff, Students, Parents/Guardians and the wider community.

CEIST Core Values

The Core Values of CEIST are:

- Promoting Spiritual & Human Development
- Achieving Quality in Teaching and Learning
- Showing Respect for Every Person
- Creating Community
- Being Just and Responsible

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 Wellbeing /SPHE/RSE, it is important that all teachers are familiar with the RSE policy.

Relationships and Sexuality Education encompasses the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, sexual identity and intimacy, contributing towards the full human development of the student. As outlined by the Department of Education and Skills in Circular 00372010 no aspect of the RSE programme including STI's, family planning, or sexual orientation can be omitted on the grounds of religious ethos.

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

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in the School

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). We currently provide a minimum of 2 timetabled classes of 58 minutes duration of RE for students in TY, 5th and 6th year and RSE is covered by RE teachers during this time. SPHE is timetabled as part of the Wellbeing Programme at Junior Cycle for 1 period per week.

This programme is firmly rooted within the Junior Cycle Framework and the SPHE short course curriculum. Here are the links with the Junior Cycle Statements of Learning:

SOL 5: The student has an awareness of personal values and an understanding of the process of moral decision-making.

SOL 6: The student appreciates and respects how diverse values, beliefs and traditions have contributed to the communities and cultures in which she/he lives.

SOL 7: The student values what it means to be an active citizen, with rights and responsibilities in local and wider contexts.

SOL 11: The student takes action to safeguard and promote his/her wellbeing and that of others.

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 Wellbeing / SPHE programme.

The aims of the Wellbeing / 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.

The Aims of the RSE Programme

In Our Lady'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.
- To help students develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and wellbeing of others
- To develop an awareness of differing family patterns
- To 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
- To develop coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse
- To acquire the use of appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development

What we currently provide

The RSE programme as taught in our school is the programme laid out by the NCCA.

- We currently provide a minimum of 2 timetabled classes of 58 minutes duration of RE for students in TY, 5th and 6th year and RSE is covered by RE teachers during this time. SPHE is timetabled as part of the Wellbeing Programme at Junior Cycle for 1 period per week. The school encourages parents/guardians to ensure that students participate in this programme as a way of supporting parents as the primary educators of their children.
- A RE programme which discusses relationships, values, peer pressure, conflict and decision-making.
- Student centred pastoral care structure supports include Principal, Deputy Principals, Year Head, Tutor, Guidance Counsellor, School Chaplain, SEN Team, Student Leaders Coordinator, Head of RE, and access to an Outside Counsellor and external support agencies e.g NEPS, TUSLA.
- Anti-bullying policy and various other programmes- Positive Mental Health Week, Internet Safety etc
- Aspects of RSE are covered in Science, Home Economics and Biology classes.

Our Lady's RSE Programme Content

The RSE programme as taught in Our Lady'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 following is an outline of topics covered in the programme:

<i>Junior Cycle</i>	<i>Senior Cycle</i>
Communication	Communication
Feelings	Feelings
Hygiene	Human Reproduction
Positive Image – self esteem	Human Sexuality
Sexual Language	Family Planning
Puberty – Growing & Changing	Pregnancy and Parenthood
Reproduction, Conception, Pregnancy and Birth	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
Relationships – Family, Friends, Boy/Girl	Loving Relationships
Gender Roles and Pressures	Marriage
Personal Safety	Gender Roles
Responsible Decision Making	Sexual Orientations
Teenage Pregnancy	Sexual Harassment, Assault, Rape, Abuse
Sexual Orientations	Bereavement
	Planning for Future
	Responsible Parenthood
	Implications of Sexual Activity
	Family Life

Assessment

The majority of assessment is formative in nature. Each faculty produce a one page formative assessment plan as part of the school's School Improvement Plan in the area of Wellbeing. The key points of this relate to sharing learning intentions, effective questioning, formative feedback and peer and self-assessment. Self- Assessment is key in delivery of RSE. A similar self-assessment sheet (see below) would be given at the end of each module. This is directly linked to learning outcomes.

Example 1

1. What was your favourite part of this module?
2. What did you find the most challenging?

3. Has this module led you to think differently or to act differently in any area of your life? Explain your answer.
4. Review the learning outcomes at the start of each unit. Tick off the ones that you feel confident that you have achieved:
 - Appreciate myself as a valuable gift
 - Differentiate aspects of my real self vs my idealised self that I want to present to the world
 - Practise being more real in my relationships by sharing vulnerabilities
 - Grow in self-acceptance
 - Imagine what I would like to achieve in life
 - Investigate different ways to strive for happiness
 - Consider my own personal motivation for your actions
 - Connect with my moral compass – my conscience to analyse the morality of certain choices
 - Investigate problems with the pornography industry
 - Explore some negative consequences of pornography consumption
 - Reflect on how external pressures influence my body image
 - Define the term ‘gender dysphoria’
 - Explore the perspective of a person with gender dysphoria and how that experience has shaped their life
 - Examine a variety of perspectives on how to help those with gender dysphoria
5. Highlight the learning outcomes that need more work. List three things you can do to achieve the learning outlined in these goals.

How is Student Voice incorporated into the classroom and planning for the subject?

This policy has been drafted in consultation with the Student Council. The student voice is central to the approach to teaching and learning. It has been found that active learning methodologies coupled with utilization of formative assessment methodologies helps in terms of raising the overall student voice in lessons.

Teaching and Learning strategies

The methodologies used are expected to be child-centred and appropriate to the age and stage of development of the students. Active learning methods are favoured in SPHE and RSE to encourage engagement and learning.

Teaching methods include:

- Group Discussions
- Case Studies
- Brainstorming
- Role-Play
- Art Work

- Games; Ice Breakers
- Debates
- Project Work
- Visitors

Visiting speakers

It is school policy to use visiting speakers to supplement and to enhance the delivery of the RSE programme in the school.

a) The SPHE co-ordinator/Pastoral Care co-ordinator/teacher will discuss the following issues with the speaker:

- i. The degree of explicitness of the content and presentation
- ii. The time and date of the visit
- iii. Resources required
- iv. Payment details if appropriate
- v. How the visit will be built upon and followed up
- vi. Should the teacher remain in the classroom or not
- vii. The speaker will be made aware of the Child Protection and RSE policy located on the school website in advance

Parental Rights and Responsibilities

The school wishes to support parents/guardians in this important aspect of their son/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. Our Lady'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. This policy has been designed in consultation with our Parents Association/Board of Management and the views expressed by parents will be taken into account when reviewing the policy. The policy will be displayed on the school website. At Senior Cycle parents will receive a letter at the start of the year outlining details of the RSE programme in 4th, 5th & 6th Year. Parents are currently informed by letter through the Komeer app– the main topics are listed in this letter.

The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools state is a legal requirement of schools to provide RSE to students at Junior and Senior Cycle and the Department of Education & Skills Inspectorate will examine and report on this during Child Protection & Safeguarding Inspections. Each parent has a right to withdraw their child from some or all RSE classes and in such cases parents are encouraged to provide alternative RSE at home. The school will respect this choice as their right. It will be necessary for parents opting out of RSE to make suitable arrangements with the school management for the supervision and

welfare of their child at these times. Where students are withdrawn for RSE the school cannot take responsibility for any versions of class content passed on to them by other students. Parents must meet with the Principal in person to discuss their decision to withdraw their child from the RSE module in September of each year and their decision and concerns about the programme must be communicated in writing to the Board of Management

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 (Principal Mr. Kelly and in his absence Deputy Principal Ms Treanor) 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. Teachers do not promote any one life style as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that LGBTI+ will be discussed during a programme of sex education. All discussions should be age appropriate and taught as an opportunity to address prejudice and promote inclusivity.

Special Needs

Students with additional needs may need further explanation than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up. An emphasis in learning to differentiate between

acceptable and unacceptable behaviour for the purpose of self-protection will need to be conveyed using appropriate language.

Links to other School Policies

- Child Protection Procedures
- School Guidance Plan
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Substance Use Policy
- AUP Policy
- Critical Incident Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- RE Policy
- External speakers- (check policy makes reference to Child Protection & RSE policy)
- Teenage Pregnancy
- Student Support Policy

Staff Development and Training

All teachers are encouraged to register with the SPHE website (www.sphe.ie) for service. All teachers do not necessarily have to be experts on the issues concerned. However, teachers do need to be able to address questions or issues that may arise in a sensitive and open nature. The school will support the training and professional development of teachers delivering the programme. Where possible the RSE team are given time to meet at school development planning days. At these meetings the RSE co-ordinator will update staff in relation to In-Service training available.

School trustees CEIST have a pilot RSE programme ready to go for 2021/2022 – the scheme of work is for 1st to 3rd year and is very detailed. The school has volunteered to pilot this programme.

Monitoring of Policy

The implementation of the RSE policy will be monitored by the RE and Wellbeing Department, School Chaplain, Student Support Team 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.

Signed: *Gary Carville*

Gary Carville
Chairperson Board of Management

Date of Review: June 2022