

RSE POLICY 2018-19

St Louis Secondary School Dundalk

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

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. 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.

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 young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible manner.

The aims of RSE are:

- To help young people understand and develop friendships and relationships
- To promote an understanding of sexuality
- To promote positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's relationship with others
- To promote knowledge and respect for reproduction
- To enable young people to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in the moral, spiritual and social framework

RSE is located in the overall framework of Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE). SPHE provides students with a unique opportunity to develop the skills and competence to learn about themselves and to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development. SPHE 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. SPHE deals with many issues such as self-esteem, assertiveness, communication and decision making skills - all of which can contribute to the effectiveness of the RSE programme.

Circular 0037/2010 states all second level schools must develop a school policy in regard to RSE and implement a programme in this area 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. Schools are required to teach all aspects of the RSE programme, elements of the programme cannot

be omitted on the grounds of school ethos. All aspects of the programme can and should be taught within the ethos and value system of the school as expressed in the RSE policy. The Board of Management have a responsibility to ensure RSE is made available to all students.

This Policy was developed in 2018 and will be reviewed annually. It was developed in conjunction with:

- The SPHE teaching team
- The whole staff
- Senior Cycle Religion Teachers
- The Principal
- The Board of Management
- The Parents Association
- The Student Council

SCOPE

The RSE policy applies to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality. RSE is a structured module within the SPHE programme at Junior Cycle and Religious Education at Senior Cycle.

In order to be effective the RSE module in St Louis must be supported in a school climate that is marked by gender, equity and a healthy respect for sexuality. These key principles require particular attention in a single sex school such as ours.

Information and discussion regarding RSE can also take place in other classes. The RSE module is supported by the wider curriculum in such areas as Science, Religious Education, Physical Education and Civic, Social, Political Education. It is therefore important that all teachers are familiar with the RSE policy.

This policy applies to school staff, students, Board of Management, parents/guardians, visiting speakers, external facilitators and outside agencies.

RELATIONSHIP TO ETHOS AND MISSION OF SCHOOL

St Louis Secondary School is a voluntary secondary school for girls under the trusteeship of the Le Chéile.

This school is ideally placed in the context of a community where Christian values are accepted and the dignity of persons respected. This community exists to promote the total education; spiritual, intellectual, creative, emotional, physical and social, of the students in its care and to provide them with the requisite skills, both academic and technical that will prepare them for their future roles in life.

The St Louis School community creates a caring and supportive atmosphere where students, teachers, parents and management are encouraged to develop and realise their potential. This atmosphere within the school energises teachers and staff to use fully their gifts in the best interests of all the students.

The aims of RSE contribute to the overall ethos of St Louis Secondary School in promoting the holistic development of our students. All aspects of the RSE curriculum, including sexual orientation, contraception and sexually transmitted infections, will be taught. Teachers of RSE will facilitate students in discussing a range of views in relation to topics within the RSE programme.

OBJECTIVES

The RSE Policy will:

- Ensure clarity and consensus on how RSE is taught in St Louis.
- Provide information on the practicalities of delivering the programme
- Clarify the rights, roles and responsibilities of all within the St Louis community, in relation to the RSE programme, with particular reference to school staff, students, parents, the Board of Management and the trusteeship of Le Chéile.
- Ensure that teachers, parents and students understand how the RSE programme is linked to the ethos of St Louis Secondary School.

KEY MEASURES

PROVISION OF TRAINING AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The value placed on SPHE by the school will be evident by the commitment on the part of management to developing a core of trained SPHE teachers preferably gender balanced and to appointing an SPHE co-ordinator. SPHE is enhanced when the appointment of teachers to the subject has been negotiated in advance of timetabling.

In-career development is an integral part of this programme. Management is responsible for responding to the relevant expressed and perceived training needs of SPHE teachers and whole staff.

The SPHE Co-ordinator is Ms. Deirdre Smith

The core SPHE teaching team includes Mrs Orla Drumgoole, Ms. Selena Reynolds, Ms. Jenny Spain, Ms Sonya Mc Eneaney and Ms Marie Meehan.

All SPHE teachers have undertaken Introduction to SPHE and Junior Cycle RSE in-service training.

Ms Gabriella Brady, Ms Charlene Woods and Ms Olivia Sherry have attended Senior Cycle RSE in-service training.

All other SPHE teachers will attend Senior Cycle RSE and Sexual Orientation and Homophobia in-service training over the next two years.

All SPHE teachers have access to resources including:

- RSE Junior Cycle Resource Materials Book
- RSE Senior Cycle Resource Materials Book
- Before You Decide
- Trust
- HSE leaflets and DVDs
- Growing Up LGBT

INCLUSION OF PARENTS

The school accepts that it is in the interests of all parents that the child grows up in a healthy and mature fashion. The school will strive to keep parents informed of the contents of the RSE programme. The RSE Policy will be available online at stlouisdundalk.ie and notifications regarding reviews are also published online. Parents of incoming first years will be given a copy of the RSE Policy along with other relevant policies.

The involvement of parents at the core of RSE gives it extra impetus, depth and validity and from time to time training and/or input and development opportunities will be offered to parents in certain aspects of RSE. The Parents Association is involved in the annual review of the RSE Policy.

ETHICAL/MORAL CONSIDERATIONS

Answering Questions

Class discussion will be of a general nature, and will not be personally directed, in accordance with the previously agreed class ground rules. Inappropriate questions will not be answered in class by a teacher, or from student to student. Teachers may not be able to answer all questions asked by students and will set appropriate limits. Students may ask questions about issues which are not included in the curriculum. Only questions directly pertinent to the lesson content will be addressed in class. Teachers will use their professional judgement on these, and all questions, guided by the age of the students, the RSE curriculum and the RSE Policy. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised he/she should seek advice from the Guidance Counsellor or the Principal without identifying the pupil.

Confidentiality

While an atmosphere of trust is a pre-requisite of RSE, the following limits of confidentiality must be observed. These limits are:

- Child abuse – physical, emotional, sexual, neglect
- Intention to harm self or others
- Substance misuse
- Underage sexual intercourse

Any disclosure will be reported to the Designated Liaison Person in compliance with the Child Protection Policy.

RSE teachers will inform students of the limits of confidentiality at the beginning of the year, remind them at necessary points throughout the year and where possible before making a disclosure.

Sexual Activity/Contraception/Sexually Transmitted Infections/Sexual Orientation/

The pace of social change in Ireland over the last number of years has been rapid. Parents, students and teachers can experience a sense of confusion in relation to sexual mores. 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, contraception and sexually transmitted infections - however sources of professional information and advice will be identified when appropriate. Teachers may provide pupils 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 pupil.

RSE classes will inform students of the age of consent which, following the passage of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act, 2006, is 17 years of age for both males and females.

Contraception will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issues in a non-directive way.

Rates of STI transmission are increasing and it is therefore important that the subject is addressed in schools. STIs will be discussed in an age appropriate manner.

Teachers do not promote any one sexual orientation as the only acceptable one for society and 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. Discussion of homosexuality will be appropriate to the age of the pupils.

PRACTICAL ISSUES

Class Organisation and Timetabling

All Junior Cycle classes, 1st, 2nd and 3rd year, are timetabled one class of SPHE a week. SPHE is not a timetabled class for Senior Cycle students, 5th and 6th year, but these students receive at least eight classes of RSE a year during Religious Education classes. Students receive SPHE classes in their dedicated class tutor groups. Teachers who are allocated SPHE classes in their timetable teach the class from 1st year until 3rd year where possible. All SPHE teachers should have the SPHE class for another subject due to the importance of the teacher-student relationship.

Visitors

In accordance with Circular 0043/2018 visiting speakers are rarely used when teaching the RSE programme. If outside speakers are used teachers inviting these speakers must:

- Inform the Principal in advance
- Make the speaker aware of the ethos of the school and the SPHE and RSE Policies
- Agree the content of the presentation
- Do preparatory and follow up work where possible
- Remain with the class group during the visit

Students with Special Needs

Children 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 what sorts of behaviour are and are not acceptable, and in being warned and prepared against abuse by others.

For learning activities to be made meaningful, relevant and achievable for all students, it is important that the teacher finds ways to respond to students' diversity by using differentiated approaches and methodologies. In consultation with the Special Needs Co-ordinator students will be enabled to participate fully by utilising some of the following strategies:

- Spending more time on tasks and organising the learning task into small stages
- Language used is pitched at the students' level of understanding
- Outlining the steps to be learned/completed in any given task
- Posing key questions to guide students through the different stages/processes
- Modelling task analysis by talking through the steps of a task as it is being done
- Having short and varied tasks

Participation

SPHE at Junior Cycle and RSE at Senior Cycle is a core curricular subject. Each parent has the right to withdraw their child from some or all RSE classes but parents are encouraged to provide alternative RSE at home. The school will respect this choice as their right. It will be necessary for parents of any student opting out of RSE to make suitable arrangements with school management for the welfare of their child at these times. Where students are withdrawn from 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.

RELATED POLICIES

- SPHE Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Acceptable Use of the Internet Policy

CROSS CURRICULAR LINKS

- P.E.
- Science
- R.E.
- CSPE
- Home Economics
- Digital Media Literacy

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The RSE programme and policy will be reviewed and evaluated on an annual basis by the SPHE team.

The opinions of students will be included and SPHE teachers will liaise with the Student Council. The opinions of parents will also be included and SPHE teachers will liaise with the Parents' Association. The opinions of management will be included and the SPHE co-ordinator will liaise with the Principal and the Board of Management.

POLICY EFFECTIVE FROM 1st March 2019

SIGNED Kevin Wynne (Chair BoM)

APPENDIX A – JUNIOR CYCLE RSE

Themes in Junior Cycle RSE:

- Human Growth and Development
(Puberty/awareness of emotions/fertility conception and birth/STI's)
- Human Sexuality
(Gender/sexual orientation/personal safety)
- Human Relationships
(Self-esteem/friendship/skills for establishing and maintaining relationships/awareness of peer pressure)

RSE Year One

- Me as unique and different
- Friendship
- Changes at adolescence
- Reproductive system
- Images of male and female
- Respecting myself and others

RSE Year Two

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

RSE Year Three

- Body Image
- Where am I now?
- Relationships – what's important
- The three R's – respect, rights and responsibilities
- Conflict

APPENDIX B – SENIOR CYCLE RSE

Themes in Senior Cycle RSE:

- Human Growth and Development
(Fertility/reproductive organs/family planning/pregnancy/development of foetus/STIs)
- Human Sexuality
(Gender/sexual orientation/attitudes and values/making choices/sexual harassment and abuse)
- Human Relationships
(Peer pressure/conflict resolution/loving relationships/marriage and commitment/importance of family life)

RSE Year Five

Healthy Relationships

Influence of Self-Esteem

Communication – assertive communication and communicating boundaries

Human Sexuality

Sexual Orientation

Human Reproduction

Contraceptive Methods

Unplanned Pregnancy

STIs

Sexual Harassment and Sexual Abuse

RSE Year Six

Loving Relationships - Intimacy and Marriage

Influences and Values

Decision Making

Responsible Relationships

Contraceptive Methods II

Responsible Parenthood

STI Transmission

Looking Back, Looking Forward

Life Support