

St. Oliver Post Primary School

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy



January 2023

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1. Introductory Statement

This RSE policy is a written statement of the aims of the RSE programme, the relationship of RSE to SPHE, and the organisation and management of RSE within the school.

This policy was produced after a process of consultation between staff, Board of Management, parent representatives and student representatives.

2. Scope of the Policy

The policy will apply to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality within our school.

Discussion about relationships and sexuality also takes place in classes other than SPHE/RSE e.g. Science, Biology, Religious Education, Home Economics, Social Education etc. and it is therefore important that all teachers are familiar with the RSE policy.

The policy will apply to all school staff-teaching staff and non-teaching staff, to students, Board of Management, parents/guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators.

3. Mission Statement

St. Oliver Post Primary school is committed to quality education. It seeks to enrich students' lives and empower them for life's many challenges in a caring atmosphere of good order and discipline and in partnership with parents. In our daily life we value the principles of justice, mutual respect, equality and tolerance leading to promotion of a positive self-image and the confidence to achieve the highest levels.

In this context, our RSE policy affirms these values, acknowledging the significance of integrated and holistic human development which fosters in students an awareness of and a capacity for healthy and fulfilling human relationships.

4. Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education

RSE is a life-long developmental process of acquiring knowledge and an understanding of human relationships and sexuality. It is primarily the responsibility of the parents and family. The RSE class gives pupils formal opportunities, through experiential learning, to cultivate healthy attitudes and values towards themselves and others, promoting the overall development of the person, and the integration of sexuality into personal life.

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

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. 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.

'In deciding to include a Relationships and Sexuality Education programme (RSE) as part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) in school curricula, the right and duty of parents

to provide for the religious, moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children is acknowledged. While the home is the natural environment in which RSE takes place most parents look to the schools for support in fulfilling their obligations to their children in this area of development. Consequently the school is seen as playing a supportive and complimentary role to the home in this task. It is envisaged that this will be achieved by involving parents with management and teachers and, where appropriate, with pupils, in a collaborative exercise towards school policy development'. **Dept. of Ed. Circular M4/95 RSE** In St Oliver PP, the RSE Programme will be delivered within the context of our school's SPHE Programme. SPHE provides students with a unique opportunity to develop skills and competencies, to learn about themselves, to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, their personal lives and their social development. SPHE develops the work of the school in promoting the health and well-being of students.

Within this context, RSE aims specifically to provide structured opportunities for students 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.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) aims to provide opportunities for children and young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

The school recognises that SPHE also takes place in all the interactions in the school community, thereby supporting the values of SPHE and supporting the values of respect and caring.

6. The aims of our Relationships and Sexuality Education programme

Relationships and sexuality education which is located 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 in keeping with the policy of the school
- To provide opportunities for students to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that helps them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

It is acknowledged that in a course of limited duration these aims are aspirational

7. Why do we need a RSE programme?

According to the 1998 Education Act the aim of education is to contribute towards the development of all aspects of the individual and RSE is a required part of this aim. While parents have the primary responsibility for RSE, schools also have a role to play in this process through our structured programme.

Young people are involved in many different relationships with family, friends and others. They live in a world where they are influenced by many conflicting value systems. Our students need to be enabled to critically evaluate the range of information, opinions,

attitudes and values they encounter in everyday life in matters concerning relationships and sexuality. Values concerning relationships and sexuality in particular are no longer as clear as they once were.

The following are some reasons why RSE needs to be formally taught:

- Young people receive informal and unsupervised information about relationships and sexuality which may be inadequate, inappropriate and often misleading.
- Young people are exposed to a variety of sexual practices and attitudes through the media, particularly TV, film, magazines and the internet.
- Young people are maturing physically at a younger age and are becoming sexually active at an earlier age than in the past.
- The roles of men and women in society are changing.
- The nature of family life is changing in a way that places many pressures on children and young people.

Student's ability to relate to others depends on a personal sense of self-worth and having the attitudes and skills to negotiate their way respectfully in their relationships with others. Parallel to this, young people are maturing sexually and are growing in awareness of their sexuality. RSE emphasises the importance of self-awareness and self-esteem in understanding these changes. It emphasises the development of ones' ability to interact respectfully with others. It provides students with an opportunity to understand the different types of relationships and attitudes, values and life skills that support the healthy development of these relationships. Students can develop an understanding of familial, cultural and religious values and consider how these values support healthy informed choices in relation to relationships, sexuality and sexual health.

At St Oliver PP we are aware that for various reasons and at different times young people may need extra support and sensitivity in coping with the physical and emotional aspect of growing up. Some students may require more help in learning what sorts of behaviour are/are not acceptable, and being warned and prepared against abuse by others. In order to provide the appropriate support, the school expects parents to make us aware where these circumstances exist. Parents are invited to speak to the Principal, who in collaboration with the Guidance Counsellor, the Year Head, the class tutor, and/or SPHE teacher will offer the support needed. Each case will be dealt with sensitively and where appropriate on-going referral will be made to outside agencies.

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

Teaching the programme:

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

The RSE component will take a minimum of six classes over each school year.

The programme will be in line with the NCCA Curriculum and Guidelines. The curriculum and the guidelines, along with the year-by-year programme, are available in the school for parents who wish to see them.

In delivering the programme teachers will show sensitivity to the needs of the group and the school.

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

The programme will be delivered by teachers timetabled for SPHE at junior level and senior level.

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.

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. A copy of this policy will be made available to any parent on request to the School Office. This policy is also available on our school website.

Withdrawing pupils from the RSE programme:

Parents have the right to withdraw their child from RSE (or parts off). 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 Geography and Religious Education. 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. (See also appendix 1)

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 counselling on aspects of sexual behaviour 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 (further information is available from the Guidance Counsellor). Advice offered should not be directive and should be appropriate to the age of the student. (It is, for example, not appropriate to give pupils a list of abortion clinics.)

Explicit Questions:

It is unlikely to be appropriate to deal with a student's explicit questions by dealing with it in front of the whole class, e.g. questions on oral sex. In practice this means that teachers should say that it is not appropriate to deal with that question at this time. The teacher may also exercise his or her own professional judgement in deciding whether to answer the question privately after the class has finished. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised he/she should seek advice from the Guidance Counsellor or the Principal.

Confidentiality:

While students should not be encouraged to disclose personal or private information in SPHE/RSE classes, there may be times when they do talk about their own lives.

Confidentiality should be respected unless a teacher becomes aware that a child is at risk, in which case the appropriate action should be taken e.g. follow the procedures set down in the Child Protection Procedures and Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools or the school's Substance Use Policy, notify parents etc.

In cases of under-age sexual activity, P10 of the Child Protection Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools (2004) state: 'In all cases where a school becomes aware of underage sexual intercourse the school shall take appropriate steps to inform the child's parents.'

In line with the current Child Protection procedures (https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Child-Protection/child_protection_guidelines.pdf), in circumstances where a student is considered at some risk of any type of abuse (e.g. moral or physical) or in breach of the law, the teacher must refer this immediately to the Designated Liaison Person (Principal) or report the matter themselves to Tusla.

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

The school policy is that the Science Department deals primarily with the biological aspects of reproduction.

Using visiting speakers and others

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 SPHE Co-ordinator 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 organiser makes the visitor aware of the ethos of the school and the manner of delivery of the RSE programme. Issues to consider are:
- Ensuring visitors are compliant with the legal requirements of the Child Protection Guidelines.
- The degree of explicitness of the content and presentation;
- Will the visitor 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?
- 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.

- 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.
- The Office should be informed of the date and name of the visitor.
- Where applicable, refreshments should be arranged with the school catering staff.
- The visitor should be welcomed at the main door.
- At the end of the session a vote of thanks should be given by a student and the visitor escorted to the main door after refreshments.

LGBTIQ

Teachers do not promote any one life-style as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that sexual orientation will be discussed during a programme of sex education. Teaching about sexual orientation is not avoided although teachers take care not to advocate one orientation over another, present it as the norm, or encourage experimentation by students. One of the many advantages of exploring issues concerning sexual orientation is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions and address prejudice. Discussion of sexuality should be appropriate to the age of the pupils.

Contraception / Abortion / Sexually Transmitted Infections

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

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. The primary level Stay Safe programme will be used as appropriate for pupils who are attached to our ASD Unit 'An Grianán'.

9. Ongoing support, development and review 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/honestly and a 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 counselling. Some teachers have expert training in the specific areas of health, relationships and sexuality education and will be encouraged to train other teachers.

The school will facilitate teachers to obtain expert 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.

A co-ordinator of SPHE will be in place each year.

10. Resources:

Resources are organised according to year group

- Junior Cycle follow the workbook

- Senior Cycle: There is no prescribed resource for RSE, however, the following are recommended:
 - ✓ SPHE Resource materials for Relationships and Sexuality Education prepared by the NCCA and approved by the Department of Education and Science (1999)
 - ✓ Trust (RSE) Senior cycle
 - ✓ On your own two feet
 - ✓ B4U Decide
 - ✓ Growing up LGBT
 - ✓ Cancer Awareness Programme
 - ✓ Mental Health Matters
 - ✓ Be safe Be wise
 - ✓ Web sites:
 - ✓ www.sphe.ie
 - ✓ www.pdst.ie
 - ✓ www.sess.ie
 - ✓ www.healthpromotion.ie
 - ✓ www.webwise.ie
 - ✓ www.thinkcontraception.ie
 - ✓ www.tes.ie
 - ✓ www.ted.ie
 - ✓ www.Kahoot.ie
 - ✓ www.mentimeter.ie
 - ✓ www.teni.ie
 - ✓ www.crisispregnancy.ie
 - ✓ www.glen.ie
 - ✓ www.belongto.org
 - ✓ www.sexualwellbeing.ie

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

11. Links to other policies and Curricular/Extra-Curricular Activities

- Links to related school policies
 - Within the framework of the overall School Plan, there are relevant school policies that are already in place, that complement the aims of our RSE policy:
 - Child Protection Policy
 - Guidance Plan
 - Anti-Bullying Policy
 - Code of Behaviour

- Substance Use Policy
- Green Schools
- Healthy Eating
- **Links to Curriculum delivery**
 - Aspects of RSE are delivered across the curriculum, through subjects such as Religious Education, Science, Biology, Home Economics and Social Education, Art work displays around the school.
- **Links to Extra-Curriculum delivery**
 - The school supports SPHE/RSE informally by creating a supportive school climate where the aims of the programme are modelled through our:
 - Peer Mentor programme
 - Prefect programme
 - Student Council

12. 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 are:

- Student feedback;
- Staff review and feedback;
- Parental feedback.

13. BOM & LMETB Ratification / Resolution Process

BOM Ratification

<i>Date Ratified by the Board of Management:</i>	
<i>Proposed By:</i>	
<i>Seconded By:</i>	
<i>Signed:</i>	<div style="text-align: right;"><i>(Chairperson, BOM)</i> <i>(Principal)</i></div>
<i>Scheduled Date for Review of the Policy:</i>	

LMETB Ratification/Resolution of the ETB Board

<i>Date of Resolution of ETB Board</i>	
<i>Signed</i>	<div style="text-align: right;"><i>(Chairperson)</i></div>

14. Appendices

Appendix 1: Request by Parent for withdrawal from RSE

What we do if a request for withdrawal from the RSE programme is made by a parent:

- a)** We discuss the nature of the concerns with the child's parent and if appropriate attempt to reassure them (initially such discussion takes place at a meeting with the Year Head and SPHE Co-ordinator. The Deputy Principal and / or Principal may become involved if necessary);
- b)** We consider whether the programme can be amended or improved in a way that will reassure parents - care is taken not to undermine the integrity of the RSE programme and the entitlement of the other pupils, e.g. it may be appropriate and desirable to have single sex classes for some sections of the RSE programme;
- c)** We attempt to ensure that where a student is withdrawn there is no disruption to other parts of their education;
- d)** We point out that students who have been withdrawn are vulnerable to teasing - we therefore attempt to cause minimal embarrassment to the student and minimal disruption to the programme;
- e)** We also point out that students may receive inaccurate information from their peers; and
- f)** We offer the parents access to appropriate information and resources.

Appendix 2: Letter to Parents re SPHE and RSE

Re: SPHE and RSE Programme

Dear Parent/Guardian,

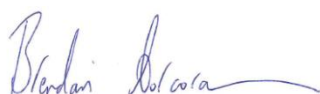
I am writing to inform you about the Social, Personal and Health Education Programme which is a core part of the national school curriculum. S.P.H.E. provides a unique and exciting opportunity for students to develop skills and competence, to learn about themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development.

Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) is one module within the S.P.H.E. curriculum. It is a developmental process through which pupils participate in order to cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships. One timetabled period per week is allocated to S.P.H.E. and out of the S.P.H.E. Programme in the year; a minimum of six timetabled periods will be assigned to Relationships and Sexuality Education. This module will be taught to all year groups from first to sixth year. These classes will take place in January and February each year. A complete breakdown of the S.P.H.E. curriculum, which includes comprehensive details on the RSE module, is available for your information on <http://www.sphe.ie/resources.aspx>.

As you are the primary educators of your children, we recognise the right of any parent/guardian who so wishes to request that his/her son/daughter should not participate in the programme. The school will respect this choice. Where students are withdrawn from RSE, the school cannot take responsibility for any versions of class content passed on to them by other students. Any Parent/Guardian who wishes to withdraw his/her son/daughter must contact the Deputy Principal to make their wishes known. This request should be made in writing before the 1st of September in order to allow for the provision of supervision for these students; otherwise the student will take part in the RSE classes.

Please feel free to contact the school to discuss this matter.

Yours sincerely,



Brendan Corcoran

Principal

Appendix 3: Topics for RSE

Junior Cycle

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.

Senior Cycle

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.

Human relationships

- an awareness of what constitutes a loving relationship.
- the long-term commitment involved in marriage.
- parenting and family life.