

Rosemont's Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

Developed: 2010

Reviewed 2014

Due for review: 2016

Enacted after consultation between staff, parent representatives, Student Council, Principal and Board of Management.

A. *School*

1. The school is a day-school for girls in the Voluntary Secondary category. Our catchment area is south county Dublin, north Wicklow and North Kildare.

B. *Our School Mission Statement*

1. **Rosemont challenges**

Ireland's leading teachers inspire students to aim high, set goals, and take ownership of their education.

Commitment

A student educated at Rosemont will:

Achieve, while adhering to high academic standards.

Set goals, and take ownership.

Have a **greater understanding** of the Catholic faith.

Be **adaptable**, and **initiate positive change**.

Be ready to **lead**, instead of follow.

Use their freedom for the good based on solid moral principles.

Seek out opportunities to **give back** to their community.

Be **interested** in their education and their future.

Possess **people skills** in order to succeed at work.

Be encouraged by an effective **parent-teacher** partnership.

2. Our school was founded by a group of forward-thinking parents in 1976-77. They knew that strong, effective partnerships between parents and teachers are essential for children to achieve their greatest potential. From birth to adulthood parents are the primary educators of their children. By forming a real partnership with parents, Rosemont gives students a powerful advantage. We have found that success is certain for students whose teachers and parents collaborate with them in the development of their goals and strategies for pursuing academic excellence. This close collaboration is evident in all areas of the RSE programme.
3. As a school with a Catholic ethos we are committed to our responsibility to promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of all students and promote health education for all, in consultation with their parents, having regard to the Catholic ethos of the school. (Ref. Education Act 1998, section 9(e)).

In accordance with our Anti-bullying policy and Equality and Dignity in the Workplace policies all staff, students and the wider school community are committed to fostering the maximum respect for the dignity of the person. The underlying objective of some policies is to nurture respect towards oneself and others.

C. Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education

1. The RSE unit in both Junior and Senior cycle teaches the dignity and beauty of human sexuality through a diversity of learning methodologies in an age appropriate way. Students learn to cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships.

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

1. 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 human sexuality and 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.

E. The aims of our Relationships and Sexuality Education programme

1. Relationships and sexuality education is a unit within SPHE at Junior Cycle (1st, 2nd and 3rd year) and as a unit within Religious Education at Senior Cycle (4th, 5th and 6th year). RSE has as its specific aims:
 - a) To help students understand and develop friendships and relationships
 - b) To promote an understanding of human sexuality
 - c) To promote knowledge of and respect for human reproduction
 - d) To enable students to develop attitudes and values toward their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework in keeping with the ethos of the school
 - f) To provide opportunities for students to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

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

1. 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 especially in matters of relationships and sexuality. Their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality is seen by the school as being of primary importance. On this basis parents will always be informed before RSE units are taught so that they have the option to deal with these matters in advance at home and will be encouraged to do so. This policy is communicated to all school parents. 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.
3. **Programme content:**
The basis of the RSE programme is the origins and meaning of human sexuality. As an integral part of human nature human sexuality will be explored in the context of relationships, understanding one's fertility, responsible parenthood, STDs etc. within the Catholic ethos of the school. Expert outside speakers will be invited to address classes where relevant.
4. **Questions arising in class:**
On occasion it may not be appropriate to deal with certain questions in the classroom setting. Teachers in consultation with the SPHE or RE co-ordinator or the Principal will decide an appropriate manner of dealing with the relevant situation. Where appropriate in the interests of child welfare the matter will be discussed with the parents. The exception being in cases of a suspected Child Protection issue in which case the Child Protection Guidelines are immediately invoked.
5. **Confidentiality:**
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 immediately to the Principal. The Principal will decide whether to inform the parents and/or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counseling.

The following is also school policy:

- a) teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality;
- b) students must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the Principal and possibly to parents if the Principal decides that it is in the best interests of the pupil to notify parents;

The Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary schools state in 4.1.1. and 4.2.1.

- 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 Designated Liaison Person. The need for confidentiality at all times, 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.*

4.2.1 *If the Designated Liaison Person is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation he/she should report the matter to the relevant health board immediately.*

6. **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.

7. **Withdrawing students from the RSE programme:**

1. Parents are informed of their right to withdraw their child from sensitive aspects of RSE – parents will always be provided with a full copy of this policy following a request to do so.
2. Issues such as over population and birth control are met in a minor way in subjects such as Geography and RE. 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.
3. 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)

8. **Using visiting speakers and others**

- 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.
- b) 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:
 - 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) At the end of the session a vote of thanks should be given by a pupil and the visitor escorted to the main door after refreshments.

i) A written acknowledgement of their contribution should be sent to the visitor and could appear in the School Newsletter.

1. **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.

G. 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 a preparedness to refer to more expert advice if necessary. The skills acquired in general teaching apply also to RSE.
2. 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.

Resources:

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.

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:

- a) pupil feedback;
- b) staff review and feedback;
- c) parental feedback.

Appendix 1

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 SPHE coordinator, the Principal may become involved if necessary)
- b) we attempt to ensure that where a pupil is withdrawn there is no disruption to other parts of their education,
- c) we also point out that students may receive inaccurate information from their peers;
- d) we offer the parents access to appropriate information and resources.