



Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

MISSION STATEMENT

The Intermediate School, Killorglin is a lay, Catholic school under unitary management. The school is open to all young people, acknowledging their different beliefs

The school wishes to educate its pupils in happy and pleasant surroundings allowing them to achieve their potential, develop their talents, to strive for excellence and to search for truth.

The pupils will learn to appreciate loyalty to their families, to school, to Country and to God and, in learning this, will understand service to their fellow human beings and to their community.

Pupils will always be encouraged to enjoy leisure in life, to participate in sport and creative activities, to be inventive and to be generous with their talents.

The policy of the Intermediate School is to create equality of opportunity for both girls and boys. This aspiration of equality is applied in the choice and range of subjects, in educational trips and in social activities.

The school strives to create an atmosphere which enables the young people to relate to one another in a way which is characterised by mutual respect.

The aim of the school is to produce a concerned Christian who is conscious of his/her dignity as a person, is familiar with his/her heritage and is equipped to take his/her place in his/her own environment.

The school also aims to foster a sense of community between teachers and pupils, a strong work ethic, a feeling of comradeship and a sense of dedication, help, encouragement and conviviality.

The school encourages pride and enthusiasm in our Irish background, a love of country and its tradition and to realise that we are all members of a larger world.

All these elements are bonded together by a strong School dedication to its Catholic Christian ethos.

Introduction:

RSE is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. The Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy has been drafted by staff and management. The Parents' Association, full staff and Student Council will be involved in the consultation process, prior to ratification.

The policy outlines the aims of the RSE programme, the relationship of RSE to SPHE and Religious Education (RE), and the organisation and management of RSE within the school.

Scope of the Policy

The policy will apply to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships, friendships and sexuality. Discussion about relationships and sexuality also takes place in classes and subjects other than SPHE/RSE, it is therefore important that all teachers are familiar with the RSE policy.

The RSE policy will apply to school staff, students, the Manager, parents, visiting and guest speakers and external facilitators.

Rationale:

Sexuality is a key element of healthy social and personal development. Young people are exposed to a bewildering variety of messages about sexuality and sexual activity. Schools, in consultation with parents/guardians, need to reflect on how to provide for the needs of their students.

- The Education Act, 1998, requires that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.
- Section 4 of the Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools requires schools to have an agreed policy for RSE and a suitable RSE programme in place for all students at both junior and senior cycle. Circular 0037/2010 requires schools to provide an RSE programme as an integral part of SPHE for each year of junior cycle and as a programme within senior cycle.
- Circular 0043/2018 clarifies best practice guidelines for post-primary schools in the use of programmes and/or facilitators in promoting wellbeing.
- Section 8.4.1 of the Department of Education Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023) requires all schools to include SPHE as part of the mandatory curriculum for all junior cycle students at post-primary level. It also mandates that all schools must have a Relationships and Sexuality Education programme at senior cycle.
- The effectiveness of an RSE programme is dependent on a collaborative policy process involving teachers, management, parents/guardians, and students.

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

- The RSE policy acknowledges the importance of RSE being taught in the context of Wellbeing/ SPHE and a whole-school culture that is inclusive and respectful.
- The RSE policy reflects the Catholic educational values and philosophy as outlined in the Mission Statement of the school. As teachers, we will express our ethos while at the same time facilitating students in discussing a range of views in relation to topics within the RSE Programme, within a moral and spiritual framework.

Child Protection

This policy is devised in compliance with the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023), Children First Act 2015, Children First National Guidance 2017 and Addendum to Children First 2019. In accordance with all child protection legislation, where a child protection concern is raised, the procedures outlined in the Child Safeguarding Statement will be followed. All staff are familiar with the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDL). The names of the DLP and DDL are clearly displayed in prominent areas of the school and the Child Safeguarding Statement is available to all members of the school community.

Aims of the RSE programme

- To build on the 'Stay Safe' programme taught in primary schools and further reforms of that policy endorsed by the Department of Education
- To help students understand and develop friendships
- To promote an appropriate understanding of sexuality and sexual health within the modern world
- To help students to grow in independence and to encourage students to act in a moral, caring and responsible way
- To promote a knowledge and respect for the opinion of others
- To address personal issues such as areas of peer pressure around sexual activity
- To inform student understanding about the concept of consent
- To promote students' emotional intelligence
- To clarify the rights, roles and responsibilities of the student in relation to RSE

Objectives of the RSE Policy and programme

- The policy ensures clarity and consensus on how RSE is taught in the Intermediate School Killorglin
- It articulates the relationship between RSE, SPHE and Wellbeing
- It clarifies the rights, roles and responsibilities of all members of the school community in relation to RSE
- It indicates how the teaching of RSE is linked to the school ethos and Mission Statement
- It provides information on how the RSE programme is delivered in the school

Provision of Training and Staff Development

Classroom teachers are best placed to work consistently and sensitively with students.

Teaching staff are encouraged to attend in-service in SPHE and RSE. Ongoing CPD is seen as an essential element in delivering the programme. The objectives of such training are to enhance personal growth of the teacher and to enable the teacher to acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary to facilitate the SPHE/RSE programme.

Inclusion of Parents/Guardians

Parents are the primary educators of their children and their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality is seen by the school as being extremely important.

Parents will be involved in the development of the RSE policy.

A copy of the RSE policy will be posted on the ISK website. Parents/Guardians will be encouraged to look at the policy on the school website to familiarise themselves with the curriculum for the relevant year groups.

Parents will be informed in advance, before instruction on the RSE module of SPHE begins. While the school strives to reach a broad consensus on these matters, The Education Act, 1998 provides that a student is not required to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parent or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student. Hence, parents have the right to opt their child out of the sensitive issues in RSE if they wish to do so. The parents must notify the school in writing, and arrange appropriate supervision of the student.

Ethical/Moral Considerations

RSE is a complex area of the curriculum. It is necessary for teachers to adhere to best practice, protecting students from any potential harmful, inappropriate or misguided resources, interventions or programmes. Our RSE policy will provide guidance for teachers on the moral and ethical framework within which the programme will be taught. In this regard the policy committee has considered the following issues:

Answering Questions: While it is important to create an environment in SPHE/RSE in which students can discuss issues openly, teachers may not be able to answer all questions asked by students and can set appropriate limits. Students may ask questions about issues which are not included in the curriculum. On these, and on all questions, teachers will use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, the RSE curriculum and the RSE policy for the school.

Confidentiality: While students are not 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.

In cases of under-age sexual activity, P10 of the Child Protection Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools (2011) 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.'*

All students will be made aware of the limits of confidentiality and teachers will not give unconditional guarantees of confidentiality.

Offering Advice: The school's function is to provide a general education about sexual matters and issues. 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 will be sensitive to Catholic teachings on relationships and sexuality and will be appropriate to the age of the pupil.

Sexual Activity: Teachers give young people information on 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.

Sexual Orientation: The RSE programme includes the topic of sexual orientation. RSE training courses delivered by the SPHE Support Service provide teachers with support material. Teachers will not promote any one life-style as the only one acceptable for society. This topic will be dealt with in an age appropriate manner.

The Equal Status Act, 2000 and the Equality Act, 2004 prohibit discrimination across nine grounds, including sexual orientation.

Family Planning/Contraception: The post-primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines state that the subject of family planning should be covered within the Senior Cycle RSE programme. The RSE programme requires that young people are provided with information about methods of contraception, but consideration will be given by teachers to the moral and ethical framework within which it is taught. This topic will be dealt with in an age appropriate manner.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs): While awareness of STIs is one of the objectives of the Second Year/RSE syllabus, STIs are mainly addressed in Senior Cycle. Given that rates of STI transmission are increasing, it is important that the subject is addressed in schools.

Current Provision of RSE

The RSE module is taught to all Junior Cycle classes in SPHE. TY students have two classes of SPHE per week. In 5th and 6th year RSE is incorporated into the Religion classes.

Aspects of RSE are delivered across the curriculum, through subjects such as Religious Education, Science, Biology and Home Economics.

First Year: What is RSE? What makes a family, forming healthy connected relationships, maintaining healthy relationships, changes in adolescence, human reproduction, personal hygiene, being safe online, gender stereotypes, sexual orientation.

Second Year: The values that count, Signs and signals in relationships, Breaking up, Consent, Sexual consent and the law, Alcohol and sexual consent, Selfies, sexting and safety, Female reproductive health - menstrual well-being, Male reproductive health, Reproductive health- contraception.

Third Year: The relationship spectrum. Sexuality, gender identity and sexual health 3ns and diseases. Media influence on relationships and sexuality & Consent.

Transition Year (TY): • Values in relationships • Developing self- awareness • What are healthy boundaries • Making informed decisions • Understanding sexuality • Consent.

Fifth Year: • Healthy versus unhealthy relationships • Assertive communication • Anger and conflict • Sexual harassment • Teenage pregnancy • Influence of the media on relationships • Responsibilities of being a parent.

Sixth Year: Building self-esteem • gender equity • rights and responsibilities in a relationship • Contraception and STIs • anger and violence • negotiating and managing conflict • Domestic violence • Sexual violence • Dating violence and rape in relationships.

Resources:

- New Health and Wellbeing 1, 2 & 3 (EDCO)
- www.hse.ie - Relationships and Sexuality (Junior Cycle SPHE Resources)
- SPHE online Resource Portal - www.pdst.ie/post-primary/health-wellbeing/sphe and the NCCA Toolkit
- Health Promotion personnel (HSE) are also available to provide information, guidance and support

AEN/EAL students

Students with additional education needs may need more assistance than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up. They may also need help in learning what behaviours are and are not acceptable in some cases. It is important that teachers are mindful of this and use professional judgement to guide the teaching of RSE in a way that is appropriate to the ability, understanding of and composition of the student group.

Visiting Speakers

It is school policy that most of the RSE programme is best discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by the pupils. 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. Any visits by external facilitators must comply with Circular 0043/2018.

Visitors will be provided with a copy of the school's RSE policy, in advance of their visit. External facilitators should always work under the guidance and supervision of the relevant classroom teacher, who remains in the classroom with the students at all times and retains a central role in the delivery of the subject matter.

Implementation Arrangements, Roles and Responsibilities

All stakeholders including Parents/Guardians, School Management and teaching staff have roles and responsibilities in ensuring the implementation of the RSE policy in our school.

Policies which support RSE

- The Mission Statement of the Intermediate School Killorglin
- The Code of Behaviour
- The Anti-Bullying Policy
- The Child Protection Policy and Child Safeguarding Statement
- The Acceptable Use Policy
- The Special Educational Needs (SEN) Policy
- The Guidance Plan
- The Wellbeing Policy
- The Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines, 2021
- Report on the Review of RSE in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 2019
- Substance Abuse Policy

Monitoring and Review

The RSE policy will be monitored, evaluated and reviewed on an annual basis to ensure legal compliance and the maintenance of best practice.

Ratified by: J. J. Dyer

Date: 07 / 10 / 24