

Relationships and Sexuality Education School Policy

Rice College Ennis

Introduction

The Wellbeing Principles for Junior Cycle Education promotes students being Responsible, Connected, Respected, Resilient and Aware. It is the aim of this policy to ensure that these descriptors are relevant to all students in our school.

The staff of Rice College acknowledge the Children First Act 2015, and Circular 0081/2017 from The Department of Education and Science, and strive to deal with all matters of child protection “sensitively and professionally”, and in accordance with the Child Safeguarding Statement. The requirements of this statement have been met – all staff have completed Children First Training courses facilitated by Tusla and the PDST.

The Designated Liaison Person is Mr. Louis Mulqueen (Principal)

The Deputy Designated Liaison Person is Mr. John Burns (Deputy Principal)

Mission Statement

We are a caring school. We strive to live up to Christian values and show genuine concern for our school community. Our core aims are to provide a broad and comprehensive education and to recognise the needs and develop the talents of each person. We strive to enrich all those with whom we are privileged to come in contact with – we strive to succeed.

Our School Philosophy

The school encourages its pupils to consider and assess different viewpoints in relation to issues of morality. The experience gained through the working out of this policy and through respecting the needs of minority groups and individuals enriches the whole life of the school.

Definition of Relationship and Sexuality Education

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.

The following definitions have been provided by the PDST

“Sexuality includes all aspects of the human person that relate to being male or female and is subject to change and development throughout life. Sexuality is an integral part of the developing personality and has biological, psychological, cultural, social and spiritual dimensions. It especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to give and receive love, procreation, and in a more general way, the aptitude for forming relationships with others”

“Sexual Health is a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. Sexual Health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. For sexual health to be attained and maintained , the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected and fulfilled”

“Consent is not just something we learn academically; it is also something we apply in our daily lives in a range of different contexts. It requires skills, strategies, a strong belief in our own self-worth and respect for others. Even for many adults there is a big difference between knowing your rights and being able to exercise your rights”

Aims of our Relationship and Sexuality Education programme

RSE is taught within the broader framework of Social, Personal and Health Education at Junior Cert and has as its specific aims:

- To help young people understand and develop friendships and relationships
- To promote an understanding of sexuality
- To promote a positive attitude to ones sexuality and the sexuality of others
- To promote knowledge and respect for reproduction
- To enable young people to develop attitudes and values in a moral, spiritual and social context
- To teach RSE while being mindful of our school ethos

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

Parent Support and Concern

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 Parents Association representatives, and the views expressed by parents are taken into account. A copy of this policy is available on the school website.

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from any, or all, of the RSE classes. Such a request should be made in writing to the school Principal. However we would urge parents to reflect on the wisdom of this course of action, as the school cannot take responsibility for information subsequently passed on to pupils by classmates.

Staff Training and Support

The school will facilitate teachers to obtain training in the field of RSE bearing in mind the need for the ongoing teaching and learning programme of the school to continue with as little disturbance as possible. The school will purchase resources deemed necessary by staff and approved by the Principal, for the teaching of this programme. Teachers will provide a general education about sexual matters but will not offer individual advice, information or counselling on aspects of sexual behaviour and contraception. Teachers may provide pupils with information about where and from whom they can receive confidential sexual advice and treatment eg their doctor or other suitable agencies. It may not be appropriate to deal with some explicit questions in class. Teachers may choose to say that it is not appropriate to deal with that question at this time. When deciding whether or not to answer questions the teacher may consider the age and readiness of the students, the RSE programme content, the ethos of the school and the RSE policy. Teachers will use factual terminology and not personal opinion.

Visiting Speakers

It is school policy that most of the RSE programme is best discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by 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. After gaining approval from the Principal for the visit the SPHE co-ordinator will make the visitor aware of the ethos of the school and may provide them with a copy of this RSE policy. 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. The guest speaker should be welcomed at the main door, and returned to same after their visit. The

presentations of guest speaker will be negotiated with the relevant SPHE teachers before delivery to students. It is normal practice for teachers to remain in the classroom while visitors are there. Preparatory and follow up work where possible should be undertaken by pupils.

Monitoring, Evaluating and Reviewing the RSE programme

We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this RSE programme. Specifically important is feedback from parents, staff and students. The SPHE team of teachers will meet regularly to discuss progress and implementation of the RSE programme.

Confidentiality

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

- “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 the 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 should be borne in mind. The supports of the school should continue to be made available to the child”
- “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”

Reports of all investigations will be compiled in the strictest and in accordance with Data Protection 2018 Guidelines.

The above guideline will form part of RSE policy, as will the following

- Teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality to a child
- Pupils 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 do so
- Teachers will use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard the information
- Teachers will indicate to pupils when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential – the pupil can then decide whether to proceed or not

