

# Relationships and Sexuality Education(RSE) Policy

Coláiste Treasa, Kanturk, Co.Cork

**This version ratified by the Board of Management :**

**Policy due for review:**

## **Introduction**

The 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 will be implemented after consultation between the staff, the Principal and Deputy Principal, the Board of Management, Parents' Council and the Students' Council.

## **Our school**

In Coláiste Treasa we aim to provide a holistic and inclusive education in order to create a safe learning environment, where each student is helped to reach his full potential and to qualify for the career of his choice.

## **School Mission Statement**

Coláiste Treasa offers a broad based education with strong emphasis on the cultivation and development of good social and moral values which will prepare students for adult life in the context of modern Ireland.

## **Scope of Policy**

This policy will apply to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality. RSE teaching and the topics and ideas covered benefit greatly from cross curricular linkages but also impact other subjects, so therefore it is important that all teachers are familiar with the school's RSE policy.

This policy will apply to school staff, students, Board of Management, parents/guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators.

## **Definition of RSE**

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. This education is delivered consciously and unconsciously by parents, teachers, peers, adults and the media. (Department of Education website, [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie))

RSE is a developmental process using learning that is experiential in which students participate to help foster a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, especially in the area of sexuality and relationships. RSE in Coláiste Treasa 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.

## **Relationship of RSE to the School's Mission Statement**

Coláiste Treasa is committed to providing the best educational formation possible for all our students as evidenced through our Mission Statement. We aim to provide an education for all students which will embrace and develop their full human potential: personal, academic, physical, moral and religious. Our RSE programme will encompass the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, sexual identity and intimacy, contributing towards the full human development of the student. As outlined by the Department of Education and Skills in Circular 0037/2010, no aspect of the RSE programme including STIs, contraception, or sexual orientation can be omitted on the grounds of religious ethos. As we seek to promote the overall development of the

student, this involves the integration of the RSE programme into the context of our holistic educational ethos.

### **Guidelines for the Management, Implementation and Organisation of RSE in Coláiste Treasa**

Arrangements for the teaching of the RSE programme and the deployment of staff will be made by the Principal. Teachers will follow the guidelines drawn up by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)

RSE at Junior Cycle will be delivered each year as a module within the SPHE curriculum as per the DES guidelines and the SPHE Department plan. In Senior Cycle, RSE will be facilitated during the TY, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year RE programme on a modular basis.

### **Relationship of RSE to the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme**

The Education Act (1998) emphasises that schools are obliged to promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them. As part of the SPHE programme students are encouraged to develop their own self confidence and build relationships with others

The Draft Guidelines for RSE (NCCA, June 1995) 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. RSE is addressed within the SPHE programme.

### **Aims of the SPHE Programme**

- to enable the students to develop skills for self-fulfilment and living in communities;
- to promote self-esteem and self-confidence;
- to enable the students to develop a framework for responsible decision making;
- to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion;
- to promote mental and emotional health and wellbeing.

### **Aims of the RSE Programme**

In Coláiste Treasa, RSE is located within the overall framework of SPHE and Religious Education. The specific aims of the RSE programme are:

- to help the pupils to 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 provide opportunities for pupils to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways which may help them to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way;
- to enable pupils to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in the context of a moral, spiritual and social framework.

## **Coláiste Treasa RSE Programme Implementation**

The RSE programme as taught in Coláiste Treasa is the programme set out by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and is delivered within SPHE and RE programmes using experiential learning methodologies. The Programme is student centred and is delivered in a pastoral environment. It includes an anti-bullying strategy which emphasises respect for the rights and dignity of others. Visits by external speakers enhance the programme on topics such as drugs, alcohol misuse, hygiene and sexual health and therefore form an integral part of the delivery of the RSE programme.

The following is an outline of the topics covered from Junior Cycle up to Senior Cycle.

### **Junior Cycle**

#### **Year 1**

- Me as unique and different.
- Friendship.
- Changes at adolescence.
- The Reproductive System.
- Images of Male and Female.
- Respecting myself and others.

#### **Year 2**

- From conception to birth.

- Recognising feelings and emotions.
- Peer pressure and other influences.
- Managing relationships.
- Making responsible decisions.
- Health and personal safety.

### **Year 3**

- Body image.
- Where am I now?
- Relationships- what is important?
- The three R's- Respect, Rights and Responsibilities.
- Conflict

## **Senior Cycle**

- Relationships
- What we value in relationships
- Healthy relationships
- Self-esteem
- The influence of self-esteem
- Understanding boundaries
- Communicating boundaries
- Intimacy

- Human Sexuality
- Sexual orientation
- Influences and values
- Decision making
- Responsible relationships.
- Sexual Health
- Human reproduction and fertility.
- Contraception.
- Unplanned pregnancy.
- Sexually Transmitted Infections. (STI)
- STI transmission.

## **Key Measures**

### **1. Provision of training & staff development**

Some teachers involved in the implementation of the RSE programme have attended training in SPHE and RSE. Management will continue to support staff training in this area.

### **2. Parental Rights and Responsibilities**

It is recognised by the school that parents/guardians are the primary educators for our students and their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality is considered by the school as very important.

Information will be provided for parents about the content and the timing of the RSE module, in a letter to be signed by parents before a teacher starts teaching the module.



Informing parents/guardians of when these topics are being taught in school will enable them to discuss any further issues at home. In recognizing the rights of parents as the primary educators of their children, the school undertakes to provide them with the opportunity to;

a) Acquaint them with the Programme.

b) View the resource materials.

c) Withdraw their son/daughter from class for the duration of the formal programme if they so wish. Written notification of such should be sent to the Principal.

### **3. Ethical/Moral considerations**

Answering questions: While we recognise that 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 have to set appropriate limits. It may not be appropriate to deal with a student's explicit questions in a classroom situation and teachers have the right to exercise their professional judgement in deeming such questions inappropriate for the class or age grouping. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised, he/she should seek advice from the DLP (Mr Murphy, School Principal) or the DDLP (Ms Walsh, Deputy Principal).

### **4. Confidentiality**

Students should be asked not to disclose personal information in SPHE/RSE class. It is important that students are made aware of the limits of confidentiality. Teachers cannot guarantee confidentiality. Pupils must be informed that if a teacher becomes aware that a student is at risk of abuse, or in breach of the law, this information will be conveyed to the Principal and the appropriate action will be taken, as set down in the *Child Protection Procedures for Post-primary Schools* (2011).

## **5. Sexual Activity**

Students should be made aware that, under the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006, the age of consent for sexual activity for both males and females is 17 years of age in the Republic of Ireland. In circumstances where a teacher becomes aware that a pupil is engaging in underage sexual activity, the teacher must refer this immediately to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

## **6. Offering Advice**

The aim of the policy is to provide a general education about sexual matters in a manner that is consistent with the school's ethos. It does not seek to provide a forum to offer individual advice or counselling on aspects of sexual behaviour. However, 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. Advice offered should not be directive and should be age appropriate to the student.

## **7. Family planning/Contraception**

The subject of family planning is covered within the senior cycle RSE programme. However, the topic may need to be addressed before senior cycle. Students will be provided with information about methods of contraception. This topic will be dealt with in an age-appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issues in a non-directive way.

## **8. Sexual Orientation**

The post primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines include the subject of sexual orientation. The Equal Status Acts 2000 - 2011 and the Equality Act 2004 prohibit discrimination across nine grounds, including sexual orientation. The topic may also need to be addressed before senior cycle. Discretion will be used with regard to the age at which students discuss homosexuality and it should be discussed in a clear and open manner, respectful and in a non-directive way.

## **9. Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)**

While awareness of STIs is one of the objectives of the second year SPHE/RSE syllabus, STIs are mainly addressed in senior cycle. This topic will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner.

## **10. Visiting speakers**

Visiting speakers can develop and enhance the RSE programme but should not be used to replace it. All visiting speakers should be provided with a copy of the RSE policy and also be familiar with the mission statement and ethos of the school. The RSE teacher should remain in the classroom whilst the speaker is delivering the subject matter in line with Circular 0023/2010 from the Department of Education and Science.

## **11. Students with Special Needs**

Students with special needs may require more help than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up. They may also require more help in learning to differentiate between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and in being equipped to deal with potentially abusive situations. Extra assistance in the area may be facilitated outside the main class for students with special needs.

## **12. Links to other School Policies**

The RSE policy is developed to maintain a consistency and cohesiveness within the school's overall plan. RSE within Coláiste Treasa takes into consideration the following policies:

- Child Protection Procedures.
- School Guidance Plan.
- Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Substance Abuse Policy.
- ICT Policy.
- Critical Incident Policy.
- Data Protection Policy.
- Code of Responsibility and Behaviour.

## **13. Staff Development and Training**

All SPHE/RSE teachers are encouraged to register with the SPHE website ([www.sphe.ie](http://www.sphe.ie)) for in-service. The school will support the training and on-going professional development of teachers delivering the programme.

Delivery of the full RSE programme relies on cross curricular links and therefore all staff will be encouraged to familiarise themselves with the RSE policy and undergo relevant training if available.

## **14. Monitoring of Policy**

The implementation of the RSE policy will be monitored by the SPHE/RSE Department and where deemed necessary by the Principal or the Board of Management.

## **15. Evaluating and Reviewing the RSE Programme**

Coláiste Treasa is committed to monitoring and evaluating on a regular basis the effectiveness of this policy. Review of the policy will take place on a regular basis and feedback from all stakeholders will be assessed including:

- (a) Pupil feedback (i.e. student council)
- (b) Staff review and feedback
- (c) Representatives from the Parents' Council.
- (d) Feedback from representatives of the Board of Management.