



Coláiste na hInse

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy Statement

A. School

Colaiste na hInse is a co-educational, multi denominational school in LMETB,

B. Our School Philosophy

‘Coláiste na hInse is a school of Excellence where students are happy and secure in a learning atmosphere characterised by Dearfachas (positivity) and belonging.... We focus on the whole young person and aspire to develop them as intellectual, emotional and spiritual individuals.... We encourage the highest standards in ár daltaí (our students) ensuring that they reach their full potential through strong relationships and positive reinforcement’. (Mission Statement)

Coláiste na hInse respects the individual; valuing, understanding and empowering the gifts and differences of each person. Our school community commits itself to educating the whole person in an atmosphere of trust and respect. The school is committed to respecting the moral standards and culture of the community it serves. It recognises that parents/guardians are the primary educators and home is the natural environment in which Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) should take place.

We as a school believe that no young person in our care should feel excluded or marginalized for being who they are. Therefore, our RSE programme will seek to:

1. Support the understanding that RSE is about the sexuality, relationships and sexual health of all young people.
2. Support the understanding that questioning of one’s sexual identity is a normal and valued part of adolescence.
3. Address the myths, prejudices and stereotypes that may exist in relation to sexuality, sexual orientation and gender identity.

C. Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education

RSE is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge, understanding and skills, which enable us to develop attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. The Coláiste aims to support parents/guardians in this important aspect of the student’s education and preparation for life.

D. 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 “spiritual, 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.

E. What Colaiste na hInse currently provides

Elements of SPHE and/or RSE are being approached during such subjects as Science, Biology, Religious Education, Home Economics, Guidance and Counselling and Physical Education. Fifth Years have seminars on addiction and substance abuse from professionals trained in this area.

F. The aims of our Relationships and Sexuality Education programme

1. Relationships and sexuality education which is located in the overall framework of Social, Personal and Health Education, has as its specific aims:

- a) To help pupils understand and develop friendships and relationships
- b) To promote an understanding of sexuality
- c) To promote a positive attitude to one’s own sexuality and in one’s relationship with others
- d) To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction
- e) To enable students to develop attitudes and values toward their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework
- 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. It is acknowledged that in a course of limited duration these aims are aspirational.

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

1. Teaching the programme

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 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 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. 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. Advice offered should not be directive and should be appropriate to the age of the pupil.

4. Explicit Questions:

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. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised he/she should seek advice from the SPHE co-ordinator or the Principal. When deciding whether or not to answer questions the teacher should consider the age and readiness of the students, the RSE programme content, the ethos of the school and the RSE policy.

5. Confidentiality:

It is school policy that in circumstances where a student 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 (Designated Liaison Person). The Principal will decide whether to inform the parents and/or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling.

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;
- c) teachers must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard the information;
- d) teachers must indicate clearly to students when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential - the pupil can then decide whether to proceed or not.

The Child Protection Procedures for Post Primary schools (2011) state in 4.1. and 4.2.2.

4.1

If a member of staff receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been abused or neglected, or is being abused or neglected, or is at risk of abuse or neglect he/she shall, without delay, report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person in that school. A written record of the report shall be made and placed in a secure location by the DLP. The need for confidentiality at all times, as previously referred to in section 1.9 of these procedures, shall be borne in mind. The supports of the school shall continue to be made available to the child.

4.2.2 If the DLP is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation (section 3.4 of these procedures refers) he/she shall report the matter to the HSE 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 pupils from the RSE programme:

1. Parents have the 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 (Also permanently on CNI website and easily acceptable).
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). A letter is sent to all parents via Cinn Lae announcing the RSE teaching of RSE at specific times of the year with an option to withdraw from these specific lessons.

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 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.
- 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 pupils 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.

9. Homosexuality

Teachers do not promote any one life-style as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that homosexuality will be discussed during a programme of sex education. One of the advantages of exploring issues concerning homosexuality is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions and address prejudice. Discussion of homosexuality should be appropriate to the age of the pupils.

10. 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.

11. 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. An Cuan students are most likely to required greater support and much differentiated methods of exploring RSE and this is dealt with in the An Cuan plan. Those An Cuan children who are capable of RSE lessons with their Rang group are encouraged to experience the RSE with their Rang group. An Cuan will support these students further if required.

H. 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 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.
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 on-going 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 Year Head and SPHE Co-ordinator, the 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 pupil is withdrawn there is no disruption to other parts of their education,
- d) we point out that pupils who have been withdrawn are vulnerable to teasing - we therefore attempt to cause minimal embarrassment to the pupil and minimal disruption to the programme;
- e) we also point out that pupils may receive inaccurate information from their peers;
- f) we offer the parents access to appropriate information and resources.

Review Procedures

A committee consisting of parent, staff and student representatives originally drafted the RSE Policy. The Board of Management ratified the policy on 20th March 2013.

- The policy will be reviewed and evaluated at regular intervals by the SPHE co-ordinator of Colaiste na hInse.
- The SDP Committee will refer this policy to all partners in education.

Date of ratification

BOM 20th March 2013