

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education

RSE is a developmental process through experiential learning in which students participate to help cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships.

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 “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 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.

The aims of our Relationships and Sexuality Education programme

Relationships and sexuality education which is located mainly in the overall framework of Social, Personal and Health Education, and to a lesser extent in Senior Cycle Religious Education has as its specific aims:

- a) To help students 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 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.

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

What we currently provide

The RSE programme as taught in our school is the programme laid out by the NCCA. The core resource used is the TRUST programme developed by the HSE and the DES.

- We currently provide RSE in TY, 5th and 6th year as per Department recommendations.
- The school encourages parents/guardians to ensure that students participate in this programme as a way of supporting parents as the primary educators of their children.
- A RE programme which discusses relationships, values, peer pressure, conflict and decision-making.
- Student centred pastoral care structure supports include Year Head, Tutor, Guidance and Counselling, School Chaplain, Learning Support, Principal & Deputy Principal, Student Council, GAA Future Leaders TY Programme.
- Possibility of one to one conversations with the school Guidance Counsellor.

- Anti-bullying policy and programmes of prevention (Well-Being Week, Internet Safety Programme etc.) which emphasise respect for the rights and dignity of others.
- Education of human physiology reproduction in Science, Home Economics and Biology classes.
- Home Economics which discusses relationships within the family, maturity, adolescence, and dealing with conflict, independence and responsibility.
- Possible visits by speakers on topics which may be relevant to senior cycle RSE.
- Awareness of human rights through Social Justice programmes such as the Dev Ed Programme., Zambia Immersion Programme and /or Class Discussion.

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

1. Arrangements and Timing of the Programme:

As per Circular 0037/201 all second level schools must implement Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) as an element of SPHE at junior cycle and as an RSE programme in senior cycle. Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff will be made by the Principal.

It is suggested that the programme commences in January as this gives the opportunity for relationship building before this sensitive area is addressed. A common timeline ensures the entire body of students are getting the same accurate and factual information at the same time.

2. Class Organisation and Timetabling

Teachers who are allocated SPHE and at senior cycle RSE teach the class from 1st year until 6th year where possible. All RSE/SPHE teachers where possible have the SPHE/RSE class for another subject due to the importance of the teacher-student relationship. The time allocation recommended is six periods of 40minute classes per year.

3. 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 the Parents Association/Board of Management and the views of parents have been taken into account in drafting the policy. A copy of this policy will be made available to any parent on request to the School Office.

4. 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 student. (It is, for example, not appropriate to give pupils a list of abortion clinics.)

5. Explicit Questions:

It may not be appropriate to deal with some explicit questions in class. In practice this means that teachers should say that it is not appropriate to deal with that question at this time. 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. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised he/she should consult with and/or seek advice from the Guidance Counsellor or the Principal.

6. 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 DLP in line with Child Protection Guidelines. The Principal will decide whether to inform the parents and/or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling.

In matters where a child confides an issue:

- 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 student 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 student can then decide whether to proceed or not.

The “Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools” issued by the Department of Education and Skills contains the following in paragraph 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.

(Note: In the case of this school, the Principal is the Designated Liaison Person.)

7. 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.

8. Withdrawing pupils from the RSE programme:

- a) This policy is available to parents on request together with details about the parent’s right to withdraw their child from any aspect of the RSE programme.
 - b) Issues such as over population, birth control and other sexual matters are met in a minor way in other subjects. 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.
 - c) 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).

9. 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 (rotated annually) or organising teacher 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.
- f) It is preferable that a written acknowledgement of their contribution should be sent to the visitor.

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. Abortion

This topic will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issues in a non-directive way.

12. 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.

13. Ongoing support, development and review Training:

a) 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.

b) The school will aim to 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.

14. 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.

15. 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) Student feedback;
- b) Staff review and feedback;
- c) Parental feedback.

16. Appendices Attached

Appendix 1: RSE Course Content listed by year group

Appendix 2: What we do if a request for withdrawal from the RSE programme is made by a parent.

17. Policy Implementation:

Adherence to the above policy is the responsibility of all Killina Presentation Secondary school staff supported by the school community.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management at its meeting on 15th October 2019 and will be reviewed during the 2021 school year or earlier if requested by a parent/guardian, teacher or Board member.

Relationship and Sexuality Education

First Year RSE (in the SPHE Programme)

1. Me as unique and different
2. Friendship
3. Changes at adolescence
4. The reproductive system
5. Images of male and female
6. Respecting myself and others

Self-confidence

2. Body image

Second Year RSE (in the SPHE Programme)

1. From conception to birth
2. Recognising and expressing feelings and emotions
3. Peer pressure and other influences
4. Managing relationships
5. Making responsible decisions
6. Health and personal safety

Third Year RSE (in the SPHE Programme)

1. Body image
2. Where am I now?
3. Relationships - what's important?
4. The three R's: respect, rights, and responsibilities
5. Conflict

Senior RSE Content:

TY

B4udecide.ie Programme

Values

Making Decisions

Self – Esteem

Age of Consent

Relationship Pressures

Resisting Relationship Pressures

5th Year

Feelings

Conflict in relationships

Values and personal integrity

Grief/loss

Human Reproduction-IVF, fertility awareness

Cloning, stem cells

Human Sexuality

Planning for the Future-contraception, abortion

More than you bargained for-STIs/SDS

Aids/HIV

Sexual Activity

Parenthood

6th Year

Loving relationships

Values and personal integrity

Marriage

Life Support and Loss

Challenging roles

Accepting sexual/gender orientation

Sexual harassment

When sexual assault becomes a reality

Without Consent

Sexual Abuse

Appendix 2

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.
- 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 student is withdrawn there is no disruption to other parts of their education.
- d) We point out that students who have been withdrawn are vulnerable to teasing - we therefore attempt to cause minimal embarrassment to the student and minimal disruption to the programme.
- e) We also point out that students may receive inaccurate information from their peers.
- f) We offer the parents access to appropriate information and resources.