

RSE Policy



Creagh College, Gorey

April 2012

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 in the overall framework of Social, Personal and Health Education, has as its specific aims:

- a) To help students to understand and develop friendships and relationships.
- b) To promote an understanding of sexuality.
- c) To support 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 policy of the College.
- f) To provide opportunities for students to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that helps 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.

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

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 College as very important. Relevant sections of this RSE policy will be included in the College's Information for Parents booklet, published annually in August.

This policy has been designed in consultation with Parent Teacher Association/Board of Management 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 College Office.

3. Offering Advice

The College'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 (further information is available from the Guidance Counsellor). Advice offered should not be directive and should be appropriate to the age of the student.

4. Explicit Questions

It is unlikely to be appropriate to deal with a student's explicit questions by dealing with it in front of the whole class. In practice this means that teachers should say that it is not appropriate to deal with that question at this time. The teacher may also exercise his or her own professional judgement in deciding whether to answer the question privately after the class has finished. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised he/she should seek advice from the Guidance Counsellor or the Principal.

5. Confidentiality

It is College policy that in circumstances where a student is considered at some risk of any type of abuse (e.g. moral or physical) or in breach of the law, the teacher must refer this immediately to the Principal or the Guidance Counsellor. The Principal will decide whether to inform the parents and/or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling. Although there is no legal duty on a teacher, or a Principal, to inform parents of matters which a child has confided to them:

- 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 pamphlet "Procedures for Dealing with Allegations or Suspicions of Child Abuse" issued by the Department of Education contains the following in paragraph 4.1:

If a teacher receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a pupil is being abused, the teacher should, in the first instance, report the matter to the principal or in exceptional

circumstances directly to the Chairperson of the Board. Where the matter is reported to the principal and he or she is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation the Chairperson or Manager should be advised. The Chairperson or Manager, together with the teacher, should report the matter to the local Director of Community Care/Medical Officer of Health. It is essential that at all times the matter be treated in the strictest confidence and not discussed except among the parties mentioned above.

(Note: In the case of this College, the Principal as Designated Liaison Person acts also as Manager in this respect.)

6. The division between biological and non-biological aspects of sex education

The College policy is that the Science Department deals primarily with the biological aspects of reproduction.

7. Withdrawing pupils from the RSE programme

Relevant sections of this policy are made available to parents in the College publication entitled *Information for Parents* together with details about the parent's right to withdraw their child from many aspects of RSE – parents will always be provided with a full copy of this policy following a request to do so.

Issues such as over population, birth control and other sexual matters are met in a minor way in subjects such as Geography and Religious Education. 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.

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).

8. Using visiting speakers and others

a) It is College 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 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 College 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.
- e) The Office should be informed of the date and name of the visitor.
- f) Where applicable, refreshments should be arranged with the College catering staff.
- g) The visitor should be welcomed at the main door.
- h) At the end of the session the visitor should be thanked by a student 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 College Newsletter / Website

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.

Teaching about homosexuality is not avoided although teachers take care not to advocate homosexual behaviour, present it as the norm, or encourage homosexual experimentation by students. One of the many 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. Sexual Activity

The R.S.E. policy statement gives teachers a framework, related to morals and values within which the issue of sexual activity should be addressed. These are to be found within the R.S.E. Programme and resources itself.

Teachers will give young people information on the age of consent which is 17 years of age for both males and females, for heterosexual and homosexual relationships. Teachers who become aware that a student is sexually active under the age of consent must bring this information to the Principal who will then inform the parents.

Under the 'Children First' Guidelines if teachers become aware of a student who is sexually active and is under the age of 18 but above the age of consent, he or she must bring this information to the Principal who will then inform the parents.

11. 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.

12. 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.

13. Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

Given that the rate of STI transmission is increasing, it is important that the subject is addressed in the College. While the awareness of STIs is one of the objectives of the Second Year S.P.H.E. / R.S.E. syllabus, STIs are mainly addressed in Senior Cycle

14. Special Needs

Students 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.

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 College will 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 College to continue with as little disturbance as possible.

Resources:

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

Review Date:

April 2014

