

CBS Secondary School, Dungarvan.



RELATIONSHIP AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE) POLICY

Our School

Scoil na mBráithre, Dungarvan, Co Waterford is an all-boys Christian Brothers School.

Our Mission Statement

A good school would concern itself with the overall well-being of the student - would care for the spiritual, intellectual, social, physical and emotional well-being of each student. It would have a strict, firm but fair discipline which would facilitate character formation. It would be a caring, decent and just institution.

It would see itself as a community within a community. It would try to inculcate a sense of self-worth in students. It would never put them down and would help give them confidence in their own abilities. A good school would have any easy-going, friendly atmosphere between teachers and students.

Academic performance would be very important with the goal that each student would achieve results commensurate with his abilities; it would hope to direct its students towards the niche in life most suited to them. It would provide a wide variety of subjects to choose from so as to cater for as broad a spectrum of abilities and aptitudes as possible. It would seek to accommodate and help students from all types of backgrounds and of all ability levels.

A good school would have a competent, dedicated and enthusiastic staff with a high morale, all working towards the goal of helping the students entrusted to them. A good school would have a good relationship with parents and be welcoming of them in the school. A good Christian Brothers' school would have a catholic ethos, where the religion is taught in a Christian atmosphere in a broad-minded and tolerant way. It would inculcate the principles of good living and be always mindful of the spiritual dimension to life. CBS Dungarvan aspires to being such a school.

Rationale

Sexuality is a key element of healthy social and personal development, most particularly in the life of an adolescent. Adolescence is marked by the onset of physical and sexual maturity. Young people are exposed to a bewildering variety of messages about sexuality and sexual activity.

RSE is the process by which our school, together with parent/s/guardian/s, develop in students, knowledge and understanding, attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, sexual identity and intimacy, within a moral, spiritual and social framework.

Also,

- The *Education Act, 1998* requires that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.
- Section 4 of the *Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools* requires schools to have an agreed policy for RSE and a suitable RSE programme in place for all students at both junior and senior cycle. At Junior Cycle, the RSE programme is part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).
- The *Draft Guidelines for RSE* (NCCA 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 relationships 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.
- Circulars M4/95, M20/96, 0023/2010, 0037/2010 request schools to commence a process of RSE policy development.
- The *Child Protection Procedures, 2011* states that all post- primary schools must implement SPHE/RSE.

Relationships and Sexuality Education in Our School.

Schools are required to deliver all aspects of the RSE curriculum, including those in relation to sexual orientation, contraception, sexually transmitted infections etc. We acknowledge the Christian ethos of our school while at the same time facilitating students in discussing a range of views in relation to the topics within the RSE programme.

Provision of RSE in Our School

- In Junior Cycle RSE is situated within SPHE and is delivered in one class per week over the three years.
- RSE is currently delivered over a ten-week module to fifth and sixth year students.

The Aims of Our RSE Programme

- 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 pupils to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework in keeping with the policy of the school.
- f) To provide opportunities for pupils 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.

RSE should enable our students to:

- Acquire the understanding and skills necessary to form healthy friendships and relationships
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, and the skills for building and maintaining self esteem
- Become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change especially during adolescence and to develop respect for difference between individuals.
- Understand human physiology with particular reference to the reproductive cycle, human fertility and sexually transmitted infections.
- Understand sexual development and identity and explore aspects of sexuality including sex roles, stereotyping, gender issues and cultural influences on sexuality.
- Value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood.
- Develop strategies for decisions and actions consistent with moral integrity and respectful of the rights and dignity of others.
- Develop skills for coping with peer pressure, conflict and threats to personal safety.

Some of these objectives will be supported by the RE Department in all years, by the broader curriculum and the whole school climate.

Junior Cycle RSE

This module is designed to develop communication and decision making skills in relationships.

- To look at the causes of conflict in relationships.
- Explore some aspect of sex stereotyping.
- Give young people knowledge of the physical, emotional and psychological changes related to adolescence.
- Have a clear understanding of male and female reproductive systems and the development stages from conception to birth.
- To emphasise the three 'R's, respect, rights and responsibility.

Development of Themes in RSE at Senior Cycle

Human Growth and Development

- Understanding the structure and function of the sex organs
- Awareness of fertility
- Awareness of the importance and methods of family planning
- Understanding of pregnancy and the development of the foetus
- Appreciation of the importance of health care during pregnancy
- Recognising the range of human emotions and the ways to deal with these.
- An understanding of the relationship between safe sexual practice and sexually transmitted diseases.

Human Sexuality

- Understanding of what it means to be male or female
- Consideration of male and female roles in relationships and in society
- Exploration of some of the issues pertaining to equality
- Understanding the concept of sexual harassment and its different forms
- Awareness of sexual abuse and rape, including legal issues and the identification of help agencies in these areas.
- Skills for making choices about sexual activity
- Exploration of the range of attitudes, values and beliefs regarding sexual behaviour in modern society

Human Relationships

- Understanding the nature of peer pressure
- Development skills for resolving conflict
- Development of an awareness of the complex nature of love and loving relationships
- Understanding marriage as a loving commitment
- Deeper awareness of the importance of family life

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of Relationships and Sexuality Education in Our school

A. Provision of Training and Staff Development.

- Ms Moore is the SPHE co-ordinator.
- SPHE/RSE teachers are and have been released for RSE in-service.
- Arrangements regarding the teaching of the RSE/SPHE programme will be made by the Principal.

B. Inclusion of Parent(s)/Guardian(s).

Parents are the primary educators of their children and their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality is seen by our school as very important. A copy of this policy will be made available to any parent on the school's website.

Also

- It is proposed that parent(s)/guardian(s) of First Year students will receive an information leaflet outlining the aims of RSE at Junior Cycle and the programme of delivery. This leaflet will be circulated to First Year parent(s)/guardian(s).
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) of 5th/ 6th year students will receive a letter prior to commencement of the 10 week programme.

Note: *The Education Act, 1998* [Section 30, Subsection (2) (e)] provides that a student is not required to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parent. Hence, parent(s)/guardian(s) have the right to opt their child out of the sensitive issues of RSE if they wish to do so. The school will ask the parent(s)/guardian(s) to put this request in writing and will respectfully try to resolve any misunderstandings they may have. Once a parent/s/guardian/s request to withdraw is made, that request must be complied with until revoked by the parent. See Appendix 1.

C. Ethical and Moral Considerations

While it is important to create an environment in SPHE/RSE in which students can discuss issues openly, our teachers may not be able to answer all questions about issues which are not included in the curriculum such as masturbation or abortion. On these, and on all questions, our teachers will use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students and the RSE curriculum.

D. Confidentiality:

It is school policy that in circumstances where a pupil 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. 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) 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 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 pupils 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 Guidelines for Post Primary Schools states in **4.1.1.** and **4.2.1.**

4.1.1. 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 risk of abuse he/she must, 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, as previously referred to in Chapter 1 Paragraph 1.2 of these guidelines, should be borne in mind. The supports of the school should continue to be made available to the child.

4.2.1 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 HSE authorities immediately.

E. Sexual Activity

It is the policy of our school to give our students information on the age of consent which, following the passage of the **Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006** is 17 years of age for both males and females.

F. 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.

- Lessons 14-17 in The Thrust resource will deal with this for 5th years.
- There is a cross curricular link to Biology and Junior Science here.

G. Sexual Orientation

- This topic will be addressed at both 3rd and 5th year RSE (lessons 9 and 10- Thrust resource).

H. Sexually Transmitted Infections

- STI's are mainly addressed in 5th Year (lessons 19 and 20 - Thrust resource)

I. 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.

J. 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.

K. Ongoing support, development and review

Training

The School facilitates RSE teachers to receive ongoing in-service training.

L. 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.

See **Appendix 2** for a list of Junior and Senior RSE/SPHE resources.

Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing 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.

We are confident that the present policy of RSE is working well in our school, but times change, and this policy will need to be reviewed in 12 months or if the need should arise in the interim.

Appendix 1

What we do if a request for withdrawal from the RSE programme is made by a

Parent/guardian: -

- 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,
- 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.
- g) We will provide supervision for a pupil who is withdrawn.

Appendix 2

RSE RESOURCES – Senior Cycle

- **The Facts** – a sex education resource *HSE*
- **Your Mental Health** – *HSE*
- **Information on HIV** – *HSE*
- **Your Sexual Health** – STI s and A Guide to Contraception
- **STI s flashcards**- *HSE*
- **Know The Facts About Drugs** – *HSE*
- **Under The Influence Workbook and DVD** – *WIT*
- **Resource Materials for Relationships & Sexuality Education** - *Dept of Education and Science (1998)*
- **Trust Pack**
- **B4udecide Teachers' Pack**

Websites

- knowthefacts.ie
- b4udecide.ie
- yourmentalhealth.ie
- reachout.com