



Cork Educate Together Secondary School

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy 1.0 July 2016

CETSS offers parents the choice of an education based on the inclusive intercultural values of respect for difference and justice and equality for all. In our school, every child will learn in an inclusive, democratic, co-educational setting that is committed to enabling and supporting each child to achieve their full potential while at the same time preparing them to become caring and active members of a culturally diverse society.

Adapted from Educate Together Mission Statement

Introductory Statement

CETSS is a new school opening on 29th of August 2016 in temporary accommodation. CETSS RSE Policy is the set of practices and procedures that together form our school's plan.

Our School Philosophy

Students who attend CETSS will be encouraged to reach their full potential mentally, physically, spiritually, emotionally and socially, in an atmosphere and environment in which they feel safe, valued and secure and in which respect for self and others is the norm. Our school operates under the direct patronage of Educate Together and there are four underlying principles which form our ethos.

We are a co-educational school, democratically run, multi-denominational and child centred.

We strive to create an ethos of respect, inclusion, accountability and of commitment to relationships.

This RSE policy works in conjunction with the CETSS, SPHE Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy and Substance Use Policy, Code of Positive Behaviour and Child Protection Policy.

From these value judgements we set our standards. These standards then guide our approach to policy and education, on the topic of Relationships and Sexuality.

Definition of Relationships in Sexuality in Education

Relationships and Sexuality are key elements of healthy social and personal development in all our lives, but particularly in the life of an adolescent. Adolescence is marked by the onset of physical sexual maturity. This stage of development is also marked by the establishment of first significant boyfriend/girlfriend relationships, by the first experience of sexual attraction and by the experience of falling in, and out, of love. There is greater freedom and responsibility and exposure to a bewildering variety of messages about sexuality, issues of sexual orientation and the place of sexuality in personal and social life. Sexual development

calls for the critical evaluation of the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values with which adolescents are bombarded.

Building on the work done in primary school, Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) at post-primary level seeks to provide opportunities for young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that will enable them to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way. It is a developmental process through experiential learning in which pupils participate to cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships.

RSE Aims and Objectives

Aims

- to help young people 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 enable young people to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework.

Objectives

RSE should enable the 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 role 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 personal 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 are supported by the SPHE Programme and by the broader curriculum taught at Junior Cycle in the school.

Scope

The policy applies to all aspects of teaching and learning about Relationships and Sexuality. Discussion about Relationships and Sexuality also takes place in classes other than SPHE/ RSE; it is therefore important that all teachers are familiar with the RSE policy.

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

Current School Provision

At CETSS the teaching and learning for RSE takes place within the subject Social Personal & Health Education SPHE at Junior Cycle. Other subjects support aspects of RSE at different stages. These include Home Economics, Science, Ethics Education and Civic Social & Political Education.

Management and organisation of RSE in the school

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

- SPHE will be timetabled for Junior Cycle Classes for one hour per week and out of the SPHE programme 4,1hour periods will be assigned to RSE

Classroom Issues

Participation

SPHE is part of Wellbeing on the Junior Cycle Curriculum, all students attend SPHE for one hour per week. Relationships and Sexuality (RSE) is one module of the programme.

- Parents / Guardians should be informed of the RSE policy from the time of the enrolment of the student.
- While all partners in the school community – teaching staff, parents and management are agreed on the programme we recognise nevertheless the right of any parent / guardian who so wishes to request that his / her son / daughter should not participate in the programme. The school will respect this choice. Where students are withdrawn from RSE the school cannot take responsibility for any versions of class content passed onto them by other students. Parents / Guardians wishing to withdraw their son / daughter must contact the Principal / Deputy Principal in the first instance. After a discussion with the Principal / Deputy Principal if the parent or guardian still wishes to withdraw their child from RSE then this request should be made in writing to the Principal / Deputy Principal in September of each year otherwise the student will take part in the RSE Classes.

Answering Questions

While 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 and should set appropriate limits. Inappropriate questions will not be answered by a teacher in class. Students may ask questions about issues which are not included in the curriculum. On these and all questions asked teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, together with the student's emotional maturity, the RSE Curriculum and RSE policy for the school.

Management of Information

It is the school's policy that if a teacher receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a pupil is being abused (as defined in *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of children*), the teacher should in the first instance, Report the matter to the Principal / Designated Liaison Person (DLP) or in exceptional circumstances to the Chairperson of the Board.

The Principal /DLP will decide whether to inform the parents / guardians and / or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling. Although there is no legal duty on a teacher or Principal / DLP to inform the parents / Guardians of matters which a child has confided to them:

- Teachers **must not** promise absolute confidentiality
- Students must be made aware that **any incident** may be conveyed to the Principal and possibly to Parents / Guardians if the Principal decides that it is in the best interest of the student to notify parents
- Teachers must indicate clearly to students when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential - the student can then decide to proceed or not.

Where the matter is reported to the Principal / (DLP) and he or she is satisfied on advice that there are reasonable grounds for suspicion or allegation, a report should be made to the HSE as per the schools Child Protection policy, in accordance with the Department of Education & Skills' *Child Protection Procedures for Post Primary*

The Principal will report to the Board of Management as per section 4.3 of the Department of Education & Skills' *Child Protection Procedures for Post Primary*.

It is essential at all times that the matter be treated in the strictest confidence and not discussed except among the parties mentioned above.

Outside Speakers

Outside speakers are from time to time invited to speak to students on issues in SPHE Classes at CETSS. SPHE visitor to the classroom Guidelines see Appendix A (**to be developed 2017**) will be followed.

While visitors to the classroom can be immensely valuable as part of the SPHE Programme, the delivery of the programme remains the responsibility of the teacher. In light of this, it is recommended that where visitors / outside Agencies are used to support SPHE, the SPHE Teacher will remain with the class group during the visit. **All visitor's/guest speakers must be approved by the Principal and/or the senior management team prior to their visit.**

Sexual Activity

Teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, together with the student's emotional maturity, the RSE Curriculum and the RSE policy for the school while dealing with the topic of sexual activity. It is advisable that teachers give young people information on the age of consent which, following the passage of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act, 2006, is 17 years for both male and females.

Family Planning

The post primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines state that the subject of Family Planning should be covered within the Senior Cycle RSE programme. The RSE Programme requires that young people are provided with information about the methods of contraception. Teachers should use their professional judgement guided by the age of the students together with the student's emotional maturity, the RSE Curriculum and the RSE policy for the school, while dealing with the topic of family planning.

LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender)

Teachers do not promote any one life-style as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that LGTB will be discussed during a programme of sex education. The post primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines include the subject of sexual orientation. The Equal Status Act 2004 prohibits discrimination across nine grounds. Teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, together with the student's emotional maturity, the curriculum and RSE policy for the school, while dealing with the topic of sexual orientation. As with all other groups covered by Equality and anti-discrimination laws, carefully selected, appropriate guest speakers may be invited to speak to students. LGBT issues will have visibility in the school.

Sexually Transmitted Infections

Creating awareness of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's) is undertaken in second level schools. Information on STI's is mainly addressed in the senior cycle. Teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, together with the student's emotional maturity, the RSE Curriculum and RSE policy for the school, while dealing with the issue of sexually transmitted Infections.

Special Needs

Young people with special needs may require more help than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up.

Links to Other School Policies

School policies being examined or reviewed, should be considered with reference to the schools RSE Policy; while the implications of other school policies for the RSE policy also need to be considered such as

- Child protection Policy
- School Guidance Plan 2017
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Substance Use Policy
- ICT AUP policy

Continuous Professional Development

The Principal at CETSS has appointed a teacher to teach SPHE. The SPHE Supports Service provides training to teachers in SPHE and RSE on an ongoing basis. Staff are allowed to attend in-service if required.

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 resources allow.

Monitoring of policy

The implementation of the RSE policy will be monitored at SPHE/RSE department meetings and other meetings deemed necessary by the Principal or Board of Management. In the short term it will be reviewed annually as the school is growing and as the current cohort of students move on up into Senior Cycle.

Evaluating and Reviewing the RSE Programme

The school will review this policy in 2017 and following that periodically after its ratification by the Board of Management. The RSE policy may be reviewed and amended, prior to that date, where necessary. All stakeholders will be informed of any changes to the policy