



Relationships and Sexuality Policy (RSE)

Loreto College, Cavan

Mission Statement

Our 'Mission' Statement' states that:” We wish to promote self-esteem, self-discipline and the goal of self-fulfilment, and to promote in our students the virtues of courage, sincerity and truth.” We believe that providing a balanced approach to R.S.E. is an essential element of the holistic education we aspire to.

Rationale for Relationship and Sexuality Programme

Today we live in a world that is complex and diverse. We are continually making choices in all aspects of our lives. Young people in particular are challenged on a daily basis, through all forms of social media, to make choices that will influence their lives.

RSE endeavours 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. This programme is based on developing a good image, promoting respect for themselves and others, and providing them with appropriate information for their age-group.

Throughout the school year, Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) are taught as a subject in Junior Cycle. A wide variety of topics are included in this programme, at age-appropriate levels. RSE forms a part of this programme.

The Relationship and Sexuality Programme provides a structured student friendly way of responding to the challenges faced by young people today.

2. RSE – Aims:

Relationships and sexuality education (RSE) which can be found in the overall framework of Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE), has as its specific 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.
- To promote a positive and inclusive attitude towards the LGBTQ community at an age-appropriate level.

3. RSE – 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 diseases.
- 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
- Be aware of the methods of contraception that are available (third year and above).
- 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.
- It is important to note that RSE is not just confined to the compulsory 6 classes in each year group. This topic is implicit throughout the entire SPHE course of many SPHE lessons and related discussion can happen naturally in any SPHE class.

4. Outline of the content and teaching methods for the SPHE curriculum

- Strand 1: Who am I?
- Strand 2: Minding myself and others
- Strand 3: Team up (RSE)
- Strand 4: Mental health and wellbeing

Teaching methods are discussed at the subject meetings and the preferred teaching methods used are up to the individual teacher. There is a strong emphasis on experiential learning in the SPHE classroom. Examples of some of the methods used are as follows:

1. Group work
2. Roleplay
3. Brainstorming
4. Icebreakers
5. Simulation
6. Narrative expression
7. Debating
8. Project work
9. Artwork
10. Multi-media materials
11. Case studies
12. Visiting speakers

5. Resources and accommodation for SPHE:

A wide range of resources are available for use during these classes. Teachers will choose from the available resources based on their own professional judgement of their particular class.

6. Cross-curricular links:

Links are made with the following departments:

- Home Economics re healthy living
- Religion /Guidance
- Biology
- Art re posters to highlight issues, e.g., substance abuse
- Physical Education
- Student Support Team

7. Staff development and subject development

The qualified classroom teacher is the best placed professional to work sensitively and consistently with students and she/he has a powerful impact on influencing students' attitudes, values and behaviours in all aspects of Wellbeing education. This can be achieved through accessing continuing professional development (CPD) which includes the sharing of expertise and learning and having opportunities to model and engage in collaborative work. The Board of Management will ensure that all staff have opportunities to engage in CPD to enhance the effective delivery of our programmes. SPHE teachers are made aware of the courses each term and are encouraged to sign up on www.sphe.ie.

8. Ethical/Moral Considerations

RSE is a complex area of the curriculum. A school's RSE policy will provide guidance for teachers on the moral and ethical framework within which the programme will be taught.

9. 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 by students and can set appropriate limits. Students sometimes ask questions about issues which are not included in the curriculum. With these, as with all questions, teachers will use their professional judgment, guided by the age of the students, the RSE curriculum and the RSE policy for the school. Students should be made aware at the beginning of the RSE programme that asking personal questions of staff and peers is inappropriate and unacceptable.

10. Questions raised in class:

It may not be appropriate to deal with some 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 Principal. When deciding whether to answer questions or not, the teacher should consider the age and readiness of the students, the RSE programme content, the ethos of the school and the RSE policy.

11. Students:

The dignity and privacy of students is to be respected at all times. Students will not be asked to participate in any class activity, e.g., role play, or to respond to any questions that they do not feel comfortable with.

12. REFERRAL

While it is acknowledged that teachers have a professional duty to impart the SPHE course content, the needs of students will be addressed in a caring and supportive manner. Where it is appropriate, the teacher may refer students to other supportive links within the school. As far as is possible this should be done in negotiation with the student. The teacher may inform the class of external supports relevant to the class material. SPHE teachers where in doubt as to a course of action, are encouraged to discuss the issue with the Guidance Counsellor or the Senior Leadership Team.

13. CONFIDENTIALITY

While an atmosphere of trust is a pre-requisite of SPHE class, there are limits to this confidentiality. SPHE teachers will inform students of the limits of confidentiality at the beginning of the year, remind them at necessary points throughout the year and where possible before making a disclosure.

14. Parents are requested to inform the school in writing or by a meeting with the Principal of the decision to withdraw their daughter from the RSE Programme. If a parent/guardian wishes to withdraw her daughter from any of these classes. **They must collect and supervise students at this time.**

All stakeholders have been notified in the development of this policy.

This Policy was approved by the Board of Management on Monday 19th April 2021