

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy



St Mary's Holy Faith Secondary School
Killester, Dublin 5

Date ratified by Board of Management:	<u>2015</u>
Next review date:	<u>2018</u>

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

Introduction:

The purpose of this Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy (RSE) is to outline the rationale for and implementation of RSE in St. Mary's Holy Faith Secondary School, Killester, Dublin 5.

Definition of RSE

RSE provides structured opportunities for students to acquire knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality. They can learn this through processes which enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework. Young people are given opportunities to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible manner. Students are provided with information and skills to critically evaluate the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values offered today. They are encouraged to make positive, responsible choices about themselves and the way they live their lives.

School Philosophy and Mission Statement:

St. Mary's Holy Faith Secondary School is an all-girls voluntary secondary school under the patronage of the Le Chéile Schools Trust.

Mission Statement:

St. Mary's Holy Faith Secondary School, Killester is a Catholic Secondary School. Our aim is to provide an excellent, all-round education in a Christian environment. We strive for academic excellence. We seek to enable each student to reach her full potential; to accept responsibility for her own actions; to respect the rights of others and to be motivated to make a positive contribution to the building of a better world.

Relationship of RSE to Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE):

The SPHE programme promotes the health and well-being of young people by dealing with many issues such as self-esteem, assertiveness, communication and decision making skills. Throughout all areas of SPHE, students are encouraged to act in a moral, caring and responsible way and are provided with clear information so that, in the context of their own lives they are able to communicate and implement informed decisions. Sexuality is a key area of development in the life of the adolescent so as well as specific lessons of RSE, SPHE covers areas which would be relevant to the development of a healthy attitude to sexuality in oneself and one's relationship with others.

Aims of RSE:

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is located in the overall framework of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and has its specific aims as outlined by the Department of Education and Skills RSE Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools (1996):

- to help students understand and develop friendships and relationships
- to help students form an understanding of sexuality, a positive self-image and a positive attitude to their own sexuality and to their relationships with others
- to enable students to develop attitudes and values towards their own sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework
- to learn to deal with conflict within relationships
- to realise that teenagers are still in the process of maturing and as they mature, their ability to be responsible within a relationship develops
- to recognise the importance of respect, rights and responsibilities within relationships
- to be aware of agencies available to help

It is acknowledged that in the course of limited duration these aims are aspirational. Delivery of the programme will be age appropriate as directed by the DES syllabus.

Guidelines for Management and Organisation of RSE

Currently RSE is provided at Junior cycle in SPHE (allowing 6 classes per year) and at Senior cycle, RSE is provided through the RE programme.

One teacher coordinates the SPHE programme and another coordinates the RE programme. Each teacher incorporates RSE into the individual subject plan. Based on this, if controversial issues arise, teachers will aim to present facts while incorporating the ethos of the school. All issues will be dealt with in a factual and balanced manner with emphasis on health, equality and correcting stereotypes. The Child Protection Guidelines as outlined by the Department of Education and Skills and adopted by the Board of Management of St. Mary's Holy Faith Secondary School will be adhered to at all times. Elements of the RSE programme are cross-curricular with the following curricula: Junior Cycle Science, Junior and Senior Cycle Home Economics and Senior Cycle Biology.

Ongoing Support:

The school will ensure every effort will be made for teachers who teach RSE to receive training and support and commit themselves to do so in the Catholic ethos of St. Mary's Holy Faith Secondary School. Visitors/guest speakers can be arranged as the SPHE/RSE teachers deem appropriate. They will work with the class as per the Child Protection Guidelines. Teachers will be present when a speaker is in the class.

Resources:

The Department of Education and Skills RSE resources and SPHE resources are used along with any other resources that the SPHE/RSE teachers deem appropriate.

Informing and involving Parents/Guardians:

Parents are the primary educators of their children and their role in education is seen by the school as very important. A copy of the RSE Policy will be posted on the school's website. Parents/Guardians have the right to withdraw their daughter from the RSE module. However it will be necessary to agree suitable supervision with school management during these times.

Review and Evaluation:

The RSE policy will be reviewed every three years or more often if necessary. The RSE programme will be evaluated on an ongoing basis at SPHE and RE subject planning meetings. In accordance with the Child Protection Policy, the Designated Liaison Person will be consulted on any relevant issues.

The RSE Policy is developed to maintain a consistency and cohesiveness within the school's overall plan. RSE within St. Mary's Holy Faith Secondary School takes into consideration the following policies:

- Child Protection Policy
- Social, Personal and Health Education Policy
- Guidance Plan
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Substance Use Policy
- ICT Policy
- Code of Behaviour