

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy Statement

In this policy document all references to gender are taken to be inclusive and the term “parent” is taken to include “guardian”.

A. St. Colman’s N.S.

1. The school is a co-educational, academically non-selective day school, with an enrolment of 257 pupils.

B. Our School Philosophy

1. The school encourages its pupils to consider and assess different viewpoints in relation to issues of morality. The experience gained through the working out of this policy and through respecting the needs of minority groups and individuals enriches the whole life of the school.
3. A code of conduct has been published after consultation with parents, staff and pupils and the following excerpts illustrate how the ethos of the school operates on a daily basis:
 - *Discipline is founded on the principles of respect for people, environment, property and safety. All rules follow from these basic principles which are intended to create and maintain a happy and stable community.*
 - *The best way in which the school can operate with the maximum happiness and fulfillment for everybody is if the maximum courtesy and respect is shown for other people. Pupils at the school are expected to respect the dignity of other pupils, teachers and other staff in the school and have the right to expect that their own dignity will be respected.*

C. Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education

1. RSE is a developmental process through experiential learning in which pupils participate to help cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships.

D. Relationships and Sexuality Education within Social Personal and Health Education

1. 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.

E. The aims of our Relationships and Sexuality Education programme

1. 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 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 toward 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.

F. Guidelines for the management and organisation of Relationships and Sexuality Education in our school

1. 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 school as very important. Relevant sections of this RSE policy will be published annually on the school website.

A copy of this policy will be made available to any parent on request to the school Office.

3. **Explicit Questions:**

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

5. **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 DLP. The DLP will decide whether to inform the parents and/or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling. **(See Child Protection Policy and Child Protection Guidelines for Teachers)**

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 Primary schools state:

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 should, 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 authority immediately.

6. Withdrawing pupils from 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)

7. 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.

Training:

The school will facilitate teachers to obtain expert training in this field. Notification of upcoming training in the local teacher centre has been requested for the academic year 2015/2016.

Resources:

The RSE books are available to each class teacher.

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) pupil feedback;
- b) staff review and feedback;
- c) parental feedback.

