



# Coláiste Chú Chulainn

Cúram. Forbairt. Feabhas.

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

## Coláiste Chú Chulainn, Dundalk, Co. Louth

### Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

#### 1. Scope

The policy will apply to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality within our school. Discussion about relationships and sexuality also takes place in classes other than SPHE/RSE e.g. Science, Biology, Religious Education, Home Economics, Social Education etc. and it is therefore important that all teachers are familiar with the RSE policy. The policy will apply to all school staff-teaching staff and non-teaching staff, to students, Board of Management, parents/guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators.

#### 2. Rationale

According to the 1998 Education Act the aim of education is to contribute towards the development of all aspects of the individual and RSE is a required part of this aim. While parents have the primary responsibility for RSE, schools also have a role to play in this process through our structured programme.

Young people are involved in many different relationships with family, friends and others. They live in a world where they are influenced by many conflicting value systems. Our students need to be enabled to critically evaluate the range of information, opinions, attitudes and values they encounter in everyday life in matters concerning relationships and sexuality. Values concerning relationships and sexuality in particular are no longer as clear as they once were.

The Need for Formal RSE teaching:

- Young people receive informal and unsupervised information about relationships and sexuality which may be inadequate, inappropriate and often misleading.
- Young people are exposed to a variety of sexual practices and attitudes through the media, particularly TV, film, magazines and the internet.
- Young people are maturing physically at a younger age and are becoming sexually active at an earlier age than in the past.
- The roles of men and women in society are changing.
- The nature of family life is changing in a way that places many pressures on children and young people.

A student's ability to relate to others depends on a personal sense of self-worth and having the attitudes and skills to negotiate their way respectfully in their relationships with others. Parallel to this, young people are maturing sexually and are growing in awareness of their sexuality. RSE emphasises the importance of self-awareness and self-esteem in understanding these changes. It emphasises the development of ones' ability to interact respectfully with others. It provides students with an opportunity to understand the different types of relationships and attitudes, values and life skills that support the healthy development of these relationships. Students can develop an understanding of familial, cultural and religious values and consider how these values support healthy informed choices in relation to relationships, sexuality and sexual health.

### 3. Definitions and Objectives

RSE is a life-long developmental process of acquiring knowledge and an understanding of human relationships and sexuality. It is primarily the responsibility of the parents and family. The RSE class gives pupils formal opportunities, through experiential learning, to cultivate healthy attitudes and values towards themselves and others, promoting the overall development of the person, and the integration of sexuality into personal life.

Relationships and sexuality education aims:

- To help students 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 students to develop attitudes and values toward their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework in keeping with the policy of the school
- To provide opportunities for students to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that helps them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

### 4. Key Guidelines for the Teaching and Management of RSE in Coláiste Chú Chulainn

#### 4.1 Teaching the RSE Programme

Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff will be made by the Principal.

The RSE component will take six classes over each school year.

The programme will be in line with the NCCA Curriculum and Guidelines. The curriculum and the guidelines, along with the year-by-year programme, are available in the school for parents who wish to see them.

In delivering the programme teachers will show sensitivity to the needs of the group and the school.

The methodologies used are expected to be child-centred and appropriate to the age and stage of development of the students. Active learning methods are favoured in SPHE and RSE to encourage engagement and learning.

Teaching methods include:

- Group Discussions
- Case Studies
- Brainstorming
- Role-Play
- Art Work
- Narrative Expression
- Games; Ice Breakers
- Debates
- Project Work
- Visitors

A co-ordinator, appointed by the Principal, will liaise with SPHE teachers. The programme will be delivered by teachers timetabled for SPHE at junior level and senior level.

#### 4.2 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. This policy has been designed in consultation with Parent Teacher Association/Board of Management and the views expressed by parents will be taken into account when reviewing the policy. A copy of this policy will be made available to any parent on request to the School Office.

#### 4.3 Withdrawing pupils from the RSE programme:

Parents have the right to withdraw their child from RSE (or part thereof). A copy of this policy will be included on the school website and parents will always be provided with a copy on request.

Parents do not have to give reasons for withdrawal, but we respectfully invite them to do so as we sometimes find that discussion will lead to the resolution of issues. Once a parent's request to withdraw is made, that request must be complied with until revoked by the parent. (See appendix 1).

#### 4.4 Offering Advice:

The school's function is to provide a general education about sexual matters and issues and not to offer individual advice, information or counselling on aspects of sexual behaviour and contraception - however sources of professional information and advice will be identified when appropriate. Teachers may provide students with education and information about where and from whom they can receive confidential sexual advice and treatment, e.g. their doctor or other suitable agency (further information is available from the Guidance Counsellor). Advice offered should not be directive and should be appropriate to the age of the student.

#### 4.5 Explicit Questions:

It may not be appropriate to answer some questions in a whole class environment, e.g. explicit questions on oral sex. In practice, a teacher may elect to say that it is not appropriate to deal with that question at this time. The teacher may then decide whether or not to answer the question after the class has finished. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised he/she should seek advice from the Guidance Counsellor or the Principal.

#### 4.6 Confidentiality:

It is school policy that in circumstances where a student is considered at risk of any type of abuse (e.g. moral or physical) or in breach of the law, the teacher must refer this immediately to the Principal or the Guidance Counsellor. The Principal will decide whether to inform the parents and/or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling. Although there is no legal duty on a teacher, or a Principal, to inform parents 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 if the Principal decides that it is in the best interests of the student to notify parents;

- Teachers must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can or should be maintained having heard the information;
- Teachers must indicate clearly to students when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential - the student can then decide whether to proceed or not. The pamphlet “Procedures for Dealing with Allegations or Suspicions of Child Abuse” issued by the Department of Education contains the following in paragraph 4.1:

If a teacher receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a pupil is being abused, the teacher should, in the first instance, report the matter to the principal or in exceptional circumstances directly to the Chairperson of the Board. Where the matter is reported to the principal and he or she is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation the Chairperson or Manager should be advised. The Chairperson or Manager, together with the teacher, should report the matter to the local Director of Community Care/Medical Officer of Health. It is essential that at all times the matter be treated in the strictest confidence and not discussed except among the parties mentioned above.

(Note: In the case of this school, the Principal as Designated Liaison Person acts also as Manager in this respect.)

#### 4.7 Visiting speakers

The RSE programme is generally best discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by the students. 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.

- 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:
- Ensuring visitors are compliant with the legal requirements of the Child Protection Guidelines.
- The degree of explicitness of the content and presentation;
- Will the visitor be accompanied by teaching staff?
- Will the staff take an active role in the visitor’s activities?
- How will the visitor be prepared for the visit?
- How will the visit be built upon and followed up?
- 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.
- 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 students in the visit and will make the experience more relevant for them - it also facilitates planning.
- The Office should be informed of the date and name of the visitor.
- Where applicable, refreshments should be arranged with the school catering staff.
- The visitor should be welcomed at the main door.
- At the end of the session a vote of thanks should be given by a student and the visitor escorted to the main door after refreshments.
- A written acknowledgement of their contribution should be sent to the visitor and could appear in the School Newsletter/Magazine/Annual.

#### 4.7 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.

### **5. Ongoing support, development and training:**

All teachers involved in the teaching of RSE do not necessarily have to be ‘experts’ on the issues concerned. However, they do require sensitivity to the needs of the group, an ability to deal with questions openly/honestly and a preparedness to refer to more expert advice if necessary. The skills acquired in general teaching apply also to health education. Furthermore, many teachers have training in related areas such as counselling. Some teachers have expert training in the specific areas of health, relationships and sexuality education and will be encouraged to train other teachers. The school will facilitate teachers to obtain expert training in this field. If teachers wish to rotate between classes to provide for withdrawal from or specialisation in certain topics, the school will make every attempt to accommodate this.

### **6. Resources**

Resources are organised according to year group

- Junior Cycle follow the workbook
- Senior Cycle: There is no prescribed resource for RSE, however, the following are recommended:
  - ✓ SPHE Resource materials for Relationships and Sexuality Education prepared by the NCCA and approved by the Department of Education and Science (1999)
  - ✓ Trust (RSE) Senior cycle
  - ✓ On your own two feet
  - ✓ B4U Decide
  - ✓ Growing up LGBT
  - ✓ Cancer Awareness Programme
  - ✓ Mental Health Matters
  - ✓ Be safe Be wise
  - ✓ Web sites:
    - ✓ [www.sphe.ie](http://www.sphe.ie)
    - ✓ [www.pdst.ie](http://www.pdst.ie)
    - ✓ [www.sess.ie](http://www.sess.ie)
    - ✓ [www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie)
    - ✓ [www.webwise.ie](http://www.webwise.ie)
    - ✓ [www.thinkcontraception.ie](http://www.thinkcontraception.ie)
    - ✓ [www.tes.ie](http://www.tes.ie)
    - ✓ [www.ted.ie](http://www.ted.ie)
    - ✓ [www.Kahoot.ie](http://www.Kahoot.ie)
    - ✓ [www.mentimeter.ie](http://www.mentimeter.ie)

- ✓ [www.teni.ie](http://www.teni.ie)
- ✓ [www.crisispregnancy.ie](http://www.crisispregnancy.ie)
- ✓ [www.glen.ie](http://www.glen.ie)
- ✓ [www.belongto.org](http://www.belongto.org)

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.

## **7. Links to other school policies and curriculum**

Our school policies need to be consistent with one another, within the framework of the overall School Plan. Relevant school policies already in place or being developed or reviewed, shall be examined with reference to the child protection policy and any implications which it has for them shall be addressed.

The following policies may be among those considered:

- SPHE Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Use of CCTV Policy
- Educational Outings & school Tours Policy
- Critical Incident Policy
- ICT Acceptable Use Policy

## **8. Monitoring the implementation of the policy**

This policy has been made available to school personnel, the parent's association and members of the school community.

The implementation of the policy shall be monitored by the principal and updates reported to the board of management when necessary.

## **9. Reviewing and evaluating the policy**

The RSE programme will be reviewed and evaluated on an annual basis by the SPHE team. The opinions of the students will be included as part of the review. The RSE policy will be reviewed in line with the School's Development Plan. The SPHE coordinator will monitor this.

The policy is reviewed and adopted by the Board of Management once in every year.

On-going review and evaluation should take cognisance of changing information or guidelines (e.g. from the Department of Education and Skills or the Department of Children and Youth Affairs), legislation and feedback from parents/guardians, students, school staff and others.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

By and on behalf of Board of Management

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Principal

Date

Date of next review: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 1 - Letter to Parents**

### **Our school's SPHE and RSE Programme**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am writing to inform you about the Social, Personal and Health Education Programme which is a core part of the secondary school curriculum. S.P.H.E. provides a unique and exciting opportunity for students to develop skills and competence, to learn about themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development.

Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) is one module within the S.P.H.E. curriculum. It RSE is a life-long developmental process of acquiring knowledge and an understanding of human relationships through which students cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships. One timetabled period per week is allocated to S.P.H.E. and out of the S.P.H.E. Programme in the year; six timetabled periods will be assigned to Relationships and Sexuality Education. This module will be taught to all year groups from first to fifth year. A complete breakdown of the S.P.H.E. curriculum, which includes comprehensive details on the RSE module, is available for your information on <http://www.sphe.ie/resources.aspx>.

As you are the primary educators of your children, we recognise the right of any parent/guardian who so wishes to request that his/her daughter should not participate in the programme. The school will respect this choice. Any Parents/Guardians wishing to withdraw their daughter must contact the Deputy Principal to make their wishes known. This request should be made in writing before the 20<sup>th</sup> of April in order to allow for the provision of supervision for these students; otherwise the student will take part in the RSE classes.

Le gach dea-ghuí,

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Deirdre Uí Liatháin  
Príomhoide

## Appendix 2

RSE Topics covered in each year of Junior Cycle

### Year 1

Topic	Methodologies	Resources	Learning Intentions
<b>Me as unique and different</b>	Pairwork advertisement discussion worksheet	<b>RSE resource materials lesson 19 Self esteem</b>	Students will deepen their awareness of factors that enhance and diminish self esteem.
<b>Friendship</b>	Group work Feedback Conclusion/plenary	<b>RSE 16 You've got a friend</b>	Students will explore the qualities of friendship, examine situations which foster friendship and reflect on the changing nature of friendship
<b>Changes at adolescence</b>	Guided fantasy Drawing Pairs/4's Class discussion	<b>ID 7 Changes RSE 10 Puberty Grow Up p46 Puberty Differentiated sheets for ESL or weaker students</b>	Students will explore changes associated with adolescence, explore feelings associated with these and appreciate individual differences
<b>The reproductive system</b>	Small groups Feedback FAQ's Feedback and information session conclusion	<b>RSE 11 Human reproduction</b>	Students will deepen their knowledge of the physiology of a woman's and man's reproductive organs
<b>Images of male and female</b>	Collage – optional Small groups Class discussion	<b>ID 14 Sex roles</b>	Students will explore expected ways of being
<b>Respecting myself and others</b>	Warm up exercise Class discussion Sheet Conclusion	<b>RSE 24 respect and tolerance for difference</b>	Students will develop understanding of the effect discrimination can have on ourselves and on the wider community Students will be encouraged to respect and accept difference

## Year 2

Topic	Methodologies	Resources	Learning Intentions
<b>From conception to birth</b>	Introduction/brainstorm Teacher input Worksheets/crossword Exercise: when were you conceived? conclusion	<b>Texts from Science or Home Economics books RSE materials 12 p114 The Miracle of new life. (may need 2 classes) Video available</b>	Students will deepen their knowledge of how fertilisation and conception occur including associated terms and words. Students will deepen their knowledge of the menstrual cycle. Students will deepen their understanding of the complementary roles of men and women in both processes.
<b>Recognising and expressing feelings and emotions</b>	Group work Role play Teacher input conclusion	<b>RSE 3 p38 Feelings and Adolescence</b>	Students will deepen their understanding of feelings and emotions including the feelings of others. Students will be able to recognise times when it is appropriate to express emotions. Students will be able to identify situations which cause mood swings.
<b>Peer pressure and other influences</b>	Small groups Role play Class discussion conclusion	<b>RSE 20 Peer Pressure p192</b>	Students will examine the peer pressures that can exist for adolescents. Students will learn ways of resisting pressure.
<b>Managing relationships</b>	Warm up Discussion Worksheet Round conclusion	<b>Healthy Choices 5 relationships and communication RSE 14 How do I relate</b>	Students will consider the nature of relationships and appreciate that relationships can differ and change. Students will be able to reflect on the nature of their own relationships.
<b>Making responsible decisions</b>	Small groups Large group Home tasks	<b>OMOTF DM 3 decision making styles</b>	Students will become aware of different decision making styles
<b>Health and personal safety</b>	Role play Carousel Class discussion Teacher input Conclusion	<b>RSE 21 Take care</b>	Students will deepen their understanding of how their behaviour can put them at risk. Students will be given an opportunity to think a situation through and subsequently act in a responsible and safe manner.

## Year 3

Topic	Methodologies	Resources	Learning Intentions
<b>Body image</b>	Pairwork advertisement discussion worksheet	<b>RSE 19 self esteem Or similar Chalkface self-esteem lessons. ID 16 Nobody's perfect.</b>	This lesson will help students to develop a positive appreciation of self.
<b>Relationships – what's important</b>	Group work Feedback Worksheet Conclusion/plenary	<b>RSE 22 Time to reflect Alternatives: Healthy choices lesson 3 What's important? And lesson 4 Mix and match also in healthy Choices</b>	Students will consider what they want from a relationship now and in the future They will examine two scenarios with regard to sexual activity
<b>The 3 R's: respect, rights and responsibilities</b>	DVD and accompanying worksheet Pair-work Class discussion	<b>RSE 23 teenage pregnancy Teachers TV DVD on teenage fathers and teenage mums. Saying No. AC 11.</b>	Students will examine the physical, social and emotional outcomes of teenage pregnancy They will look at possible choices and the consequences of these choices
<b>Conflict</b>	Handout Small groups Role play FAQ's Feedback and information session Conclusion	<b>Could record an episode of Eastenders, find a 'fight' in it and discuss alternatives to resolving the conflict. Resolving conflict handout 1 from <a href="http://www.kidshealth.com">www.kidshealth.com</a></b>	
<b>Where am I now?</b>	Worksheet Small groups Class discussion Reflection activity	<b>RSE 18 The growth cycle</b>	A review of human growth and development with a view to the student identifying his/her own stage of development within the growth cycle.
<b>Contraception</b>	Warm up exercise Class discussion Sheet Conclusion	RSE inservice materials and HSE publications IFPA publications	A look at 2 family planning methods in the context of a committed couple and the implications of failure rates for pregnancy or STI's.

### Appendix 3- Documents/Web Resources

- DES Child Protection Procedures ([www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie))  
Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Secondary Schools
- DCYA Children First ([www.dcyu.ie](http://www.dcyu.ie))  
Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children  
2011
- HSE Reports and Publications ([www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie))  
Child Protection and Welfare Handbook
- DES Circular 63/2010 Recruitment Procedures Garda Vetting
- DES Circular 65/2011 Child Protection Procedures  
([https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0065\\_2011.pdf](https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0065_2011.pdf))



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**Policy ratification**

Policy: Relationships and Sexuality Education
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This policy has been communicated to our school community of School Management, Staff, Students, Parents and Guardians, both directly and/or through appointed representatives.

The policy has been ratified by the Board of Management of Coláiste Chú Chulainn, properly convened, at its meeting of

Day/Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson

Date: \_\_\_\_\_