

Coláiste Cois Siúire



Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

Policy Review History

<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
May 2019	Drafted
August 2019	Published
December 2019	Review
August 2020	Review
August 2021	Reviewed
August 2022	Reviewed
August 2023	Reviewed
September 2024	Reviewed

Enacted following consultation between staff, parent representatives, Principal and Board of Management (see review schedule above). This policy is devised collaboratively by an RSE core team comprised of the Principal, the Deputy Principal, the SPHE coordinator/teacher, the home-economics teacher and guidance counsellor, the biology teacher and the religious education teacher.

Policy Construction

Step 1: Literature review and study of relevant RSE documents

Step 2: Review of current school provision of RSE/SPHE

Step 3: Draft of Policy Statement

Step 4: Publicise, amend and finalise draft policy

Step 5: Circulate the RSE policy statement

Step 6: Initiate the RSE programme

Step 7: Ensure a timeline for policy review is in place

In this policy document all references to gender and sexual orientation are intended to be inclusive and the term(s) *parent(s)* is understood to include guardian(s) or similar designated adult with responsibility for a student's care, wellbeing and upbringing.

A. School

1. Coláiste Cois Siúire (CCS) is a co-educational, non-designated, non-selective day school under the patronage of Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board, with an enrolment of approx. 170 students.

B. Our School Mission and Vision

Coláiste Cois Siúire recognises that each student is unique and has individual needs. It is the aim of the school to assist all students to fulfil their potential both educationally and personally, and to become socially responsible adults.

1. As such CCS encourages its students 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 our entire school community enriches the whole life of our students, teachers and school partners.
2. CCS gives its students the opportunity to explore the humanities, sciences, arts, business studies and technical subjects at both Junior and Senior cycle. In addition, it provides a non-designated religious education along with moral and physical instruction in order to meet its aims of supporting students in achieving

their full academic potential and preparing them for participation in civic society and working life.

3. A school code of behaviour has been published after consultation with parents, staff and students and is predicated on a foundation of mutual respect, care and wellbeing.

C. Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education

1. RSE is a developmental process through experiential learning in which students 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 “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. Elements of the school RSE programme may also be delivered through other subject areas such as science, biology, religious education, home economics and geography.

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 students 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 students to develop attitudes and values toward their own sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework in keeping with the policy of the school
 - f) 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.

It is acknowledged that in a course of limited duration these aims are aspirational at times but always remain an objective.

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

1. Leadership and Management of Resources:

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 included in the school's communications with parents at various times and through various mediums throughout the academic calendar. This policy has been designed in consultation with Parents' Association representatives 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 and the policy is published on a designated policy section on the school website. Notice of its ratification and review will be recorded in the Board of Management's Agreed Reports (also published on the schools website). Parents will be provided with a letter requesting consent to participate in the school RSE programme (Appendix 2).

3. 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. Advice offered should not be directive and should be appropriate to the age of the student.

4. Explicit Questions:

It may not be appropriate to deal with some explicit questions in class. Teachers may exercise sensitivity in when it is or is not appropriate to deal with a question at a given time. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised, he/she should seek advice from a relevant colleague including, but not limited to, the SPHE co-ordinator, Guidance Counsellor 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 overarching ethos of the school and the RSE policy.

5. **Confidentiality:**

It is school policy that in circumstances where a student is considered at some risk of any type of abuse, harm or in breach of the law, the teacher must refer this immediately to the Principal (Designated Liaison Person). In an instance where the Principal (DLP) is not available the matter will be referred to the Deputy Principal (Deputy Designated Liaison Person). The DLP/DDLP may seek advice from the Child and Family Agency and will ultimately decide whether to inform the parents and/or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling. Note: all staff of CCS are mandated persons and are provided with CPD to effectively report on any child safeguarding issue. In the instance where the DLP/DDLP are not available and the student is considered to be at immediate risk of harm the Gardaí may be contacted.

The following is also school policy:

- Teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality; students must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the Principal and possibly to parents or other authorities should the situation demand it.
- Teachers must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can 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 Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary schools state in 4.1.1. and 4.2.1.

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 health board immediately.*

6. **The division between biological and non-biological aspects of sex education:**

The school policy is that the Science Department, trained in the provision of RSE, deals primarily with the biological aspects of reproduction:

- The body
- Contraception
- Using contraception
- Sexually transmitted infections

The SPHE (Junior Cycle) course, Home Economics, Religious Education and other external partners delivering RSE course components, may have valid cause to discuss subject matter in this area also.

The religious education teacher will cover other aspects of the RSE programme:

- Talking about sex
- Sex and relationships
- Moral/Ethical considerations

Provision will be made for delivery of RSE at Senior Cycle for all students.

6.1 Arrangements for the Provision of RSE in 2024/25

Junior Cycle students will receive RSE training through their SPHE class. Students opting out will be provided for in accordance with section 7 of this document.

Transition Year students will receive their RSE training over three classes (timetabled for careers and Religious Education classes) in March 2025. Students opting out will be provided for in accordance with section 7 of this document.

Fifth Year students will receive their RSE training over four hours – timetabled to take place in career guidance classes, and, in Religious Education classes as outlined in section 6, in March 2025. Students opting out will be provided for in accordance with section 7 of this document.

Sixth Year students may receive additional RSE training to that provided for in 2025 in term two/three, and, in Religious Education classes as outlined in section 6. Students opting out will be provided for in accordance with section 7 of this document.

7. **Withdrawing students from the RSE programme:**

1. This policy is made available to parents via the school website or by hardcopy (upon request). Parents are provided with details of the RSE programme and about the parent's right to withdraw their child from sensitive aspects of RSE.

2. Issues such as over-population and birth control are met in a minor way in subjects such as Geography and RE. However, as any discussion is limited and set

within the context of the other subject concerned, it does not constitute part of the RSE Programme.

3. Parents do not have to give reasons for withdrawal, however, CCS management respectfully invites parents to provide a reason so that this may assist the school in better understanding our school community, and/or, influence future policy review/development. Once a parent's request to withdraw is made, that request must be complied with until revoked by the parent. (See also appendix 1)

8. **Using visiting speakers and others**

a) It is school policy that most of the RSE programme is best discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by the students – staff CPD has been facilitated for the necessary teachers to support this endeavour. However, it is also recognised that visitors can enhance the quality of the provision if they are delivering a recognised and verifiable planned programme of RSE themes, for example, *Botvin LifeSkills Advanced Programme*, delivered by SCP na Siúire, contains some optional themes which would overlap with the Junior Cycle SPHE programme.

b) 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:

- i) the degree of explicitness of the content and presentation;
- ii) the visitor be accompanied by teaching staff
- iii) if staff take an active role in the visitor's activities
- iv) the number of students working with the visitor at any one time
- v) if/how the visit will be built upon and followed up

c) Visitors should be given advance notice of the composition of the class and an idea of how their contribution fits into or overlaps with the overall scheme of work.

d) the group may be furnished with an opportunity to draw up questions in advance to 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.

e) School management and relevant staff should be informed of the date and name of the visitor.

g) the visitor should make their presence known at the main school office on arrival

h) at the conclusion of a session best practice is that the visitor alerts the school staff that their visit has concluded

i) A written acknowledgement of their contribution may be sent to the visitor, may appear in the school newsletters or PR and may be recorded in the Principal's report to the Board of Management

9. **LGBT+**

It is recognised that a variety of forms of sexuality and sexual/emotional expression is accepted both legally and socially. It is recognised that this area has experienced and is subject to change and includes, but is not limited to, homosexuality, bisexuality, transgenderism and other forms of sexual and

emotional orientation and expression. These areas may be discussed during a programme of sex education. An advantage of exploring issues concerning LGBT+ issues is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions, address potential prejudices and promote a more inclusive school community and wider society. Discussion of LGBT+ issues should be appropriate to the age of the students concerned.

10. **Contraception**

This topic will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issues in a non-directive way.

11. **Sexually Transmitted Infections**

While awareness of STIs is one of the objectives of the Second Year SPHE/RSE syllabus, STIs are also addressed in Senior Cycle in greater depth. This is covered in Senior Cycle Biology class, and, for students not opting to study Biology, this is covered in a separate class including all Fifth/Sixth Year students.

12. **Additional Educational Needs**

Children with additional educational needs (AEN) 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. CCS ensures that SPHE/RSE lessons are appropriately differentiated so that all students are present with the relevant topics so that they can be understood by all.

G. Ongoing support, development and review

Training:

1. All teachers involved in this work do not profess 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.
2. Teachers involved in delivering aspects of the RSE programme are facilitated and encouraged to engage in specific recognised CPD related to the delivery of an RSE programme. The school will facilitate teachers to obtain expert training in this field bearing in mind the overall budgetary framework and the need for the ongoing teaching and learning programme of the school to continue with as little disturbance as possible. To date, teachers concerned have engaged with the relevant PDST training for delivering RSE.

Resources:

The school will procure appropriate and necessary 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.

Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the RSE programme:

Coláiste Cois Siúire is committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this programme. Specifically, important to the RSE Programme are the areas of:

- a) student feedback
- b) staff review and feedback
- c) parental feedback through
- d) Board of Management review/ratification

Such feedback may be gathered in a variety of methods using various mediums and may be specific to the RSE programme or may be part of other data gathering. A policy review timeframe is included at the start of this policy, and, the Board of Management maintains a policy review schedule of this and all school policy documents.

Appendix 1

CCS procedure if a request is made for withdrawal from the RSE programme by a Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

- a) we discuss the nature of the concerns with the child's parent(s)/guardian(s) and if appropriate attempt to reassure them (this meeting may involve but is not limited to the Year Head, SPHE co-ordinator or other members of school management)
- b) we consider whether the programme can be amended or improved in a way that will reassure parents - care is taken not to undermine the integrity of the RSE programme and the entitlement of the other students, e.g. it may be appropriate to differentiate genders for some sections of the RSE programme;
- c) we attempt to ensure that where a student is withdrawn there is no disruption to other parts of their education
- d) we point out that students who have been withdrawn may seek the information from students who engage with the programme and therefore may be at risk of receiving inaccurate information from their peers
- f) we offer the parents access to appropriate information and resources to ensure that an informed decision is being made

Appendix 2

Dear Parent/Guardian,

This term we will be delivering our Relationships and Sexual Education and health programme in Coláiste Cois Siúire. The age-appropriate programme aims to help young people make informed choices about their sexual health and will be facilitated over a number of weeks. The programme is delivered by staff who have received specific training to do so and includes the following topics:

- Talking about sex
- Sex and relationships
- The body
- Contraception
- Using contraception
- Sexually transmitted infections

We request that you sign the attached parental consent form and return it to the school prior to your son/daughter taking part. If you have any questions or queries in relation to the content of the workshops, please do not hesitate to contact the school on 051 895112.

Yours Sincerely,

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Parental Consent Form

RSE Programme

I consent to my son/daughter (block Capitals)

Date of Birth is _____ attending the above mentioned.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Parent/Guardian