

Athboy Community School
Relationships and Sexuality Education (R.S.E.) Policy.

Mission Statement.

The mission statement of Athboy Community School is to provide quality, holistic and inclusive education in a caring and safe environment which encourages pupils to reach their full potential in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education:

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.

Rationale:

- ~ This policy will apply to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality. As discussion about relationships and sexuality can take place in classes outside RSE/SPHE, it is important that all teachers are familiar with the RSE policy.
- ~ The policy will apply to school staff, students, board of management, parents/guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators.
- ~ Section 4 of the rules and programmes for secondary schools require schools to have an agreed policy for RSE in place at both junior and senior cycle. At junior cycle the RSE programme is part of SPHE. At senior cycle, RSE is taught on a modular basis alongside the SPHE module.

Aims:

Relationships and Sexuality Education which is located in the overall framework of Social, Personal and Health Education, has as its specific aims:

- ~ To develop a sense of Self-Respect among students.
- ~ To help students understand and develop friendships and relationships.
- ~ To promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and to make informed choices about their sexual health.
- ~ To promote knowledge of and respect for human reproduction.

- ~ To enable students to develop positive attitudes and values towards the sexuality of others.

The organisation and management of RSE within the school:

- ~ The Guidelines for RES (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 principal and pattern.
- ~ The programme will be delivered by teachers trained to create a learning environment which is respectful of the privacy of each student and which will allow each student to be treated with sensitivity and care.
- ~ Class groups will be mixed and on occasions divided into single sex groups when content matter requires it.
- ~ Teachers are to be released to attend RSE/SPHE training and teachers are to be consulted before being timetabled to teach.
- ~ The school will purchase appropriate RSE teaching materials which have been identified by the staff as useful and which have been approved by the Principal within the normal budgetary framework and as general resources allow.
- ~ The school has an appointed co-ordinator of SPHE.
- ~ Parents/guardians are given information on the content of SPHE/RSE at Parent Meetings and are consulted in the process of policy development.
- ~ Parents/guardians have the right to withdraw their son/daughter from areas of the RSE programme that they consider sensitive, if they wish to do so. It is the responsibility of the school to make alternative arrangements for the student in that situation.
- ~ Parents/guardians will be sent written notice of any visiting speakers who may have been invited to the school to talk to the students of a particular aspect of the RSE programme. A summary of the content of the talk will be included in this written notice. Parents/guardians have the right to withdraw their son/daughter from all or part of these talks. The school may ask for their request in writing.
- ~ It is school policy that most of the RSE programme be delivered by teachers who are known and trusted by the pupils. However visiting

speakers can enhance the quality of the provision as long as they are used in addition to and not instead of a planned programme of RSE. The SPHE Co-ordinator will provide the speaker, well in advance of the visit, with a copy of this RSE policy.

Moral considerations and the school ethos:

- ~ Schools are required to deliver all aspects of the RSE curriculum, including those in relation to sexual orientation, contraception and sexually transmitted infections. Spiritual, moral and ethical issues will arise when teaching RSE. Teachers of RSE understand that it is their role to express the views of the whole school community on these sensitive issues and not their personal views.
- ~ While it is important to create an environment in the RSE/SPHE class in which students can discuss issues openly, teachers may not be able to answer all questions and can set appropriate limits. When answering questions on sensitive issues, teachers should use their professional judgement guided by the age of the student, the RSE curriculum and the RSE policy of the school.
- ~ While students are not encouraged to disclose personal information about themselves, they may confide in a teacher on a matter of concern to them. Confidentiality should be respected unless the teacher considers the student to be at risk of any type of abuse or in breach of the law. Teachers must not guarantee absolute confidentiality and must indicate to the student that the incident being discussed may be conveyed to the Principal and possibly the parents, if deemed in the best interests of the student. This practice is in accordance with The Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary schools. (See Appendix).

It is advisable for teachers to give young people information on the age of consent which, following the passage of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006, is 17 years of age for both males and females.

- ~ The RSE curriculum guidelines state that the subjects of contraception and sexually transmitted infections should be covered in senior cycle. However schools can use their discretion with regard to the age at which students receive any aspect of the RSE programme. It may be necessary to provide some information to students on these matters earlier than senior cycle.
- ~ The RSE curriculum guidelines include the subject of sexual orientation. The school may decide the topic needs to be addressed before senior cycle, especially if homophobic bullying is an issue.

Generally, however, the issue of homosexuality is best addressed under the topics of sexual harassment and equality legislation rather than as a separate topic.

Consultation:

- ~ With the approval of the board of management, this draft policy will be circulated for consultation with staff, student council and parents/guardians.
- ~ The draft will be amended as necessary in the light of the consultation process.
- ~ The amended policy will be presented to the board of management for ratification.

Review Procedures

Appendix

The Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary schools state in 4.1.1. and 4.1.2. – 4.1.1. If a member of staff receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been abused, or is at risk of abuse he/she should, without delay, report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person in the 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 is at all times, as previously referred to 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 that 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.