

Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy Statement

A. School

- St. Kevin's College is an all boys secondary school, offering a broad education through wide curriculum of subjects approved by the Department of Education and Science, together with sport and extra-curricular activities.
- One of the aims of the school is to encourage each pupil to develop his full potential, to mature as an individual and to become a constructive and caring member of society.
- In line with both the aims of the school and the Department of Education and Science Guidelines in relation to Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), it is intended to provide for all pupils at Junior Cycle level a Social, Personal and Health Education programme (SPHE) within the curriculum of the school. A Relationships and Sexuality Education programme is an integral part of the SPHE programme.
- The RSE programme is established through a consultative process involving parents, teachers and the Board of Management and with due regard to the Department of Education and Science.

B. Objectives of the programme

Overall aim of the programme is to develop in each pupil responsible attitudes, values and beliefs about sexuality identity, personal relationships and intimacy.

- To enable students to acquire the understanding and skills necessary to form healthy friendships and relationships
- To promote an understanding of sexuality and a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and the sexuality of others

- To become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change, especially during adolescence, and to develop respect for the differences between individuals
- To promote knowledge and respect for reproduction, sexually transmitted diseases and human fertility
- To understand sexual development and identity and explore aspects of sexuality including sex roles, stereotyping, gender issues and cultural influences on sexuality
- To value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood
- To develop strategies for decisions and actions consistent with personal moral integrity and respectful of the rights and dignity of others
- To develop skills for coping with peer pressure, conflict and threats to personal safety

Some of the objectives will be supported by other elements of the SPHE programme and the broader school curriculum and by the ethos of the school.

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

- Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff will be made by the principal
- Informing and involving parents:
- *Offering Advice*
 - The schools 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 pupils 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 pupil.

- *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 pupils, the RSE programme content and the ethos of the school and its RSE policy.
- *Confidentiality*
 - Teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality. Pupils must be made aware of that any information they divulge can be conveyed to the Principal or possibly their parents. 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.
 - Where a pupil is considered at risk of any type of abuse or in breach of the law, the teacher must immediately refer this to the Principal. The Principal will decide whether to inform parents or the appropriate authorities.
 - See The Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary schools 4.1.1 and 4.2.1
- *Withdrawing Pupils from RSE – Parents will be encouraged to support the RSE programme but if they request to remove their child:*
 - Discuss the nature of the concerns with the child's parent and if appropriate attempt to reassure them. Such discussions should take place with the pupils form tutor and the SPHE co-ordinator

- Consider whether the course can be amended in a way that will assure the parents – care must be taken not to undermine the integrity of the RSE programme and the entitlements of the other pupils.
- Advise parents that pupils withdrawn from the programme are vulnerable to teasing and may receive inaccurate information from their peers.
- Offer parents access to appropriate information and resources, along with the RSE policy.
- Once withdrawn, the request by the parent must be compiled until revoked.
- *Homosexuality*
 - Teachers do not promote any one lifestyle as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that homosexuality will be discussed during a programme of sex education. One of the advantages of exploring issues concerning homosexuality is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions and address prejudice. Discussion of homosexuality should be appropriate to the age of the pupils.
- *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.
- *Special Needs*
 - Children with special needs may need more help than other pupils coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up; they may also need more help in learning what sorts of behaviours are and are not acceptable, and in being warned and prepared against abuse by others. Consultation with the Resource Co-ordinator is important before the RSE programme is undertaken.

D. Ongoing support, development and review

- *Training*
 - All teachers involved in the programme 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 preparedness to refer to more expert advice if necessary. The skills required 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 should be encouraged to train other teachers.
 - 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.
- *Resources*
 - The school will purchase appropriate RSE teaching materials which have been identified by staff as useful and which have been approved by the Department of Education and Science and the Principal, within the normal budgetary framework and the general school resources allow.
- *Review of the programme*
 - The programme will be reviewed by the Board of Management and the Principal at St. Kevin's College at regular intervals in light of the needs of the schools and the views of parents and its teachers.