

# North Presentation Secondary School



## Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy 2019

Ratified by the Board of Management on 20/05/19

Signed Richard W. Brett Chairperson

Review 2022

## **SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT**

Management, Staff, Parents and Pupils of North Presentation Secondary School work in partnership to provide a caring environment in which:

- Catholic- Christian values are fostered and maintained.
- Each student can develop all her abilities and creative gifts.
- Each student can achieve her full academic potential.
- Self-esteem and respect for the dignity of the individual are promoted.
- Efforts to maintain and develop links with the wider community are actively encouraged.

## **SCOPE**

This policy will apply to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality. As discussion about relationships and sexuality takes place in classes other than SPHE, it is therefore 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.

## **RATIONALE**

1. Sexuality is a key element of healthy social and personal development. Young people are exposed to a bewildering variety of messages about sexuality and sexual activity. Schools, in consultation with parents / guardians, need to reflect on how to provide for the needs of their students.
2. The Education Act, 1998 requires that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.
3. Section 4 of the Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools requires schools to have an agreed policy for RSE and a suitable RSE programme in place for all students at both Junior and Senior Cycle. At Junior Cycle, the RSE programme is part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).
4. Circulars M4/95 and M20/96 request schools to commence a process of RSE policy development.
5. The effectiveness of an RSE programme is dependent on a collaborative policy process involving teachers, parents/guardians, members of the board of management and students.
6. Circular 0037/2010 requires schools to develop a RSE Policy and programme, and to implement them for all students from First Year to Sixth Year.
7. Access to sexual health and education is an important right for students under the terms of Article 11.2 of the European Social Charter.

## **THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF OUR RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION PROGRAMME**

### **AIMS**

1. To help young people understand, develop and respect friendships and relationships.
2. To promote an understanding and respect towards sexuality.
3. To promote a positive attitude and acceptance to ones sexuality and the sexuality of others.
4. To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction.
5. To enable our students to develop positive attitudes and values in a moral/spiritual/social context.
6. To provide opportunities for pupils to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a caring and responsible way.

### **OBJECTIVES**

7. To ensure clarity and consensus on how RSE is taught in the school.
8. To articulate the relationship of RSE to SPHE.
9. To articulate the aims of the RSE programme.
10. To clarify the rights, roles and responsibilities of all within the school community, in relation to the RSE Programme, with particular reference to school staff, students, parents / guardians and the Board of Management / trustees.
11. To ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
12. To ensure that teachers, parents / guardians and students understand how the teaching of RSE is linked to the school ethos.
13. To provide information on the practicalities of delivering the programme.

### **POLICY CONTENT**

#### **1**

#### ***Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education***

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.

2.

**RSE within Social Personal and Health Education**

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.

3

**Guidelines for the management and organisation of RSE in our school**

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

b. **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 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.

c. **Offering Advice:** The school’s function is to provide a general education about sexual matters and issues. 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 will be appropriate to the age of the pupil.

d. **Answering Questions:** While it is important to create an environment in SPHE / RSE in which students can discuss issues openly, teachers may not be able to answer all questions asked by students and can set appropriate limits. On these, and on all questions, teachers will use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, the RSE curriculum and the RSE policy for the school.

e. **Confidentiality:** While students will not be encouraged to disclose personal or private information in SPHE / RSE classes, there may be times when they do talk about their own lives. Confidentiality will be respected unless a teacher becomes aware that a child is at risk, in which case the appropriate action will be taken e.g. follow the procedures set down in the Child Protection Procedures and Guidelines for Post Primary Schools or the school’s Substance Use Policy, notify parents etc. In cases of under-age sexual activity, P10 of the Child Protection Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools (2004) state: „*In all cases where a school becomes aware of underage sexual intercourse the school shall take appropriate steps to inform the child’s parents.*“ It is important that students are made aware of the limits of confidentiality and that teachers do not give unconditional guarantees of confidentiality.

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.*

**f. The division between biological and non-biological aspects of sex education:**  
The school policy is that the Science Department deals primarily with the biological aspects of reproduction.

**g. Withdrawing students from the RSE programme:** o Parents will be provided with a full copy of this policy on request.

The Education Act, 1998 (section 30, subsection (2)(e)) provides that a student is not required to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parent or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student. Hence, parents have a right to opt their child out of the potentially sensitive issues in RSE if they wish to do so. Parents do not have to give reasons for withdrawal, but we respectfully invite them to do so.

What we do if a request for withdrawal from the RSE programme is made by a parent:

1. We discuss the nature of the concerns with the child's parent and if appropriate attempt to reassure them (initially such discussion takes place at a meeting with the Year Head and SPHE Co-ordinator. The Principal may become involved if necessary.).
2. We attempt to ensure that where a student is withdrawn there is no disruption to other parts of their education.
3. We point out that students who have been withdrawn are vulnerable to teasing - we therefore attempt to cause minimal embarrassment to the student and minimal disruption to the programme.
4. We also point out that students may receive inaccurate information from their peers.

We offer the parents access to appropriate information and resources.

**h. 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. 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.
- (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 RSE policy. The following issues will be considered: 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?
- (c) Visitors will be given advance notice of the composition of the class and an idea of how their contribution fits into the scheme of work.
- (d) The Management Committee will be informed of the date and name of the visitor.
- i. **Sexual Activity:** 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.
- j. **Family Planning:** The RSE programme requires that young people are provided with information about methods of contraception. Our school uses its discretion with regard to the age at which students receive any aspect of the RSE programme e.g. we might decide to provide some information on contraception to students earlier than Senior Cycle.
- k. **LGBT QIA:** The topic of homosexuality is included in the RSE programme at both Junior and Senior Cycles and will be addressed in a clear and open way.
- l. **Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs):** STIs are part of the programme for Junior and Senior Cycle and are discussed as deemed appropriate by the relevant teachers.
- m. **Abortion:** This topic will be dealt with as an age appropriate and non-directive.
- n. **Training:** We recognise that all teachers involved in this sphere should have the appropriate training. It is necessary that those teaching the RSE Programme are willing to do so, are sensitive to the needs of the group, and have an ability to deal with questions openly and honestly. The school will facilitate teachers to obtain training in this field.
- o. **Resources:** 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.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### Board of Management

1. To ensure that the policy is developed and evaluated from time to time.
2. To approve the policy.
3. To consider reports from the Principal on the implementation of the policy.

### Principal and Deputy Principal

1. To establish structures and procedures for the implementation of the policy.
2. To monitor the implementation of the policy.
3. To raise awareness of the policy among members of the school community.

### **Subject Teachers**

1. To be familiar with the policy.
2. To implement the policy.

### **SUCCESS CRITERIA**

1. RSE is being successfully taught through SPHE for all relevant students.
2. Senior Cycle students are receiving RSE.
3. Resource material is available to teachers.
4. Appropriate in-service for teachers is available and relevant teachers are availing of it.
5. Students are aware of the policy.
6. Parents/guardians are aware of the policy.
7. Positive feedback is received from teachers, other school staff, students, parents / guardians, members of Board of Management and trustees.
8. The goals are being attained.

### **MONITORING, EVALUATING AND REVIEWING RSE**

We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this programme.

Specifically important to the RSE Programme are:

1. Student feedback
2. Staff review and feedback;
3. Parental feedback through the Parents Council.