

CARRIGTWOHILL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY
EDUCATION (RSE) POLICY

RATIFIED 04 DECEMBER 2018

EDITED NOV 2019

REVIEWED AND RATIFIED 15 APRIL 2021

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A. The School and its Philosophy

Mission Statement

Carrigtwohill Community College is a community of learning and teaching where all members have the opportunity and are encouraged to reach their potential, where talents are nurtured, and positive relationships fostered through mutual respect. The Mission Statement is the result of a collective and consultative process where students, parents and staff of Carrigtwohill Community College participated. It was ratified by the Board of Management on 06 December 2018.

Carrigtwohill Community College is a co-educational establishment under the patronage of Cork Education and Training Board and the trusteeship of the Diocese of Cloyne and is committed to excellence in a caring and supportive environment.

The aim of the college is to provide an enriching environment for the academic, moral, spiritual and social education of its pupils and to nurture the growth and development of all. While the College ethos is Catholic, the RSE policy acknowledges, respects and will be implemented in accordance with the inclusive ethos definition as outlined in the College's Admissions Policy. The curriculum is designed with the modern world in mind and students are equipped with the skills necessary to confront challenges that they may encounter in life.

Carrigtwohill Community College aims to:

- ✓ Provide academic excellence within a caring environment
- ✓ Promote Christian values
- ✓ Develop the whole person
- ✓ Celebrate diversity and value difference
- ✓ Foster relationships through mutual respect
- ✓ Provide committed and highly qualified staff
- ✓ Maintain a pastoral care structure
- ✓ Provide a positive discipline practice
- ✓ Offer a broad extra-curricular programme

This policy was developed to assist in the fulfilment of these aims, in partnership with the college's management, teaching staff, parents and students. RSE is taught in the context of a whole school climate that is inclusive and respectful. It recognises that parents/guardians are the primary educators and home is the natural environment in which Relationship and Sexual Education (RSE) should take place. The policy enables pupils to develop character and values in relation to their own sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework. It also gives them the opportunity to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways which help them think and act in a responsible manner.

B. Scope

The policy encompasses every aspect of teaching and learning in relation to Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). Dialogue regarding this aspect of the curriculum occurs also in other classes as well as SPHE and RSE, and it is important that all teachers, as well as management, parents, pupils and guest speakers/facilitators, are familiar with the RSE policy. In drafting this policy, the legislation, various guidelines, school policies and the following circulars were considered, together with the college ethos:

Education Act, 1998

Education (Admissions to Schools) Act

2018 Education (Welfare) Act, 2000

Equal Status Act, 2000-

2001 Equality Act 2004

Children First Act 2015

Child First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of

Children Circulars 23/2010, M4/95, M20/96 (Department of Education & Skills) College Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment

College Code of Behaviour

College Antibullying

Policy

College Special Education Needs

Policy College Acceptable Use Policy

C. Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education

Relationships and Sexuality Education is a central part of the social and personal development of the pupil. Parents, as the primary educators of their children, provide information on this at home and the school supports this education by providing classes which give pupils the opportunity to develop, in a structured way, an understanding of, and a positive attitude to, human relationships, sexuality and identity.

D. Relationships and Sexuality Education within Social, Personal and Health Education

The Social, Personal and Health Education Programme (SPHE) enables the pupils to develop important skills and to learn about taking care of themselves and of others. In this way, they are enabled to take a responsible and informed role in society and to make responsible decisions about their own health, which show respect for their own dignity and for the dignity of others. The learning is spiral, and age-appropriate in methodology and content. SPHE covers areas which are closely linked to developing a healthy outlook in relation to sexuality in the pupils themselves and in their relationships with other people.

E. The Aims of our Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme

The RSE programme is set in the framework of the SPHE programme and has the following aims:

- ✓ To help pupils 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 allow students to develop attitudes and values about sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social environment that supports the college's ethos
- ✓ To give students the opportunity to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way

F. The Management and Organisation of Relationships and Sexuality Education in our College

1. Programme Management

The Board of Management approves, ensures implementation and reviews the policy. Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff is made by the Principal.

School Staff

The policy applies to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality. School staff have a responsibility to embrace and safeguard the college ethos and support the cross curricular nature of RSE.

2. Parents' Role / Withdrawal

Parents are the primary educators of their children and the college recognises their important role in education concerning relationships and sexuality. This policy was drafted in consultation with parents and the views of parents are taken into account when reviewing the policy. This policy is available to the college community on the college website.

In 2023, the SPHE specification was updated. Consequently Relationship & Sexuality Education for current first year students will be intertwined with other SPHE modules. For second and third year students, Relationship & Sexuality Education will still consist of stand-alone modules as per the previous specification.

A letter and permission form is sent to parents before the first RSE topic of the SPHE programme is due to commence. The 1998 Education Act, Section 30 Subsection 2 (e), shall not require any student to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parent of the student or in the case of a student who has reached the age of eighteen. Consequently, parents/guardians will also be informed that it is their right to withdraw their child but that this must be communicated in writing. The parent/guardian will then need to take responsibility for their child during the 58 minutes class when the topic is being taught.

Where students are withdrawn from RSE, the college cannot take responsibility for any versions of class contact passed onto them by other students. At the same time, care will be taken not to undermine the RSE programme and the entitlement of the other pupils.

At Senior level, RSE is an integral part of the Senior Cycle programme.

3. Providing Advice:

The college's function is to provide a general education about sexual matters, not to offer individual advice, information or guidance. However, sources of professional advice and information are identified when appropriate.

4. Explicit Questions:

It may not be appropriate to deal with certain explicit questions in class. Teachers may 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 to answer questions, the teacher should consider the age and maturity of the students, the RSE programme content, the ethos of the college and the RSE specification.

5. Confidentiality:

In relation to reporting of child protection concerns to Tusla, all school personnel are required to adhere to the procedures set out in the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017, including in the case of registered teachers, those in relation to mandated reporting under the Children First Act 2015. The following is also college policy:

- ✓ Teachers cannot promise absolute confidentiality.
- ✓ Pupils are made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the Principal or possibly to parents, if the Principal decides that it is in the best interests of the pupil to notify a parent.
- ✓ Teachers must indicate clearly to pupils when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential.

6. Sexual Activity:

It is college policy that the Science Department deals primarily with specialist information on the biological aspects of reproduction. When addressing the issue of sexual activity, teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age and emotional maturity of the students. It is advisable for teachers to give students information on the age of consent which, according to the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006, is 17 years of age for both males and females.

7. Visiting Speakers and Others

As per circular 0043/2018:

- ✓ It is college policy that most of the RSE programme is best discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by the pupils. 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.
- ✓ If it is decided to bring in an external speaker/to run an external workshop for an aspect of the programme, the teacher must follow the guide set out for guest speakers and must get permission from the Principal beforehand via the Organising an Event form
- ✓ Parents will be informed in writing regarding the guest speaker / workshop a week in advance.
- ✓ The teacher will ensure that the subject of the talk is age-appropriate and conforms to the RSE programme.
- ✓ Visitors will be made aware of the RSE policy, the ethos of the college and the manner of delivery of the RSE programme. The teacher will be present for the talk, along with the guest speaker.
- ✓ 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 to draw up questions in advance and to forward them to the visitor. This will involve the pupils in the talk, and it facilitates planning.

8. Sexual Orientation

The teachers recognise that there are different sexual orientations in society and therefore, it is inevitable and natural that various sexual orientations will be discussed during a programme of sex education. One of the advantages of exploring issues concerning homosexuality is the opportunity given to correct false ideas and assumptions and to address prejudice. Discussion of this topic will be at a stage which is appropriate to the age of the pupils.

The Equal Status Acts 2000 – 2011 and the Equality Act 2004 prohibit discrimination across nine grounds, including sexual orientation. To promote inclusivity, sexual orientation needs to be discussed in a clear, open and respectful way in the classroom.

9. Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

Creating awareness of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) is undertaken in the RSE programme. General hygiene and STIs are addressed at Junior Cycle level but the area of STIs is addressed in further depth at Senior Cycle. While dealing with the topic of STIs, teachers should use their professional judgement and be guided by the age and emotional maturity of the students and the RSE Curriculum and RSE policy for the school. Awareness of STIs is one of the objectives of the SPHE/RSE syllabus and is mainly addressed in the Senior Cycle.

10. Additional Needs

It may happen that pupils with additional needs may need more help in learning what sort of behaviour is suitable as they deal with the physical and emotional aspects of this programme. With parental permission, this support and help will be provided to prepare them for life and to make them vigilant of abuse by others. The SPHE teacher should inform the SENCO or appropriate SET of any difficulties arising in this field. Equally, should the SENCO or SET become aware of any such difficulties for a student with AEN, they too must inform the SPHE teacher.

11. Family Planning/Sexual Health

Family planning will be dealt with in an age-appropriate way and each aspect of the question will be considered in an open manner. Age-appropriate information will be provided in the senior cycle regarding safe sex practices and sexually transmitted infections.

12. Links to other School Policies

School policies being examined or reviewed, should be considered with reference to the school's RSE policy; while the implications of other school policies for the RSE policy also need to be considered, such as:

- SPHE Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Whole School Guidance Plan
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Critical Incident Management Policy

Resources

- Lesbian Gay and Bisexual Students in Post Primary Schools, Guidance for Principals and School Leaders.
www.jct.ie

Junior Cycle

- Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines
- Lockers
- Webwise.ie
- Textbook
- B4UDecide (HSE Website and Workbook)
- Busy Bodies Booklet
- LGBT+ Growing up LGBT
- NCCA (www.curriculumonline.ie)
- www.jct.ie

Senior Cycle

- TRUST –Talking Relationships Understanding Sexuality Teaching Resource
- www.hse.ie
- www.glen.ie
- www.HealthPromotion.ie
- www.consenthub.ie/
- Being LGBT in School – Glen.ie
- BelongTo website. The college is currently on track to be awarded a quality mark from this organisation.
- Classroom teachers will use the B4Udecide website. This website uses information provided by the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Organisation.

G. PROVISION OF THE PROGRAMME IN THE SCHOOL

An RSE module will be provided for each year group in the school in the junior cycle and in the senior cycle.

H. ONGOING SUPPORT, DEVELOPMENT & REVIEW

Training

All teachers involved in this work 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 and honestly within the college ethos, and a willingness to take advice and training. The college will facilitate teachers to obtain expert training in this field by facilitating attendance at in-service courses. SPHE will not be put on a teacher's timetable without consulting with the teacher first. Teachers will be given the opportunity to hold meetings to plan the programme and to share expertise.

Resources

The college 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 college resources allow.

Monitoring, Evaluating and Reviewing the RSE Programme

We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this programme. The monitoring and evaluation will be done through:

- ✓ Pupil Feedback and reflection through Comhairle na nDaltaí
- ✓ Staff Review and Feedback
- ✓ Parental Feedback

This Policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management on: 15 April 2021

Signed:



Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed:



Secretary of Board of Management (Principal)

APPENDIX 1

RSE IN THE NEW JUNIOR CYCLE SPHE SPECIFICATION

The new specification is designed to support students in developing a positive sense of self and a capacity to care for themselves and others. It is designed around 4 interconnected strands, the third of which is Relationship and Sexuality Education and three cross-cutting elements: awareness, dialogue and reflection & action.

There are 11 statements of learning in the RSE strand:

- 3.1 - reflect on the values, behaviours and skills that help to make, sustain and end relationships respectfully with friends, family and romantic/intimate relationships
- 3.2 - examine benefits and difficulties experienced by young people in a range of relationships - friendships, family relationships, and romantic/intimate relationships
- 3.3 - identify signs of healthy, unhealthy and abusive relationships
- 3.4 - appreciate the importance of setting healthy boundaries in relationships and consider how to show respect for the boundaries of others
- 3.5 - consider the importance of taking care of their reproductive health
- 3.6 - appreciate the breadth of what constitutes human sexuality, and how sexual orientation and gender identity are experienced and expressed in diverse ways
- 3.7 - explore the pressures to become sexually intimate and discuss ways to show respect for people's choices
- 3.8 - appreciate the importance of seeking, giving and receiving consent in sexual relationships, from the perspective of building caring relationships and from a legal perspective
- 3.9 - explain the importance of safer sexual activity with reference to methods of contraception and protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- 3.10 - discuss the influence of popular culture and the online world, in particular, the influence of pornography, on young people's understanding, expectations and social norms in relation to sexual expression
- 3.11 - demonstrate how to access and appraise appropriate and trustworthy advice, support and services related to relationships and sexual health.

APPENDIX 2 – TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED IN SENIOR CYCLE RSE

Communication

Assertive Communication / Conflict Handling

Dealing with Emotions

Human Reproduction

Human Sexuality

Responsible Parenting

Implications of Sexual Activity

Sexually Transmitted Infections

Loving Relationships

Marriage

Life Support

Accepting Sexual Orientations

Sexual Assault / Harassment

Consent

Sexual Abuse

(Resource Materials for Relationships & Sexuality Education - Post-Primary: Junior Cycle & Senior Cycle, published by the Dept of Education and Skills 1999)

The Senior Cycle RSE specification has not been updated.

