

# St Mary's C.B.S.

## Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

### **A. School**

St. Mary's CBS Enniscorthy is an all Boys Catholic Secondary School under the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. The school has an enrolment of 664 students.

### **B. Our School Philosophy**

- St Mary's C.B.S. Enniscorthy is committed to the vision and mission statement set out in the Charter of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. The mission of the charter is to provide Catholic education in the Edmund Rice tradition. The vision of the charter is to promote full personal and social development in caring Christian communities of learning and teaching.
- In our school's Mission Statement the school community values, educates and prepares all its students for a responsible, meaningful and productive life. The role of the school is to provide the highest standard of education for all its students. A stable, secure learning environment is an essential requirement to achieve this goal.
- The school operates a code of behaviour which was formulated in consultation with parents, staff and students. The aim of the code is to encourage respect and courteous behaviour among all members of the school in order to facilitate a warm and positive learning environment.
- The school provides a wide curriculum including religious, moral and physical education in order to meet its objectives of supporting pupils in achieving their full academic potential and preparing them for participation in civic society and working life.
- The underlying principles of positive relationships and respect are fostered throughout the curriculum and throughout the daily life of the school.

### **C. 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.

## **D. Relationships and Sexuality Education within Social Personal and Health Education**

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is taught in junior cycle as a module within the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme. In senior cycle RSE is taught within the Religious Education programme.

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.

### **OUR SCHOOLS APPROACH TO SPHE**

OUR SCHOOL IS COMMITTED TO ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF THE WHOLE SCHOOL IN RELATION TO SOCIAL, PERSONAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION.

EDUCATION FLOURISHES IN AN ENVIRONMENT WHICH CAN LEAD TO THE CREATION OF A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY PROFESSING AND LIVING GOSPEL VALUES, WHERE THE PARTICIPANTS RELATE TO EACH OTHER IN A RESPECTFUL MANNER AND WHERE MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY ARE HELPED TO ACHIEVE PERSONAL WHOLENESS.

SPHE SUPPORTS THE AIMS OF CBS ENNISCORTHY BY SUPPORTING THE PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT, HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF OUR STUDENTS AND BY HELPING THEM TO CREATE AND MAINTAIN SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS.

OUR SPHE POLICY AIMS TO PROVIDE LEARNING EXPERIENCES THAT WILL HELP THE PUPILS TO UNDERSTAND THEMSELVES, TO RELATE TO OTHERS AND TO ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN HEALTHY PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOUR.

SPHE COMPLIMENTS AND SUPPORTS WORK CONTINUING IN OTHER SUBJECTS.

### **THE AIMS OF SPHE**

1. TO PROMOTE THE PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH OF THE PUPIL
2. TO ENABLE THE STUDENT TO DEVELOP PERSONAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS
3. TO PROMOTE SELF ESTEEM AND SELF CONFIDENCE
4. TO ENABLE THE STUDENT TO DEVELOP A FRAMEWORK FOR RESPONSIBLE DECISION MAKING.
5. TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

## **OBJECTIVES OF SPHE**

TO ENABLE THE STUDENT TO:

1. BE SELF CONFIDENT AND HAVE A POSITIVE SENSE OF SELF ESTEEM
2. DEVELOP A SENSE OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND COME TO UNDERSTAND HIS SEXUALITY AND THE PROCESS OF GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT AND REPRODUCTION
3. DEVELOP AND ENHANCE THE SOCIAL SKILLS OF COMMUNICATION, CO-OPERATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION
4. DEVELOP AN UNDERSTANDING OF HEALTHY LIVING, AN ABILITY TO IMPLEMENT HEALTHY BEHAVIOUR AND A WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN ACTIVITIES THAT PROMOTE AND SUSTAIN HEALTH
5. DEVELOP SOME OF THE SKILLS AND ABILITIES NECESSARY FOR PARTICIPATING FULLY IN GROUPS AND SOCIETY

## **E. The aims of our Relationships and Sexuality Education programme**

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

- To help students 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 enable students to develop attitudes and values toward their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework in keeping with the ethos of the school
- 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.

## **F. Relationships and Sexuality Education programme in our school**

### **Junior Cycle**

The topics covered in the three year junior cycle are developed over the three years and are taught according to the guidelines for RSE which states that 'social personal and health education is spiral, developmental in nature and age appropriate in content and methodology'. Most of the topics below are covered in the SPHE class but some are taught in the Science and Religion classes.

#### **1. Human Growth and Development**

Puberty, Uniqueness and Physical Body

Hygiene

Male and female reproductive organs-structure and function

Sexual intercourse, conception, pregnancy and birth

Fertility awareness

Body image

Changes in adolescence and emotional health

Cancer awareness

Feelings and mood swings

## **2. Relationships**

Relationships with parents

Relationships with peers

Relationships with the opposite sex

Friendship love and marriage

Respect of self and others

Rights and responsibilities

Conflict

## **3. Sexuality, Sexual Identity, Self Esteem**

Uniqueness

Positive self esteem

Respect, rights and responsibilities

Positive attitude to sexuality

Sexual stereotyping

STI's

## **4. Personal and Social Skills**

Decision making

Criticism and compliments

Critical thinking skills

Assertiveness

Risk taking

Gender roles

## **5. Moral Development**

Moral and spiritual values

Respect for self and others

Attitudes and behaviour

## **Senior Cycle**

### **TRANSITION YEAR**

Learning for Living Programme

Duration: 6 weeks 12 class periods.

### **Rights, Responsibilities & Respect**

1. Confidentiality
2. Responsible behaviours
3. Self-Esteem
4. Understanding boundaries
5. Risky behaviour

### **Healthy Relationships & Dealing with Trauma**

6. Establishing a healthy relationship
7. Dealing with relationship pressures
8. Defining Sexual Assault
9. Exploring case studies
10. Reactions and Attitudes
11. Psychological effects

### **Myths & Attitudes**

12. Challenging beliefs & attitudes
13. Drug assisted assault
14. How to get help & support
15. Do's& Don'ts of helping
16. Smart planning & Prevention tips
17. Reporting to Gardai
18. The Law

### **Sexual Harassment & Bullying**

19. Bullying behaviours
20. Sexual harassment vs. flirting
21. Assertive Body Language
22. Support & Advice

## **FIFTH YEAR**

### **Trust Programme/ Talking Relationships, Understanding Sexuality Teaching Resource.**

Duration: 8 weeks 16-20 class periods.

#### **Relationships**

1. What we value in relationships
2. Healthy relationships
3. Self-Esteem
4. Understanding Boundaries
5. Intimacy

#### **Sexuality& Sexual Identity**

6. Sexuality
7. Sexual Orientation
8. Influences and Values
9. Decision-Making

## 10. Responsible Relationships

### **Sexual Health**

11. Human Reproduction and Fertility

12. Understanding Female Fertility

13. Contraceptive Methods I

14. Contraceptive Methods II

15. Family Planning

16. Unplanned Pregnancy

17. STI's – What's What

18. STI Transmission

## **SIXTH YEAR**

### **Marriage and sustaining long term relationships**

#### **1. Relationships**

Marriage

Commitment

Partnership

Love and relationships

Making, keeping and ending relationships

Separation and divorce

Conflict and resolution

#### **2. Sexuality, sexual identity, self esteem**

Gender stereotyping

Rape and sexual violence

The media and sexual image

### **3. Parenting**

Child care

Family roles and responsibilities

## **G. Guidelines for the management and organisation of Relationships and Sexuality Education in our school**

1. 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 'Information for Parents' booklet, published annually in June. 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. Parents will be informed by letter prior to RSE programmes being taught to their sons. A copy of this policy will be made available to any parent on request to the school Office.

3. Offering Advice:

The school's function is to provide a general education about sexual matters and issues. If issues arise as a result of the teaching of RSE support will be provided to individual students through the Pastoral Care system in the school. 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.

4. 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 students, the RSE programme content, the ethos of the school and the RSE policy.

5. Confidentiality:

The school's understanding of confidentiality is in accordance with the definitions of confidentiality outlined in the Child Protection Guidelines. All students and parents will be made aware of the limits of confidentiality and of the procedures that will be followed following a disclosure.



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.

It is school policy that in circumstances where a pupil is considered at some risk of any type of abuse or in breach of the law, the teacher must refer this immediately to the Principal who is the Designated Liaison Person as required under the Child Protection Guidelines. The Principal will decide whether to inform the parents and/or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling.

The following is also school policy:

- teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality;
- pupils must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the Principal and possibly to parents if the Principal decides that it is in the best interests of the pupil to notify parents;
- Students will be made aware of the Pastoral Care structures in the school and of the roles and responsibilities of the individual members of the Pastoral Care team.
- Students will be made aware of the counselling services available in the school. The school has two guidance counsellors who will be available to provide support and advice to students who may wish to avail of their services.

6. 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.

7. Withdrawing pupils from the RSE programme:

- Parents will be informed of the right to withdraw their son from the RSE part of the SPHE programme. If a parent wishes to withdraw their son they will be invited by the school to discuss the matter.
- This information will be made available to parents in the school publication entitled 'Information for Parents', which is sent to all parents in June of each year. Parents will always be provided with a full copy of this policy following a request to do so.
- Parents do not have to give reasons for withdrawal, but we respectfully invite them to do so - sometimes we can then resolve misunderstandings. Once a parent's request to withdraw is made, that request will be complied with until revoked by the parent. (See also appendix 1)

8. Using visiting speakers and others

- It is school policy that the RSE programme is best taught by 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.
- The RSE teacher will consider the following issues when inviting a visitor:
  - i) that the content provided by the visitor is in accordance with the ethos of the school
  - ii) the degree of explicitness of the content and presentation;
  - iii) will the visitor be accompanied by teaching staff?
  - iv) will the staff take an active role in the visitor's activities?
  - v) how will the visitor be prepared for the visit?
  - vi) how will the visit be built upon and followed up?

## 9. Homosexuality

Teachers do not promote any one life-style 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.

## 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. Special Needs

Children with special educational needs 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. They may also need some extra help in understanding some of the terminology used.

## **H. Ongoing support, development and 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/honestly and a preparedness to refer to more expert advice if necessary. The skills acquired 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 will 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 as possible.

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.

Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the RSE programme:

We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this programme. Specifically important to the RSE Programme are:

- pupil feedback;
- staff review and feedback;
- parental feedback.

## **Appendix 1**

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

- 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)
- 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 pupils.
- we attempt to ensure that where a pupil is withdrawn there is no disruption to other parts of their education,
- we point out that pupils who have been withdrawn are vulnerable to teasing - we therefore attempt to cause minimal embarrassment to the pupil and minimal disruption to the programme;
- we also point out that pupils may receive inaccurate information from their peers;
- we offer the parents access to appropriate information and resources.