

Ardscoil na Tríonóide

Relationship & Sexuality Policy (RSE)



Mission Statement of Ardscoil na Tríonóide

Ardscoil na Tríonóide is inspired by the educational vision of Venerable Catherine McAuley and Blessed Edmund Ignatius Rice. It exists to provide a centre of learning where Christian values underpin and pervade all activities, where each member of the school community is cherished and respected.

In Ardscoil na Tríonóide, emphasis is placed on the moral and spiritual formation of students along with their intellectual, social and physical development. Students are encouraged to strive towards academic excellence.

This school community advocates, and will develop a strong sense of social justice. It is intended that the experience of education in Ardscoil na Tríonóide will be happy and creative, enabling each participant to strive to fulfil his/her potential.

Introduction

Ardscoil na Tríonóide is a co-educational Catholic voluntary secondary school under the Trusteeship of CEIST (Catholic Education, an Irish Schools Trust). Our school is a community committed to providing a quality education for all students. Our objective is to create a safe, calm, orderly and work-oriented atmosphere in a caring, supportive and mutually respectful environment. Ardscoil na Tríonóide is committed to the five Core Values of CEIST:

- Promoting Spiritual and Human Development
- Achieving Quality in Teaching and Learning
- Showing Respect for Every Person
- Creating Community
- Being Just and Responsible

The RSE policy is a written statement of the aims of the RSE programme, the relationship of RSE to SPHE, and the organisation and management of RSE within the school. The policy was enacted in 2019 after consultation between the RSE committee, the Principal, the Board of Management, students, staff and parent representatives. It was reviewed and updated in 2024.

Relationship of RSE to the Schools Mission Statement

Ardscoil na Tríonóide is committed to providing the best educational formation possible for all students by providing equally for all, a broadly based curriculum. We aim to provide an education for all students which will embrace their full human development: personal, academic, physical, moral and spiritual.

RSE encompasses the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, sexual identity and intimacy contributing towards the full human development of the student. The RSE programme is developed with due cognisance of the school mission statement and Circular 0037/2010.

Scope of RSE Policy

To whom the policy applies:

- The policy applies to school staff, students, the Board of Management, parents/guardians/visiting speakers/external facilitators.
- To what aspects of the curriculum:
- The policy applies to all aspects of teaching/learning about relationships, it is cross curricular and not exclusively the domain of SPHE or RSE. It is therefore important that all staff would be familiar with the RSE Policy.

Definition of RSE

Relationship and Sexuality Education encompasses the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, sexual identity and intimacy. RSE seeks to provide children with opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of relationships and human sexuality, through processes which enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework.

Relationship of RSE to SPHE

The Education Act (1998) emphasises that schools are obliged to promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them. As part of the SPHE programme students are encouraged to develop their own self confidence and build relationships with others. The aim of the SPHE programme is to promote physical, mental, spiritual, social and emotional health and wellbeing. It also encourages the development of a healthy attitude to sexuality. Relationships and sexuality are key elements of healthy social and personal development in all our lives, but particularly in the lives of an adolescent. The RSE programme is designed to specifically deal with these issues and encourage students to deal with their own sexuality and develop healthy relationships.

Circular 0015 /2017 states that a new area of learning called Wellbeing be introduced and that a key component of this learning is Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE), including Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). RSE aims to help young people to acquire knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework.

Aims of RSE Programme

The aims of RSE are

- To help students understand and develop friendships and relationships
- To promote an understanding of sexuality
- To promote a positive attitude to student's own sexuality and in relationships with others
- To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction
- To enable students to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in 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 encourage them to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

It is acknowledged that these aims are aspirational due to the time constraints of the course.

Key themes in RSE will include:

<i>Junior Cycle</i>		
<i>First Year</i>	<i>Second Year</i>	<i>Third Year</i>
Appreciating difference Changes during adolescence Identity - Sexual Identity Male and female reproductive system	Communicating in a healthy way Understanding family relationships Sexual orientation Male and female reproductive systems	Respect Setting Boundaries Relationship Problems Sexual Health Pregnancy and Parenting
<i>Senior Cycle</i>		
<i>Transition Year</i>	<i>Fifth Year</i>	<i>Sixth Year</i>
Communication Values Self Esteem Healthy Relationships Healthy Boundaries Gender and Sexuality Sexual and Reproductive Health Contraception STI's Making Decisions/Consent	Values Influence of media Sexual orientation and Gender Identity Consent Relationship Pressures Contraception STI's	Empathy and Relationships Transgender Identity Discrimination Healthy relationships Consent Image Sharing Sexual Coercion/Exploitation Sexual Harassment

Please note: An incremental approach is taken with topics at both Junior and Senior Cycle. There may at times be some crossover on the topics discussed but this will be appropriate to the age and stage of students.

Key Measures

1. Provision of Training and Staff Development

It is school policy that:

- SPHE is a subject department in its own right.
- A SPHE Convenor coordinates and leads the SPHE team in collaboration with the Deputy Principal responsible for Wellbeing.
- We endeavour that staff teaching SPHE/RSE are adequately trained and upskilled.
- School management take full responsibility for the facilitation of ongoing training of staff. To this end Management will liaise with the SPHE Convenor and inform staff of training opportunities and make every effort to facilitate their release from school when/where necessary.

2. Inclusion of Parents/Guardians

It is recognised by the school that the parents/guardians are the primary educators of the children and their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality is seen by the school as very important. Information will be provided for parents about the content of the RSE module in the following way:

- Parents of 1st years will be provided with an information leaflet from the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) which provides details on the Junior Cycle SPHE/ RSE curriculum. [NCCA link](#)
- Parents will be notified via the school VShare App (and directed to explanatory information in their child's school journal) prior to the commencement of the RSE module each year.
- The RSE policy will be published on the school website.

Our school recognises the right of parents/guardians to withdraw their child if they wish to do so from the RSE programme. Parents/Guardians do not have to give reasons for withdrawal but we invite them to do so as sometimes we can resolve misunderstandings. If parents/guardians wish to withdraw a child from RSE they are required to make an appointment to speak to the Principal in relation to this before commencement of the programme.

3. Ethical and Moral Considerations

Answering Questions

It is important for teachers to create an environment in RSE/SPHE in which students can discuss issues openly. However, boundaries need to be established around the appropriateness of certain questions in a classroom setting. In this matter the teachers will exercise their professional judgment guided by their training and the age of the students. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised the teacher will seek the advice of the Principal.

Confidentiality

It is important that teachers facilitating classes in SPHE/RSE establish clear boundaries around confidentiality at the outset. Students will be made aware that they will not be asked to disclose personal information in SPHE/RSE classes. Students will be informed of the limits of confidentiality and teachers as a mandated person must not guarantee confidentiality. Students will be informed that if a teacher becomes aware that a pupil is at risk of abuse, or in breach of the law, this information will be conveyed to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and that the procedures set down in the Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary Schools will be followed. An explanation in relation to this is available for each student to read in their school journal under the heading Child Protection and Safeguarding.

Sexual Activity

As part of the RSE programme students will be made aware of the age of consent in law in the Republic of Ireland. In circumstances where a teacher becomes aware that a pupil is engaging in underage sexual activity, the teacher as a mandated person must refer this immediately to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP).

Offering Advice

The school's function is to provide a general education about sexual matters and not to offer individual advice or counselling on aspects of sexual behaviour. However, teachers may provide pupils with education and information about where and from whom they can receive confidential advice and treatment.

Contraception

The subject of contraception is covered within the RSE programme. Students will be provided with information about methods of contraception and the topic will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner looking at the issues in a nondirective way.

Sexual Orientation

The subject of sexual orientation is included in the RSE curriculum at both Junior and Senior Cycle. It will be discussed in an open manner and in a non - directive way.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

This topic will be dealt with in an age appropriate and open manner. While awareness of STI's is addressed in 3rd year, this issue is mainly addressed in the Senior Cycle.

4. Practical Issues

Timetabling

SPHE is timetabled for 1 period per week (58 mins) from 1st-3rd year. Within this framework RSE is taught as a module.

Transition Year, Fifth Year and Sixth Year students are taught RSE on a modular basis.

Additional Educational Needs (AEN)

Students with additional educational needs may require more help than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up. Additional support/expertise may be sought in providing appropriate RSE education for students with additional educational needs. In the case of students in the ASD class, RSE may be delivered outside of the scheduled RSE time and by the ASD teacher or another teacher as determined by the Principal, Deputy Principals and ASD teacher.

Visiting Speakers

It is recognised that the quality and provision of the RSE programme may be enhanced by the expertise of visiting professionals. When this resource is deemed helpful visiting speakers will be facilitated in keeping with the School's Child Safeguarding Statement and will be provided with a copy of the school's RSE policy prior to the visit.

Resources

The SPHE Department collaborates and shares resources via a Google Drive account. Resources that are gained from Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in SPHE/RSE by individual teachers are uploaded to the shared Drive and also referenced at Subject Department meetings. Resources are embedded within the SPHE/RSE subject plan. Students' learning is also supported by the use of their SPHE textbook and workbook.

Links to other School Policies

All school policies strive to be consistent and cohesive within the framework of the overall school plan. The RSE policy is developed in this context and shares links with other policies: Anti-Bullying Policy, Child Safeguarding Statement, Code of Behaviour, Mobile Phone Policy and Acceptable Use Policy.

Links to other School Subjects

Teachers of the relevant subject areas such as Science, Home Economics and Religious Education are aware of the content of RSE and in so far as possible RSE will be taught in a cross curricular way.

Child Protection

Ardcoil na Tríonóide has adopted Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children. The Board of Management carries out an annual review of the Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment. Child Protection appears as an agenda item at every meeting of the Board of Management.

Reporting of Concerns

If a member of staff receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been abused or neglected, or is being abused or neglected, or is at risk of abuse or neglect he/she shall, without delay, report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person in that school. A written record of the report shall be made and placed in a secure location by the DLP. The need for confidentiality at all times shall be borne in mind. The support of the school shall continue to be made available to the child. Where the allegation or concern relates to the DLP, the staff member shall, without delay, report the matter to the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

Roles and Responsibilities in implementing policy

All partners, including the Board of Management, parents/guardians, school management and teaching staff, have roles and responsibilities in ensuring the implementation of RSE Policy in our school. Given the sensitive nature of the work involved, training of staff is paramount. Accordingly, teachers delivering the RSE programme will attend the training provided by the SPHE support service/Oide.

Adoption of Policy

A review of the RSE policy will take place on a regular basis. This RSE policy was reviewed and adopted by the Board of Management on 23rd April 2024.

_____ Principal:

_____ BOM Chairperson