



## **Relationships & Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy**

### **Introduction**

This 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. This policy has been implemented after consultation between the staff, the Principal and Deputy Principal, the Board of Management, Parents' Representatives and the Student Council.

### **School Mission Statement:**

At Greenhills Community College, we promote academic excellence, in a respectful and inclusive environment, where learners achieve their unique potential. We encourage a culture of curiosity, helping our students flourish into responsible individuals, who embody the core values of our school.

We Care. We Prepare. We Achieve.

### **Scope of policy**

This policy applies to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality in the school. RSE teaching and the topics and ideas covered benefit greatly from cross curricular linkages but also impact other subjects.

## **Definition of RSE**

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy.

(Department of Education and Skills)

Sexuality is a key element of healthy social and personal development in all our lives, but particularly important in the life of the adolescent. RSE is a developmental process using learning that is experiential in which students participate to help foster a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, especially in the area of sexuality and relationships. RSE in Greenhills College will provide structured opportunities for students to acquire a 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.

## **Relationship of RSE to the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme**

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.

Notice is taken by the school of Section 30 (2) (e) under which a child may not be required 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 18. An information leaflet outlining the topics covered will be provided to parents/guardians prior to the commencement of the programme. Parents/guardians can contact management with any questions or concerns.

The Draft Guidelines for RSE (NCCA, 2023) states that Social Personal and Health Education is “.... employs a spiral approach.... This spiral approach allows students to revisit important themes over the three years in order to allow for deeper engagement relevant to the students’ evolving needs and stage of development.” The RSE programme is designed to follow this principle and pattern. RSE is addressed within the SPHE programme. 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.

Schools are required to teach RSE as an integral component of Junior Cycle SPHE up to Third Year, as outlined in the Junior Cycle SPHE Curriculum Framework produced by the National Council for Curriculum



and Assessment (NCCA, 2000). From September 2025, schools will teach RSE as part of a Senior Cycle SPHE course. (NCCA, 2024)

## **The Aims of our RSE Programme**

- To help students understand and develop healthy friendships and relationships.
- To help students develop problem solving and coping skills for dealing with the emotional ups and downs of life.
- To promote a positive understanding of sexuality.
- To promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's own relationship with others.
- To educate the students to have a clear understanding of the male and female reproductive systems.
- To enable the students to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- To help young people understand Sexually Transmitted Infections and to promote sexual health.
- To appreciate the importance of seeking, giving and receiving consent in sexual relationships.

*(It is acknowledged that in a course of limited duration and contact time, these aims are aspirational.)*

## **The Management and Organisation of RSE in the School**

The Principal/Deputy Principal will plan for the teaching of the RSE Programme and the deployment of staff. Teachers will follow the guidelines and lesson plans drawn up by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

One timetabled period per week will be allocated to SPHE and out of the SPHE Programme in the year; six timetabled periods will be assigned to RSE. RSE is included in the Junior Cycle and Transition Year programmes and is delivered as part of the timetabled SPHE course. From September 2025, RSE will be covered under strand 3 of the Senior Cycle SPHE course for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year.

Signed consent forms will be gathered from all students prior to the RSE programme delivery. (Page 25 of student journal.)

**RSE Team** in Greenhills Community College includes teachers from the following subject areas:

Principal: Ms Noirin Lannon

Deputy Principal: Ms Geraldine Leahy

Science & Biology: Ms Pauline Fagan, Ms Mary McMahon

Guidance Counsellors: Ms Caroline Golding Brady and Ms Sarah Byrne

SPHE: Ms Karen Sewell, Ms Maria Donoghue, Ms Josephine Healy, Ms Bernadette Healy

Special Education Needs Coordinator: Mr Ciaran Stone



A Wellbeing Coordinator has been appointed since 2019 to assist in the organisation of SPHE and RSE in the school, namely Ms Bernadette Healy.

### **Choice to opt out of RSE programme**

The Education Act, 1998 (Sec 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/guardian or in the case of any student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student. The school respects the rights and wishes of parents/guardians who wish to withdraw their child from the Programme and this policy will be made available to parents/guardians. If any parent(s)/guardian(s) wish to withdraw their son from any part of the Programme, they may do so by indicating their wish in writing to the Principal or Deputy Principal. Prior to the student being withdrawn from the Programme, the Principal or Deputy Principal/RSE teacher will discuss the nature of a parent's/guardian's concerns with her/him and advise of the risks associated with students receiving inaccurate information from peers or other sources.

### **Classroom Issues**

#### **Confidentiality**

While students should 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, in accordance with the school's safeguarding policy, the appropriate action will be taken i.e. immediate referral to the Designated Liaison Person for child safeguarding.

#### **Participation**

SPHE is a core curricular subject from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> year. RSE is one module of the programme. While all partners in the school community – teaching staff, parents and management – are agreed on the programme we recognise, nevertheless, the right of any parent/guardian who so wishes to request that his/her son/ person over 18 should not participate in the programme. The school will respect this choice. Where students are withdrawn from RSE the school cannot take responsibility for any versions of class content passed on to them by other students.

It is our hope that all students will avail of the RSE programme provided by the school. We understand however that at times parents/guardians may wish to withdraw their son from aspects of the RSE programme because of perceived conflict with their own values and beliefs. The school respects this parental right but will engage with parents/guardian with a view to resolving any perceived difficulties.

#### **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 and will set appropriate limits, in relation to ground rules and learning outcomes. Inappropriate questions will not be answered by a teacher in class. Students may ask questions about issues which are not included on the curriculum. On these and all questions asked, teachers will use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, together with the student's emotional maturity, the RSE Curriculum and RSE Policy for the school.



## **Visiting Speakers/Presenters**

Visiting Speakers/Presenters may be invited to assist in teaching the RSE programme. While visitors to the classroom can be immensely valuable as part of the SPHE and RSE programme, the delivery of the programme remains the responsibility of the teacher. In light of this, the SPHE/RSE teacher will remain with the class group during the visit. Visiting Speakers/Presenters will also be asked to submit a copy of their presentation to the Principal and RSE Co-ordinator prior to their visit, at which point they will also receive a copy of the school's RSE policy.

## **Dealing with the topic of Sexual Activity**

Teachers will use their professional judgement, the RSE Curriculum and the RSE Policy for the school, while dealing with the topic of Sexual Activity. Students will be given information on the age of consent for sexual activity which is 17 years for both males and females (Sexual Offences) Act, 2017.

## **Family Planning**

The post primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines state that the subject of Family Planning should be covered. The RSE Programme requires that young people are provided with information about methods of contraception. Teachers will use their professional judgement, the RSE Curriculum and RSE Policy for the school, when dealing with the topic of family planning.

## **Homosexuality**

The school does not promote any one lifestyle as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that homosexuality and identity-based issues will be raised during a programme of RSE. The post primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines include the subject of sexual orientation. The Equal Status Act, 2004 prohibits discrimination across nine grounds, including homosexuality. Teachers will use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, together with the student's emotional maturity, the RSE Curriculum and RSE Policy for the school, when dealing with the topic of sexual orientation.

## **Sexually Transmitted Infections**

The topic of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) is also addressed. Teachers will use their professional judgement, the RSE Curriculum and RSE Policy for the school, when dealing with the issue of Sexually Transmitted Infections.

## **Additional Needs**

Students with Additional Educational Needs may need more help than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up. They may need more help in learning what sorts of behaviour are and are not acceptable, and in being warned and prepared against abuse/being taken advantage of by others. Support from SNAs and the AEN department will be provided where necessary. Students completing the Level Two Learning programme (L2LP) will also cover RSE related topics as part of their Personal Care Priority Learning Unit (PLU).

## **Links to Other School Policies**

The RSE policy is linked to other school policies including (but not limited to):

- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Guidance Plan
- Anti-Bullying Policy/ Bí Cineálta
- Digital Learning Policy
- Wellbeing Statement
- Code of Behaviour

## **Provision of Training and Staff Development**

Greenhills Community College has appointed a Wellbeing Coordinator to assist the SPHE and RSE teachers on staff. The SPHE Support Service offers training and support to teachers in both Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle RSE and the school will endeavour to facilitate staff in Training and Support in teaching SPHE and RSE, subject to resources available.

## **Resources**

Core and supplementary resources are available to all SPHE and RSE teachers. These are located in the SPHE/RSE digital folder on SharePoint.

Relevant literature and information are posted around the school notice boards and walls. Staff may also avail of web-based resources for class planning; every classroom is now equipped with ICT equipment which aids the use of ICT in classes.

The SPHE and RSE departments will identify any necessary resources and present them to the Principal/Deputy Principal as part of their projected budget.

## **Monitoring & Evaluation**

The implementation of the RSE policy will be monitored at SPHE/RSE department meetings and other meetings deemed necessary by the Principal or Board of Management.

The effectiveness of the Programme will be monitored and evaluated through:

- Student Feedback and the Student Council
- Teacher Feedback
- Parent Feedback
- The RSE policy team

The RSE policy will be reviewed and amended every April by the Principal/Deputy Principal and the RSE policy team.



This policy should be read in conjunction with the Greenhills Community College Safeguarding policy. This policy is available online, on the school website.

### **Ratification & Review of Policy**

This policy was officially ratified by the Board of Management on 20/5/25

Signed: *Pamela Lewis*  
Chairperson BOM

*Notker Lannon*  
Principal

Date: 20/5/2025

20/5/25

