



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:

Greenhills Community College endeavours to be a caring community to stimulate and foster the physical, intellectual, moral, emotional and spiritual growth of our students. Our aim is to develop each of our students as a whole person by promoting an atmosphere of respect, honesty and fairness in which all the school community can achieve their full potential.

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, the student.

The Draft Guidelines for RSE (NCCA, June 1995) 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. RSE is addressed within the SPHE programme at junior cycle. 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 one's self 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). Schools are also required to teach Senior Cycle RSE even in the absence of a timetabled SPHE class. (Circular 0027/2008). The School endeavours to do this subject to available resources.

The Aims of our RSE Programme

- To help students understand and develop friendships and relationships
- 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.

(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 make arrangements regarding 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.

Signed consent forms will be gathered from all students prior to attending presentations on RSE.

RSE is included in the Transition Year programme and is delivered in a six-week module or through block classes through Life Skills and Guidance.

RSE is delivered to 5th and 6th year students in six timetabled periods or block classes throughout the year.

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

Religion: Ms Deborah Middleton

Guidance: Ms Caroline Golding Brady and Ms Brid Brennan

SPHE: Ms Louise Scully, Ms Lisa Albuquerque, Ms Aisling O'Brien, Mr Sean Ennis, Ms Karen Sewell, Ms Maria Donoghue

SEN Department: Ms Josephine Healy

RSE Presentations: Ms Teresa Byrne (R.G.N.S.C.M) and Lisa Albuquerque to Senior Cycle students

A Wellbeing Coordinator has been appointed in 2019 to assist in the organisation of SPHE and RSE in the school.

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 Child Protection Policy, the appropriate action will be taken i.e. immediate referral to the Designated Liaison Person for child protection.

Participation

SPHE is a core curricular subject in the Junior Cycle Curriculum. 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/daughter 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 particular 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.

If students are withdrawn, the school may not be able to provide alternative learning opportunities. Parents/Guardians are asked to collect their son at an appointed time if he is not attending the RSE class.

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, guided by the age of the students, together with the student's emotional maturity, 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 which is 17 years for both males and females (Sexual Offences) Act, 2006.

Family Planning

The post primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines state that the subject of Family Planning should be covered within the Senior Cycle RSE Programme. The RSE Programme requires that young people are provided with information about methods of contraception. 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 family planning.

Homosexuality

The school does not promote any one life-style 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 addressed primarily in 6th year. 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 issue of Sexually Transmitted Infections.

Special Needs

Students with Special 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. The Learning Support Department will provide support for students with SEN in this regard.

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
- Substance Use Policy
- ICT Policy
- SPHE Policy

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 Folder.

Relevant literature and information is 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
- Teacher Feedback
- Parent Feedback

The RSE policy will be reviewed and amended every September by the Principal/Deputy Principal, Wellbeing Coordinator and by the Guidance and Counselling Department.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Greenhills Community College Child Protection Policy.

Ratification & Review of Policy

This policy was officially ratified by the Board of Management on _____

Signed: _____

Chairperson BOM

Principal

Date: _____
