

**ST DAVID'S CBS
RELATIONSHIPS &
SEXUALITY EDUCATION
POLICY**



Relationships & Sexuality Education Policy

Our School Philosophy

St. David's CBS is an all boys Catholic voluntary secondary school under the patronage of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST). The characteristic spirit of our school is based on the vision and values of the ERST charter. The five characteristics of an Edmund Rice school underpin the operation of St David's secondary school.

1. Nurturing Faith, Christian spirituality and gospel based values
2. Promoting partnership
3. Excellence in teaching and learning
4. Creating a caring school community
5. Inspiring transformational leadership

St. David's CBS core aims and vision is demonstrated in our mission statement below and we are committed to fostering a safe and secure environment for all our students whilst encouraging our students to strive for excellence in both curricular and co-curricular activities.

St. David's is a Catholic School, promoting Christian values, that provide opportunities for every student to achieve his full potential in academic, artistic, social and sporting spheres in an atmosphere that promotes responsibility, tolerance and respect for others.

St David's CBS is committed to the delivery of a quality experience in RSE and the programme delivered is complementary to our school's core values and key elements of the ERST Charter in supporting students to develop key strengths in respect, tolerance and an understanding of responsible actions.

Definition of RSE

Relationships and Sexuality Education is an integral part of SPHE and must be taught in this context. SPHE deals with issues such as self - esteem, decision making and communication all of which contribute to the effective delivery and learning in RSE. RSE within the SPHE curriculum provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding in three key areas across both junior and senior cycle.

1. Human growth and development
2. Human Sexuality
3. Human Relationships

Through an exploration and development of the above themes students will be supported in enabling them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework. 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 areas of sexuality and relationships.

RSE within SPHE

The Education Act, 1998 requires that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them. An effective programme of RSE embodies this act through structured timetabled RSE lessons in addition to teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality in classes such as SPHE, Science, Biology and Religion. Every teacher and staff member, every class and extra curricular activity can offer opportunities for growth in personal and social development which subsequently supports the effectiveness of RSE.

Circulars M4/95 and M20/96 request schools to commence a process of RSE policy and programme development for all students from 1st to 6th year. At Junior Cycle, the RSE

programme is part of SPHE. The Draft Guidelines for RSE (NCCA, June, 1.2) state that SPHE is “spiral, development in nature and age appropriate in content and methodology” The RSE programme emulates this at both junior (part of SPHE) and senior (part of Religious Education) cycle and promotes the progressive personal and social development of our students.

Access to sexual and health education is an important right for students under the terms of the Article 11.2 of the European Social Charter. The Council of Europe European Committee of Social Rights has indicated it regards this Article as requiring that health education

“ be provided throughout the entire period of schooling and that sexual and reproductive health education is objective, based on contemporary scientific evidence and does not involve censoring, withholding or intentionally misrepresenting information, for example as regards contraception or different means of maintaining sexual reproductive health.”

This policy will apply to the whole school community as an effective programme of RSE is supported by a school environment that values gender equality and a healthy respect for sexuality. Therefore it is important to note that every staff member has a role to play in the support and delivery of the school’s RSE programme.

Aims of the RSE Programme

RSE is located in the overall framework of SPHE. Its own specific aims include:

- To help young people 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 young people to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in moral, spiritual and social framework

Learning Objectives of the RSE Programme

- Understand the skills required to form healthy relationships.
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, and the skills for building and maintaining self-esteem.
- To become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change especially during adolescence and to develop respect for difference between individuals.
- To understand human physiology with particular reference to the reproductive cycle, human fertility and sexually transmitted diseases.
- To understand sexual development and identity and explore aspects of sexuality including sex roles, stereotyping, gender issues and cultural influences on sexuality.
- To value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood.
- To develop strategies for decisions and actions consistent with personal moral integrity and respectful of the rights and dignity of others.
- To develop skills for coping with peer pressure, conflict and threats to personal safety.

The above aims and objectives are also supported by other aspects of the SPHE curriculum and subject curriculums in addition to the overall school environment.

Objectives of the RSE Policy

- This policy will ensure clarity and consensus on how RSE is taught in the school.
- It will articulate the relationship of RSE to SPHE
- It will articulate the aims of the RSE programme.
- It will clarify the rights, roles and responsibilities of all within the school community, in relation to the RSE Programme, with particular reference to school, staff, students, parents/guardians and the Board of Management.
- It will ensure that teachers, parents/guardians and students understand how the teaching of RSE is linked to the school ethos.

- It will provide information on the practicalities of delivering the programme.

Key Measures

Provision of Training and Staff Development

An assigned Co-ordinator of RSE will ensure the implementation of the RSE Policy and delivery of the RSE Programme to each year group. They will also be responsible for coordinating new material and resources to support RSE teachers.

- All RSE teachers at both junior and senior cycle will have the opportunity to participate in CPD training.
- Consideration is given to gender balance in the teaching of RSE
- All teachers of RSE have access to to the RSE resources through “ Team Drive” and RSE Co-ordinator

Inclusion of Parents/Guardians

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. Parents/Guardians are invited to participate in the process of drawing up a school policy on RSE. Each parent/guardian of incoming 1st year students will be informed of the RSE programme at the Information Evening for 1st year parents. Notification to read the RSE Policy on the school website will be communicated to all parents through text and follow up letter. Parents will be provided with a full copy of this policy following a request. Parents may ask to withdraw their son from the RSE programme and if such occurs we will encourage a meeting with our RSE Co-Ordinator to discuss their specific concerns but the parents decision will always be respected.

Ethical and Moral Considerations

RSE Teachers adhere to the following in the delivery of the RSE programme:

Answering Questions

While it is important to create an environment in RSE in which students can discuss issues openly, teachers may not be able to answer all questions asked by students and will set appropriate limits. Students may ask questions which are not appropriate to a classroom setting. On these, and on all questions, teachers should use their professional judgement, be guided by the age of the students, the RSE curriculum and the RSE policy for the school. Reference should also be made to the “Ground Rules”, which are drawn up at the beginning of the RSE programme.

Confidentiality

While students should be encouraged not to disclose personal or private information in RSE classes, there may be times when they do talk about personal issues. It is important that students are made aware of the limits of confidentiality from the beginning and that teachers do not give an unconditional guarantee of confidentiality. Confidentiality should be respected unless a teacher becomes aware that a child is at risk, in which case the appropriate action should be to notify the Designated Liaison Person (the Principal) who will then follow the procedures outlined in the Child Protection Procedures and Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools

Students should also be made aware that they too may need to make judgements regarding confidentiality when sensitive information indicating risk is disclosed to them by friends. They will be reminded of the Child Protection Policy of the school and encouraged to seek support if they have any concerns.

Sexual Activity

The RSE policy statement gives teachers a framework, related to morals and values within which the issue of sexual activity should be addressed.

Teachers will give young people information on the age of consent which is 17 years of age for both males and females, for heterosexual and homosexual relationships. Teachers who become aware that a student is sexually active under the age of consent must bring this information to the Designated Liaison Person, the Principal who will then inform the parents.

Family Planning

The RSE Curriculum Guidelines state that the subject of contraception will be covered within both the Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle RSE programme. This topic will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issue in a non-directive way.

Sexual Identity

The post-primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines include the subject of sexual orientation.

The Equal Status Act, 2000 and the *Equality Act, 2004* prohibits discrimination across nine grounds, including sexual orientation. Consideration needs to be given to the messages that are conveyed if the subject of homosexuality is not discussed in a clear and open way in schools. Teachers will begin this topic in junior cycle to ensure a safe and secure environment is provided for all students to express their identity.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's)

While awareness of STIs is one of the objectives of the 2nd year syllabus and is viewed as very important it is mainly addressed in the Senior Cycle RSE curriculum. Again content is always age appropriate and guided by the professional judgement of the RSE teacher within the framework of the RSE policy.

Links to Other Policies and Curriculum Delivery

The following policies were examined to ensure consistency of the RSE Policy with the overall School Plan.

- Child Protection Policy
- Anti - Bullying Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Wellbeing Policy
- Child Safeguarding and Risk Assessment

The following Curriculum Delivery is set out.

- At Junior Cycle RSE is delivered as a minimum of a 6 week programme as part of the SPHE curriculum.
- At Senior Cycle RSE is delivered as a minimum of a 6 week programme during RE Classes.
- Aspects of RSE are delivered across the curriculum in Science, Biology and Religion.

Implementation Arrangements, Roles and Responsibilities regarding RSE Policy

Implementation

The RSE Coordinator on behalf of the Board of Management will coordinate implementation of the RSE policy.

All RSE teachers will be responsible for the delivery of the RSE content. RSE teachers are supported by the RSE Co-Ordinator and will attend in-service training.

Relevant RSE school resources will be sourced, stored and updated by the RSE Coordinator.

Ratification & Communication

This policy will be available to parents, teachers and the BOM and can be amended when consensus has been reached by all parties.

The final agreed policy will be presented to the BOM, to be ratified and then circulated to all parties involved.

Parents/guardians will be informed of the RSE Policy from the time of enrolment of the student.

Implementation Date

It will be implemented in the school year beginning September 2019.

Monitoring the Implementation of the Policy

The RSE co-ordinator in association with the school management will monitor the implementation of this policy.

Reviewing and Evaluating the Policy

The policy will be reviewed and evaluated firstly after 2019/2020 and thereafter every three years under the direction of the Board of Management. This process will be coordinated by the RSE Coordinator in consultation with the wider school community. Ongoing review and evaluation will take cognisance of changing information, guidelines, legislation and feedback from parents/guardians, students, teachers and others. The RSE Co-ordinator will have the role of monitoring aspects of the policy. This policy will be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation and within the framework of school planning.

The following indicators will be used to gauge the impact and effectiveness of the policy, at review.

- RSE is taught as part of the SPHE and RE Curriculum at junior and senior cycle respectively.
- Resource material is available to all RSE teachers
- Appropriate in-service for teachers is available and relevant teachers are availing of it
- Students are aware of the policy
- Parents/guardians are aware of the policy
- Feedback is received from teachers, other school staff, students, parents/guardians and members of the Board of Management
- A confidential survey of students, staff and parents

The following may be considered to support the process of review and evaluation:

- Feedback from student council.
- Parent/guardian feedback, including at parent/teacher meetings

- A comment/suggestion box.