



Errigal College Letterkenny

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

May 2024

Proposer:	Gina Grant
Seconder:	Joanne Donaghy
Chairperson of the Board of Management:	Donal Coyle
Principal:	Danny McFadden
Date of Approval:	15th May 2024

Mission Statement

Errigal College aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

Our Mission Statement affirms that we aspire:

To enable each student to achieve his/her educational potential, in partnership with parents, based on the principles of caring, dignity, mutual respect and equality.

We are an ETB school, state, co-educational and multi-denominational, underpinned by the core values of:

- Excellence in Education
- Care
- Equality
- Community
- Respect



Introduction

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. This education is delivered consciously and unconsciously by parents, teachers, peers, adults and the media. In Irish schools, RSE 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. This approach gives opportunities to children and young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible manner.

At post-primary level, this means building on the primary programme and providing young people with information and skills to critically evaluate the wide range of information,

opinions, attitudes and values offered today, and so make positive, responsible choices about themselves and the way they live their lives.

Rationale for RSE

RSE is an integral part of, and connects with, aspects of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). It is of particular importance for young people at this stage of their lives as they reflect on questions such as 'what kind of person am I?' and 'what matters for me in relationships?' As they continue to form their identity, they are making sense of life experiences, information, images and messages about relationships and sexuality from a range of informal sources such as their peers, family, the media, online world. Having the opportunity to think about and discuss relationships, sexuality and healthy sexual expression within a safe classroom setting and with a skilled teacher is vitally important.

The Aims of our RSE programme

RSE, 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, and in keeping with the policy of the school.
- To provide opportunities for students to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways which help them to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

- To inform students on information on consent.

It is acknowledged that in a course of limited duration these aims are aspirational.

Provision of RSE at Errigal College

Errigal College provides:

- All Junior Cycle students are taught SPHE in their class groups, a minimum of 6 of these classes will be used to cover RSE topics listed in Appendix A.
- Transition Year students are taught 'Personal Development' in which aspects of the Senior Cycle SPHE will be covered. Transition Year' classes also have greater access to talks, guest speakers etc.
- 5th & 6th Year students have SPHE as a timetabled subject. A minimum of 6 of these classes will be used to cover RSE topics listed in Appendix B.

Planning for Students with Special Educational Needs

- Wherever possible we aim to fully include SEN students in the RSE lessons so that they benefit from the emphasis on oral and mental work and by listening and participating with other students in demonstrating and explaining their methods. We do this by team teaching, whenever possible, by differentiation of our lessons and by collaborating with resource teachers (JCSP). Students with difficulties in literacy and numeracy are identified and given extra help.
- Where necessary, teachers will in consultation with the Principal, the Special Needs Coordinator, relevant members of the SET team and the Parents draw up a Student Profile for a student.

- When planning, teachers will try to address the students needs through simplified or modified tasks or through the use of support staff.
- SEN students may also follow separate programmes outside of the classroom depending on individual needs.

Delivery of RSE at Errigal College

- RSE lessons will be delivered by members of a consolidated SPHE team to Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle students.
- All teachers have access to shared resources on the SPHE shared drive.

Parental Involvement

The school acknowledges that the primary responsibility for the personal development of children rests with their parents. However, it also accepts the school's role in supporting parents in this work. Links between home and school play a vital role in supporting the efforts of parents and guardians in the home and the work of the teachers in the classroom. Such links are particularly important in RSE. Errigal College seeks to develop well-structured continuing links with the lives of the students outside the classroom and outside the school. Such links can inform an RSE programme by helping teachers to prioritise modules of particular relevance.

A copy of both SPHE and RSE policies will be available to any parent or guardian on request from the school office. Policies are also available on the school website.

Letters are distributed to parents in advance of the RSE module in senior cycle. A copy of this letter is available to teachers in the SPHE shared drive.

Parental Choices

It is hoped that all students will avail of the RSE programme provided by the school. It is understood that at times parents may wish to withdraw their children from particular aspects of the RSE Programme because of conflict with their own beliefs and values. The school respects this parental right as per the Education Act 1998, Section 30, Subsection 2E.

Parents must notify the Principal in writing if they wish to have their child withdrawn from aspects of the programme. Parents are welcome to contact the school and meet with the SPHE Co-ordinator to discuss the nature of their concerns.

Confidentiality

It is school policy that in circumstances where a student is considered at some risk of any type of abuse or in breach of the law, the teacher must follow The Child Protection Guidelines.

The following is also school policy:

- Teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality;
- Students 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 student to notify parents;
- Teachers must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard the information;
- Teachers must indicate clearly to students when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential - the students can then decide whether to proceed or not.

RSE links to Child Safeguarding

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 support 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.

Cross-Curricular Links

Post-primary students may learn about aspects of RSE in PE, RE, Home Economics, Science, Biology or in other subjects when relevant issues are being studied.

Roles in relation to RSE

The BOM should:

- Ensure that the policy is developed and evaluated annually.
- Approve the policy.
- Consider reports from the inspectorate on the implementation of the policy.

The Principal/Deputy Principal should:

- Establish such structures and procedures that are necessary for the implementation of this policy.
- Provide opportunities to staff for CDP in this area.
- Monitor the implementation of the policy.
- Ensure that teachers delivering the programme are willing, qualified and capable.

Monitoring and Review

The Policy will be reviewed annually by the SPHE team. The opinions of students will be included and SPHE coordinator will liaise with the Student Council. The opinions of parents will also be included and SPHE coordinator will liaise with the Parents Association. The opinions of staff and management will be included based on current legislation and needs.

Signed: Donal Coyle
(Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Signed: Danny McFadden
(Principal)

Appendix A: Junior Cycle RSE Topics

Topics	Learning Outcomes
Having a friend and being a friend	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish what young people value in different relationships and how this changes over time. 2. Evaluate attitudes, skills and values that help make, maintain and end friendships respectfully. 3. Recognise their capacity to extend and receive friendship
The Relationships Spectrum	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain the different influences on relationships and levels of intimacy. 2. Analyse relationship difficulties experienced by young people.
Sexuality, Gender Identity and Sexual Health	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe fertility, conception, prenatal development and birth, and the particular health considerations for each. 2. Explain what it means to take care of your sexual health. 3. Demonstrate assertive communication skills in support of responsible, informed decision-making about relationships and sexual health that are at an age and developmentally appropriate. 4. Reflect on the personal and social dimensions of sexual orientation and gender identity.
Media Influence on Relationships and Sexuality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Critically analyse the use of sexual imagery and gender stereotyping in various forms of the media.

	2. Critique the influence of the media on their understanding of sexuality and sexual health.
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Appendix B: Senior Cycle RSE Topics

Topics	Learning Outcomes
Self-awareness and Personal Skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compare what they value in relationships with what is valued by significant other groups, e.g. family, church, older people, friends, different cultures. 2. Compare what they value in relationships with the values portrayed in relationships in the media. 3. Identify the personal strengths that they bring to relationships. 4. Construct a personal life plan including consideration of their personal, social and vocational goals and the place of parenthood in this plan. 5. Analyse the concepts of love, being in love and the importance of love in its various aspects, including closeness, intimacy, distance, pleasure and commitment.
Relationship Skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demonstrate genuineness, empathy and respect in different types of relationship scenarios. 2. Demonstrate relationship skills which support the setting up, maintenance and ending of relationships. 3. Design an awareness campaign highlighting different ways to negotiate sexual relationships in order to avoid unwanted sexual activities and/or

	<p>unprotected sexual intercourse.</p> <p>4. Devise an SPHE class for junior cycle students which focuses on healthy and safe engagement in online and virtual communications.</p>
<p>Sexual and Reproductive Health</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain the different stages of adolescent development, including the physical, emotional and sexual changes that take place in puberty. 2. Explain the reproductive process including an understanding of fertility from both a male and a female perspective. 3. Research sexually transmitted infections including Human Immuno-deficiency Virus (HIV) and the importance of early medical intervention for STI's. 4. Compare different methods of contraception and protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and pregnancy. 5. Examine different lifestyle choices about sexual activity, the arguments for delaying sexual activities and the consequences of being sexually active for themselves and their personal relationships. 6. Discuss the complexity of moral, social and cultural issues that impact on sexual behaviour including the pressure on youth to be sexually attractive and sexually available. 7. Discuss different cultural values and beliefs about sex and sexual health.
<p>Sexual Identity</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Distinguish between sexual activity, sexuality and sexual orientation. 2. Clarify their understanding of and comfort with

	<p>different sexual orientations.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Demonstrate how to relate respectfully to others of a different sexual orientation.
<p>Parenting</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compare their understanding of the responsibilities of being a parent/guardian with parents/guardians' understanding of their responsibilities. 2. Discuss the role of commitment and relationship skills in marriage and other committed relationships, that help to support lasting relationships and family life. 3. Compose an 'open' letter to adults/guardians emphasising the importance of supportive adult/child relationship on the development of self-esteem and independence and how this might be achieved. 4. Design a scenario which explores the consequences of crisis pregnancy, teenage pregnancy and/or parenthood for different males and different females.
<p>Personal Rights and Personal Safety</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Argue in support of their right to personal safety, privacy and their own space, and the consequences for them when these are not respected. 2. Explain what sexual harassment is, including issues of power and control. 3. Make a short presentation explaining sexual harassment and the law as it applies to it. 4. Demonstrate skills for dealing with sexual harassment including how to assess risk and take

	<p>steps to deal with it including where to access help and support.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Formulate suggestions for a school policy on sexual harassment. 6. Design an information campaign highlighting safety tips to protect against rape and sexual assault including where to access help and support if one is a victim.
<p>Being Health Literate</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss the law as it relates to the age of consent for sexual activity. 2. Research the services offered by statutory and voluntary agencies in the community which support the sexual health and wellbeing of young adults. 3. Describe the statutory and voluntary agencies which offer support to those experiencing relationship difficulties. 4. Evaluate the reliability and credibility of two sources of information about sexual health, sexuality and sexuality orientation. 5. Design an awareness campaign about young people's rights and responsibilities in relation to online/virtual communications