

# **St Fergal's College**

## **Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy**

### **Mission Statement**

*St. Fergal's College, is a co-educational school which aims to provide a quality education for all our students in a caring and respectful environment*

*We enable students to develop fully a sense of their own unique worth by providing a broadly based curriculum which fosters intellectual, spiritual, moral, emotional and physical growth. We are committed to promoting good relationships between students, staff, parents and our community.*

*We aim to create a safe, healthy, learning environment that nurtures self-discipline and encourages our students to take responsibility for their own learning.*

*We aim to educate our students not only for now, but also for life.*

### **Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education**

RSE is a developmental process through experiential learning in which students participate to help cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships.

### **The aims of our Relationships and Sexuality Education programme**

Relationships and sexuality education which is located mainly in the overall framework of Social, Personal and Health Education and has as its specific aims:

- a) To help students understand and develop friendships and relationships
  - b) To promote an understanding of sexuality
  - c) To promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's relationship with others including the importance of consent.
  - d) To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction
  - e) To enable students to develop attitudes and values toward their sexuality in a 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 help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

### **What we currently provide**

The RSE programme as taught in our school is the programme laid out by the NCCA. The core resource used is the TRUST programme developed by the HSE and the DE for Senior Cycle and from the Junior Cert SPHE Curriculum

- We aim to provide RSE in TY, 5th and 6th year as per Department recommendations.
- Student centred pastoral care structure supports include Year Head, Guidance and Counselling, Learning Support, Principal & Deputy Principal, Care Team, Student Council, TY Programme.

- Possibility of one to one conversations with the school Guidance Counsellor.
- Anti-bullying policy and programmes of prevention (eg Well-Being Week, Internet Safety Programme etc.) which emphasise respect for the rights and dignity of others.
- Education of human physiology reproduction in Science, Home Economics and Biology classes, Social Education (LCA).
- Home Economics which discusses relationships within the family, maturity, adolescence, and dealing with conflict, independence and responsibility.

## **Guidelines for the management and organisation of Relationships and Sexuality Education in our school**

### **1. Arrangements and Timing of the Programme:**

All second level schools must implement Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) as an element of SPHE at junior cycle and as an RSE programme in senior cycle. Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff will be made by the Principal.

It is suggested that the programme commences in January as this gives the opportunity for relationship building before this sensitive area is addressed. A common timeline ensures the entire body of students are getting the same accurate and factual information at the same time.

### **2. Class Organisation and Timetabling**

The time allocation recommended is six periods of 1 hour classes per year.

### **3. Informing and Involving Parents:**

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. A copy of this policy will be made available to any parent on request to the School Office and on the website.

A letter outlining the RSE provision will be included in the First Year pack indicating that parents have a right to withdraw their children from RSE class.

Parents do not have to give reasons for withdrawal, but we respectfully invite them to do so - sometimes we can then resolve misunderstandings. Once a parent's request to withdraw is made, that request must be complied with until revoked by the parent

### **4. Offering Advice:**

The school's function is to provide a general education about sexual matters and issues and not to offer individual advice, information or counselling on aspects of sexual behaviour and contraception - however sources of professional information and advice will be identified when appropriate. Teachers may provide students with education and information about where and from whom they can receive confidential sexual advice and treatment, e.g. their doctor or other suitable agency. Advice offered should not be directive and should be appropriate to the age of the student. (It is, for example, not appropriate to give pupils a list of abortion clinics.)

### **5. Explicit Questions:**

It may not be appropriate to deal with some explicit questions in class. In practice this means that teachers should say that it is not appropriate to deal with that question at this time. When

deciding whether or not to answer questions the teacher should consider the age and readiness of the students, the RSE programme content, the ethos of the school and the RSE policy. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised he/she should consult with and/or seek advice from the Guidance Counsellor or the Principal.

#### **6. 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 refer this immediately to the DLP in line with Child Protection Guidelines. The Principal will decide whether to inform the parents and/or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling.

In matters where a child confides an issue:

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

The “Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools” issued by the Department of Education and Skills contains the following in paragraph 4.1:

*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.*

*(Note: In the case of this school, the Principal is the Designated Liaison Person.)*

#### **7. Special Needs**

Children with special needs may need more help than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up; they may also need more help in learning what sorts of behaviour are and are not acceptable, and in being warned and prepared against abuse by others.

#### **8. Ongoing support, development and review Training:**

a) All teachers involved in this work do not necessarily have to be ‘experts’ on the issues concerned. However, they do require sensitivity to the needs of the group, an ability to deal with questions openly/honestly and a preparedness to refer to more expert advice if necessary. The skills acquired in general teaching apply also to health education.

b) The school will aim to facilitate teachers to obtain training in this field.

#### **9. Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the RSE programme:**

We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this programme.

Specifically important to the RSE Programme are: a) Student feedback;

b) Staff review and feedback;

c) Parental feedback.

d) Any NCCA revisions that may arise in SPHE specifications for RSE in the SPHE specification, or from any other official sources.

## **10. Appendices Attached**

Appendix 1: RSE Course Content listed by year group

Appendix 2: Information letter for Parents.

## **11. Policy Implementation:**

Adherence to the above policy is the responsibility of all St Fergal's College school staff supported by the school community.

**This policy was adopted by the Board of Management at its meeting on, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2021,**

**and will be reviewed during the next school year or earlier if requested by a parent/guardian, teacher or Board member.**

Chairperson John King  
Principal Gerry Quinn

Date 5<sup>th</sup> December 2021  
Date 5<sup>th</sup> December 2021

## **Appendix 1      RSE Course Content listed by year group**

### **Relationship and Sexuality Education**

Books:    Health and Wellbeing SPHE 1, 2, 3.

Trust pack for TY, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year

#### ***First Year RSE ( in the SPHE Programme)***

1. Being an Adolescent: Puberty and reproduction
2. Having a friend: Being a friend, Making and keeping friends
3. Sexuality: Changes in Adolescence, what happening to your body.
4. Gender Identity and Sexual Health; gender stereotyping.

#### ***Second Year RSE ( in the SPHE Programme)***

1. Changes at adolescence; Physical, social and emotional changes.
2. Having a friend: Being a friend; what do we value in friendship?
3. The Relationship Spectrum; different types of relationships.
4. Sexuality Gender Identity and Sexual Health; sexual orientation
5. Media Influences on Relationships and Sexuality;

#### ***Third Year RSE ( in the SPHE Programme)***

1. Friendship and Romantic relationships
2. The Relationship Spectrum; healthy and unhealthy Relationships.
3. Gender Identity and Sexual Health; pregnancy, sexual health, Consent.
4. Media Influences on Relationships and Sexuality. Using sex in advertising.

### **Senior RSE Content: TRUST Programme**

#### **TY**

What we value in relationships

Healthy Relationships

Self Esteem

Reproduction

Contraception

### **5<sup>th</sup> Year**

Self Esteem

Understanding Boundaries

Communicating our Boundaries

Sexuality

Sexual Orientation

Unplanned pregnancy

STIs

### **6<sup>th</sup> Year**

When we feel hurt

Intimacy

Influences and Values

Decision Making

Responsible Relationships

Contraceptive methods

STI Transmission

Consent (not included in TRUST pack)



## **Appendix 2 Sample letter to parents**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is a core part of the secondary school curriculum. S.P.H.E. provides a unique and exciting opportunity for students to develop skills and competence, to learn about themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development.

Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) is one module within the S.P.H.E. curriculum. RSE is a life-long developmental process of acquiring knowledge and an understanding of human relationships through which students cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships. One timetabled period per week is allocated to S.P.H.E. and out of the S.P.H.E. Programme in the year; six timetabled periods will be assigned to Relationships and Sexuality Education. This module will be taught to all year groups from first to sixth year. If you would like any further information about the contents of this module please contact the school.

As you are the primary educators of your children, we recognise the right of any parent/guardian who wishes to request that his/her child should not participate in the programme. Any parents/guardians wishing to withdraw their son/daughter must contact the school.

Yours Sincerely

  

---