



St Joseph's Secondary School, Castlebar. Relationships and Sexuality Education (R.S.E.) Policy

Mercy philosophy of Education

Inspired by the vision of Catherine McAuley, Mercy Education is committed to holistic development and to the achievement of the full potential of each student, particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalised. It is a process informed and influenced by the teaching and example of Jesus Christ and is conducted in an atmosphere of care, respect and joy. Mercy Education is committed to ongoing whole school development in collaboration and partnership with the Board of Management, Staff, Parents/Guardians and the wider community.

CEIST Core Values

The Core Values of CEIST are:

- Promoting Spiritual & Human Development
- Achieving Quality in Teaching and Learning
- Showing Respect for Every Person
- Being Just and Responsible

Mission Statement

St. Joseph's Secondary School Castlebar, Co.Mayo is a voluntary Catholic Secondary School for girls under the trusteeship of CEIST (Catholic Education an Irish Schools' Trust). We aim to provide a holistic Christian Education in co-operation with staff, students, parents/guardians, Board of Management and the Community. We work to create equality for all in an atmosphere of mutual respect. We strive to excellence in learning and endeavour to help each student to reach her full potential in a positive, caring and happy environment.

School Ethos

The characteristic spirit of St. Joseph's Secondary School, Castlebar is based on the Mercy Philosophy of Education which espouses the core values of respect, justice, care and joy. The School's Ethos is holistic and person centred. The school encourages students to use and share their talents to their full potential, to recognise God's presence in their lives, to celebrate their Christian faith and to show respect to all persons in all areas of life and work. Students are encouraged by school staff to strive for excellence in learning and to participate to the best of their ability in all aspects of school life.



Introduction

Relationships and Sexuality Education (R.S.E.) as part of the S.P.H.E. Programme supports the personal growth and development, health and wellbeing of our students. Relationship and Sexuality Education is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. R.S.E. gives an opportunity to students to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible manner. R.S.E. in the Post Primary School builds on the module which is delivered in Primary School by providing the students with information and skills to critically evaluate the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values offered today, and thus make positive, responsible choices about themselves and the way they live their lives.

Scope of Policy

- (a) R.S.E. policy applies to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality education. R.S.E. is a structured module within the S.P.H.E. programme at Junior Cycle.
- (b) In order to be effective the R.S.E. module in St. Joseph's Secondary School must be supported in a school climate that is marked by gender equity and a healthy respect for sexuality. These key principles require particular attention in a single sex school such as St. Joseph's.
- (c) Information and discussion regarding R.S.E. can also take place in other classes. The R.S.E. module is supported by the wider curriculum in such areas as Home Economics, Science, Religious Education, Physical Education and Civic, Social, Political Education.
- (d) This policy applies to school staff, students, Board of Management, parents/guardians, visiting speakers, external facilitators, outside agencies.

Rationale

- The Education Act 1998.
- Section 4 of the Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools requires schools to have an agreed policy for R.S.E. and a suitable R.S.E. Programme in place for all students at Junior Cycle.
- Circular M4/95
- Circular M20/96
- Circular 0027/2008
- R.S.E. in the context of S.P.H.E - February, Mayock, Kitching, Mangan



- Equal Status Act
- Child Protection Guidelines

Relationship to the school's Mission Statement

- St. Joseph's Secondary School acknowledges the importance of R.S.E. being taught in the context of a whole school climate that is inclusive and respectful.
- The R.S.E. Policy reflects the core values and ethos of our school, as outlined above in the school's vision statement.
- Spiritual, moral and ethical issues will arise when teaching R.S.E. This R.S.E. policy will guide teachers in the treatment of such issues in accordance with the ethos of the school, therefore, teachers must realise that their role is to express the views of the whole school community on these sensitive issues, and not their own personal views. In this regard, it should be noted that:
 - The school is required to deliver all aspects of the R.S.E. curriculum, including those in relation to sexual orientation, contraception, sexually transmitted infections etc. This is done within a context in which teaching of the programme is informed by the school's ethos.
 - The school can express its ethos while at the same time facilitating students in discussing a range of views in relation to topics within the R.S.E. Programme.

Aims of the RSE Programme

1. To help young people develop healthy friendships and relationships.
2. To promote an understanding of sexuality.
3. To promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's relationship with others.
4. To promote knowledge of and respect for human reproductions.
5. To enable young people to develop healthy attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a respectful, moral, spiritual and social framework.



Objectives of RSE Programme

R.S.E. should enable students 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.
- Understand human physiology with particular reference to the reproductive cycle and human fertility.
- Understand sexual development and identity and explore aspects of sexuality including sex roles, stereotyping and gender issues.
- Value relationships and family life.
- Develop strategies for decisions and actions consistent with personal moral integrity and respectful of the rights and dignity of others.

RSE Module Themes for Junior Cycle

The resource material for R.S.E. for Junior and Senior Cycle as developed by the DES (Department of Education and Skills), N.C.C.A (National Council for Curriculum Assessment) will be used and the H.S.E (Health Service Executive). The age, level of maturity and class dynamics will determine what topics are covered and to what level. Other modular materials may be used.

Resources

- Relationships and Sexuality Education – Interim guidelines, Department of Education and Science 1996.
- S.P.H.E. – Resource material for R.S.E., Post-Primary Junior Cycle, Department of Education and Science 1998.
- S.P.H.E. – Resource material for R.S.E. Post-Primary Senior Cycle (Department of Education and Science) 1999.
- Grow Up - Junior Cycle S.P.H.E., Folens
- About You - Always Resource Pack



- Busybodies – Adolescent Development Video, H. S. E.
- T.R.U.S.T. – Resource material for R.S.E. (D.E.S., H.S.E., and Crisis Pregnancy Agency)
- On My Own Two Feet
- Health Promotion Unit
- Healthy Lifestyles 1, 2 and 3. Edel O'Brien 2008

Provision of Training and Staff Development

- The school has an appointed co-ordinator for S.P.H.E.
- Teachers are released to attend R.S.E. Training.
- Teachers of S.P.H.E./R.S.E. have access to the S.P.H.E. and R.S.E. resources.
These resources are stored in the S.P.H.E. resource locker.

Implementation of the Policy

- R.S.E. included in the S.P.H.E. curriculum and is timetabled in all Junior Cycle classes, and Transition Year.
- 5th and 6th year R.S.E. is included in the R.E. curriculum.
- As far as possible, R.S.E. modules will commence in second term for each year group.
- All parents/guardians of 1st year students will receive a copy of the R.S.E./S.P.H.E. Policy and a Junior Cycle programme outline.
- Parents/guardians of Senior Cycle students will receive an outline of the Senior Cycle programme.
- Parents/guardians of students who enrol in our school during the academic year will receive a copy of S.P.H.E./R.S.E. Policy, and an outline of the relevant R.S.E. Programme.
- Parents/guardians are encouraged to have discussed relationships and sexuality with their daughter prior to the commencement of these classes.
- We respect the right of parents/guardians to withdraw their daughter from this module with the prior consent of the Principal.
- It is the responsibility of the school to make alternative arrangements for the student in this situation.
- It is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to inform the school of their wishes. The school requires the parents/guardians to put their request in writing.



- Copies of the R.S.E. programme will be made available for viewing by appointment.

Ethical and Moral Considerations

- R.S.E. is a complex area of the curriculum. The R.S.E. Policy provides guidance on the moral and ethical framework within which the programme is to be taught. In this regard, the policy outlines the following issues.

Answering Questions

While it is important to create an environment in S.P.H.E./R.S.E. in which students can discuss issues openly, teachers may not be able to answer all questions asked by students and can set appropriate limits. Students may ask questions about issues which are not included in the curriculum. On this, and on all questions, teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, the R.S.E. Curriculum, the R.S.E. and the Policy and Ethos of the school.

Confidentiality: While students should not be encouraged to disclose personal or private information in S.P.H.E./R.S.E. classes, there may be times when they do talk about their own lives. Confidentiality should be respected but it should be noted that there are times when the teacher cannot promise confidentiality. The issues surrounding the following cannot be treated as confidential:

- Child abuse: physical, emotional, sexual or neglect.
- Underage sexual intercourse (under 17 years of age).
- Intention to harm self or others.
- Substance misuse.

Role of Parents & Guardians

- The Board of Management and staff of St. Joseph's Secondary School acknowledge parents/guardians as the primary educators of their children and that the home is a natural environment where relationships and sexuality education should take place.
- The school will work in a supportive role to complement the work of parents/guardians.
- It is expected that parents/guardians will support R.S.E. teaching methodologies and resources used by the school.
- A Parent's/guardian's right to withdraw their daughter from the R.S.E. process will be respected on the understanding that the parent/guardian is taking responsibility for this area of the child's education himself/herself. An explanation in writing will be required from the parent/guardian in such a situation.



Evaluation

This policy will be evaluated by the teachers of the R.S.E. Programme in consultation with the wider school community.

- The evaluation process will take cognisance of changing information, guidelines, legislation, feedback from students, parents/guardians, staff and others in the school community.
- St. Joseph's Secondary School is committed to monitor and evaluate the efficiency of the R.S.E. Programme, specifically student feedback, staff review and parental feedback.

Consultation

All partners in the school community i.e. Staff, Student Body, Parents' Council, Board of Management have been consulted in drafting this policy document.

Monitoring and Review

This policy was Reviewed and Ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting on:

This Policy is operational from: _____

Mr. John Caulfield
Chairperson of Board of Management

Ms. Marie Mac Cabe
Principal