



St. Angela's School, Waterford. Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy Statement

A. Mission Statement

St Angela's School is a girl's' Catholic school which aims to cherish the uniqueness of each individual and develop her to her full potential, in the spirit of the Ursuline ethos.

In this policy document all references to gender are taken to be inclusive and the term "parent" is taken to include "guardian".

B. Our School Philosophy

1. Our Philosophy is..."One will achieve more with gentleness and kindness". As a Catholic School the primary objective is to participate in the evangelizing mission of the church by fostering a school community where gospel values are lived and taught. Ursuline Education strives to nurture a community where Christian values are respected, lived and taught.
2. The school encourages pupils to consider and assess different viewpoints in relation to issues of morality. The experience gained through writing this policy and through respecting the needs of minority groups and individuals enriches the whole life of the school.
3. The school gives pupils the opportunity to explore the humanities, sciences, arts, business studies and technical subjects. In addition, it provides religious, moral and physical education in order to meet its founding objectives of supporting pupils in achieving their full academic potential and preparing them for participation in civic society and working life.

C. Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education

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 area of sexuality and relationships.

D. Relationships and Sexuality Education within Social Personal and Health Education

The *Draft Guidelines for RSE* (NCCA, June 1995, 1.2) 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. 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 oneself 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.

E. Aims and Objectives

Aims

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

- a) To help pupils 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
- d) To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction
- e) To enable pupils to develop attitudes and values toward their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework in keeping with the ethos of the school
- f) To provide opportunities for pupils to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way

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

Objectives

RSE should enable the students to:

- g) acquire the understanding and skills necessary to form healthy friendships and relationships
- h) develop a positive sense of self-awareness and the skills for building and maintaining self-esteem
- i) become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change especially during adolescence and to develop respect for difference between individuals
- j) understand human physiology with reference to the reproductive cycle, human fertility and sexually transmitted infections
- k) understand sexual development and identity and explore aspects of sexuality including sex role stereotyping, gender issues and cultural influences on sexuality
- l) value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood
- m) develop strategies for decision making and actions consistent with personal moral integrity and respectful of the rights and dignity of others
- n) develop skills for coping with peer pressure, conflict and threats to personal safety

Some of these objectives will be supported by other elements of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), by the broader curriculum and the whole school climate. (Relationships and Sexuality Education, Interim Curriculum and Guidelines for Post-Primary schools, page 10)

F. Guidelines for the management and organisation of Relationships and Sexuality Education in our school

1. School Arrangements:

Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff will be made by the Principal.

Selecting teachers to deliver the RSE course may be a difficult task and every effort will be made to select teachers who are willing and have an interest in delivering this programme. Generally, the Senior Cycle Religious Education Teachers deliver the course within the Religious Education subject.

2. 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. Teachers should instruct their students to inform their parents when the RSE module will begin.

Parents may make themselves aware of the materials covered by the RSE class by looking at the resources listed in Appendix 2; many of these are available online and are approved for use in the RSE classroom.

3. 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 behavior and contraception, sources of professional information and advice will be identified when appropriate. Teachers may provide pupils 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 pupil. If any explicit issues are raised or if a teacher has concerns, the matter in question may be referred on to the Guidance Department.

4. Explicit Questions:

At times students may ask explicit or personal questions. While it may not be appropriate to deal with some explicit questions in class, care must be taken to ensure a safe and inclusive environment is maintained. Teachers may choose to say that it is not appropriate to deal with that question at this time. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised, he/she should seek advice from the SPHE Co-ordinator, Guidance Department or the Principal. When deciding whether 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. A teacher may direct a student to appropriate channels to seek information on explicit or personal topics. Teachers may encourage a student to discuss the matter with their parent(s) if they have not done so already.

5. Confidentiality:

It is school policy that in circumstances where a pupil is considered at risk of any type of abuse or in breach of the law, the teacher must refer this immediately to the DLP (Principal). The Principal will decide whether to inform the parents

and/or the appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling.

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 supports 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 Tusla immediately.

6. Delivery of RSE

In St. Angela's School, the RSE Programme is delivered within Religious Education throughout Transition Year, 5th and 6th Year. There must be at least six lessons of RSE delivered over the course of each year, but more may be delivered.

Teachers are encouraged to use a Personal Learning Diary (PLD) for each student. These booklets are not for assessment purposes but simply to collate the student's new learning. They are completely private and personal to each student. They can be utilized online as an 'efolio' or in hardcopy. The PLDs should contain the class ground rules, referral pathways and appropriate 'sentence starters'. PLDs should be handed up at the end of every class and kept in a secure place for confidentially purposes and student's peace of mind and in line with GDPR guidelines.

7. Visiting speakers

a) It is school policy that most of the RSE programme is best discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by the pupils. However, visitors can enhance the quality of the provision in addition to the planned programme of RSE.

b) The SPHE Co-ordinator will provide the visitor, well in advance of the visit, with a copy of this RSE policy. After gaining approval from the Principal for the visit, the organiser makes the visitor aware of the ethos of the school and the manner of delivery of the RSE programme. Issues to consider are:

- i) the degree of explicitness of the content and presentation;
- ii) will staff take an active role in the visitor's activities?
- iii) how will the visit be built upon and followed up?

c) Visitors should be given advance notice of the composition of the class and an idea of how their contribution fits into the scheme of work.

d) In order to inform the visitor of the precise requirements of a group and to optimise the visitor's time, it is advisable for class questions to be forwarded in advance.

e) The class teacher **MUST** remain with the class while there is a visiting speaker present. There is no exception. If this is not in line with the visiting speakers practice, the visit will not proceed.

8. LGBTI+

Teachers do not promote any one life-style as the only acceptable one for society. It is inevitable and natural that LGBTI+ will be discussed during a programme of sex education. One of the advantages of exploring issues concerning LGBTI+ is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions and to address prejudice. Discussion regarding LGBTI+ should be age appropriate and sensitive to the students.

9. Relationships

All aspects of relationships will be discussed including relationship with self, family, employers, friends and partners. Working on self-esteem and self-confidence, being treated with respect and treating others with respect, aspects of a healthy/ unhealthy relationship, bullying and other issues will be discussed during this section of the course.

10. Sexually Transmitted Infections

The different types of STIs, symptoms, preventions, treatments and cures will all be clearly outlined and discussed. Teachers will not show pictures or videos which show explicit material.

12. Contraception

This topic will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open-minded manner and in a non-directive way.

13. Special Needs

Children with special needs may need more help in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up, learning about appropriate and inappropriate behavior of others.

14. Assessment

There is no formal assessment of RSE. Assessment of learning is done in an informal and ongoing manner by the class teacher through oral and written short questions and reflections. Teachers should make students aware when they are being assessed.

Evidence of individual or group work should be kept in a portfolio.

G. *Ongoing support, development and review*

Training:

1. All teachers involved in this work do not necessarily have to be 'experts' on the issues concerned. However, teachers are to be sensitive to the needs of the group, an ability to deal with questions openly/honestly and preparedness to refer to more expert advice if necessary. The skills acquired in general teaching apply also to health education. Some teachers have expert training in the specific areas of health, relationships and sexuality education and will be encouraged to train other teachers.
2. The school will facilitate teachers to obtain expert training in this field, bearing in mind the overall budgetary framework and the need for the ongoing teaching and learning programme of the school to continue with as little disruption as possible.
3. A full list of the CPD/courses/qualifications/training undertaken by teaching staff in the area of RSE is contained in Appendix 1 and will be updated regularly.

Resources:

The school will purchase appropriate RSE teaching materials which have been identified by staff as useful and which have been approved by the Principal, within the normal budgetary framework and as general school resources allow.
List of appropriate and approved resources is contained in *Appendix 2*.

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) pupil feedback;
- b) staff review and feedback;
- c) parental feedback.

This policy is due for review in 2021.

Appendix 2 - Resources

- TRUST education pack
- NCCA toolkit – Focus on learning – Booklet 4 – Reflection
- B4Udecide
- Busy bodies booklet
- www.healthpromotion.ie
- www.sphe.ie
- www.sexualwellbeing.ie
- www.yoursexualhealth.ie
- www.belong2.org
- Growing up LGBT
- You can talk to me
- Lockers
- Be in CTRL
- www.webwise.ie
- www.scoilnet.ie
- On my own two feet
- Relationships and Sexuality
- https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0037_2010.pdf - circular 37/2010
- https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0043_2018.pdf - circular 43/2018

Date of ratification by the Board of Management: _____

Signed: _____
Chairperson of Board of Management