

Our Lady's Grove

Relationship

&

Sexuality Education

(RSE Policy)



Mission Statement

Our Lady's Grove is a Catholic Community in keeping with the educational philosophy of St. Claudine Thevenet and the stated ethos of the school.

We are committed to providing a quality education in pursuit of excellence. We endeavour to provide a teaching and learning environment which encourages the school community to develop to its full potential cognisant of all its talents and skills.

We aim to work together in a safe, respectful, caring and just environment.

We value the principles of mutual respect, equality and tolerance encouraging positive self-image, confidence and pride in all achievements.

Introductory Statement

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is situated with the Social, Personal and Health Education syllabus. However, RSE is also a component of the Religious Education, Science, Biology, Physical Education and Home Economics Syllabi. RSE offers knowledge and an understanding of relationship, sexual identity and intimacy while establishing and developing attitudes, beliefs and values which are consistent with the Catholic Ethos of Our Lady's Grove. While RSE is experienced by all students in the school, it is important that parents and society act as co-educators in this area. RSE is a process that continues throughout life.

The Department of Education and Science identifies the following aims of Relationship and Sexuality Education:

1. To help young people develop healthy friendships and relationships.
2. To promote an understanding of sexuality.
3. To promote a healthy attitude to sexuality and to relationships.
4. To promote knowledge and respect for reproduction.
5. To enable young people to develop healthy attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework.

Aims specific to Our Lady's Grove

- ❖ To help students and allow students time to develop self-awareness and personal skills and to develop skills that promote self-esteem.
- ❖ To help students understand and develop healthy human relationships and develop skills for developing, maintaining and ending these relationships.
- ❖ To help students to come to understand and come to terms with the physical, emotional and psychological changes that occur during adolescence.
- ❖ To support students in their discovery of sexual identity.
- ❖ To prepare our students to 'participate fully and creatively in their communities', (Charting our Future, p.10).
- ❖ To promote a positive attitude towards self-image, sexual identity, relationships and intimacy.
- ❖ To develop positive attitudes, behaviours and values towards sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- ❖ To create an environment that is tolerant and respectful towards all, regardless of sexual orientation and/or relationships.
- ❖ To help students in responsible decision-making in relationships, sexuality and sexual activity.
- ❖ To give students the information about sexual and reproductive health with regard to STI's with particular attention to HIV/AIDS.

- ❖ To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction in both males and females from intercourse to conception.
- ❖ To educate students in the area of parenting.
- ❖ To equip students with information about sexual harassment and allow students reflect on their personal safety and develop skills to ensure their personal safety.
- ❖ To build up a student's health literacy.
- ❖ To deepen the student understanding of stereotyping and to develop appropriate attitudes and behaviours in Our Lady's Grove.

How can we achieve these aims?

- ❖ Build on the knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired at Primary Level.
- ❖ Help students to develop the skills of critical evaluation.

Relationship of Relationships and Sexuality Education to Social Personal and Health Education

Social, Personal and Health Education affects many aspects of school life. It gives students information on a moral, social, intellectual and spiritual level that will help them to develop and grow. The SPHE syllabus does not simply deal with sexual relationships, but also with skills in communication, expressing feelings and making decisions in an appropriate way. The Report of the Expert Advisory Group (DES 1995, 13) states:

Social, Personal and Health Education programmes need to be the core part of the curriculum right through Primary and Post-Primary schooling. The syllabus should be a spiral one, expanding in scope each year revisiting key topics in deeper ways appropriate to the age and stage of development of the pupils. Relationships should be the central part of this programme and Sexuality Education should take place within this context.

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

Our Lady's Grove is committed to an education which fosters personal growth, self-worth and an openness to the spiritual dimension of life for all its members. We aspire to promote responsibility, respect, care and to work in a just environment. Sensitive issues, such as sexual orientation, contraception, sexually transmitted infections and teenage pregnancies are part of the RSE programme and can be taught within our Catholic Ethos.

The Scope of the Policy

This policy should be familiar to all teachers of SPHE, Religious Education, Science, Biology, Civic, Social and Political Education, Physical Education, Guidance and Counselling and Home Economics and this policy applies to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education. This policy applies, not only to the teachers, but also to students, the Board of Management, parents/guardians, guest speakers and external facilitators.

Rationale for Creating a Relationship and Sexuality Policy

- ❖ To provide reliable information in a world where students can be misinformed through the media and peer communication. Parents' input is essential for the teaching of an appropriate programme for their daughters.
- ❖ The Education Act, 1998 stipulates that students receive a health education which deals with development of the student on a social and personal level.

- ❖ The Rules and programme for Secondary Schools, Section 4, says that schools must have an RSE policy and an appropriate RSE programme in place for Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle students.
- ❖ Circulars M4/95 and M20/96 state that an RSE policy must be created in schools.

Goals/Objectives

- ❖ Teachers of RSE need to consult and agree on a consistent way of teaching the programme.
- ❖ In RSE in particular, material must be age-appropriate to the student.
- ❖ The six week programme must be provided to all students in the course of the school year
- ❖ Students must receive, as stipulated by the Department of Education and Science a six week RSE programme every year.

Literacy and Numeracy

The SPHE Department's Strategy for Literacy and Numeracy is developed as part of the Whole School Policy.

Strategies:

Literacy

- ❖ Use of Keywords when beginning a new section.
- ❖ Presentation of work with the use of Graphic Organisers.
- ❖ Material presented in a variety of media, using digital literacy.
- ❖ Encouragement to read articles or research certain topics.
- ❖ Reflection, both written and oral, in every class to provide opportunity to use and access new vocabulary.
- ❖ Chunking information on PowerPoint.
- ❖ Use of images to assist understanding of new words.
- ❖ Information posters.

Numeracy

- ❖ Create numeracy moments throughout the curriculum, e.g. correct daily intake of calories/content of sugar in carbonated drinks.
- ❖ Assessing a balanced diet
- ❖ Time Management
- ❖ Physical Health
- ❖ The effects of Drugs
- ❖ Looking at relevant statistics which highlight topics within the SPHE programme.
- ❖ Creating timetables.
- ❖ Discussion of figures, percentages in information gathered.

Intercultural Education

The RSE programme can be influenced by the participation of students from other cultures in the class. This should be encouraged as students receive a broader picture of Relationships and Sexuality with respect to the different cultures. The teacher must exercise care and be sensitive to the issues that arise. The sharing of attitudes and beliefs from other cultures adds a further dimension to RSE Education. It develops the skills of tolerance and acceptance and also furthers the student's skill in listening and being empathetic towards others. It can be very beneficial to compare the attitudes, behaviours, information and experiences of the Irish

tradition with that of other cultures. The school must strive to promote respect and human dignity in the school community.

Roles and Responsibilities

Principal: The role of the Principal is of vital importance for the implementation of an effective SPHE/RSE programme. This programme very much affects the whole-school climate and so the decisions made by the Principal determine the climate which exists in the school. These decisions include timetabling issues, assigning teachers to teach SPHE/RSE, provision for resources and releasing teachers for in-service days.

Class Teacher: The role of the Class Teacher is to know the appropriate topics to be covered in each year and to be aware of the teaching methodologies that are associated with this programme. These have been sent out very clearly in the Teacher Guidelines.

Dean: The Dean liaise with the Class Tutors to ensure that a healthy environment exists in each year. They may also liaise with students on an individual basis if it is deemed necessary or appropriate. As part of the school community, the Dean helps to create a supportive and caring environment which ensures the safety and well-being of all students. This is not just a physical safety but also a safety where students are allowed to be themselves and are treated with respect and human dignity.

Class Tutor: As per our school plan, one of the responsibilities of the Class Tutor is to:

- ❖ *Organise and encourage students to maintain a high standard in their classroom environment.*

As part of the school community, the Class Tutor helps to create a supportive and caring environment which ensures the safety and well-being of all students. This is not just a physical safety but also a safety where students are allowed to be themselves and are treated with respect

Parents/Guardians: The role of the Parents/Guardians of the students is to support the SPHE programme in the school and to facilitate the emotional, moral, social and spiritual development of their children. To facilitate this, a presentation is made to the parents of first year students. This presentation explains about the SPHE programme and also the RSE programme which is such an important part of the SPHE programme.

Students: The role of the student is to participate fully in the SPHE programme. Student's opinion guides the planning of the programme through evaluation and reflective exercise.

Key Measures

SPHE Coordinator: The SPHE coordination team is responsible for the implementation of the SPHE syllabus and the choosing of appropriate books/resources for teachers of SPHE. The team decides on the dates for review of the policy as well as at what time of year would be the most appropriate for the teaching of the RSE programme. The team also informs the parents when the RSE programme is being taught.

In-Service: Teachers of SPHE are permitted to attend in-service as it occurs and is constantly updating the training of the SPHE team.

Consultation: Insofar as is possible, teachers are consulted about the teaching of SPHE/RSE.

Resources: The SPHE department have a resource area where policies, syllabi, teacher guidelines, books, handouts, information pamphlets, videos and DVDs are kept. The Coordinator holds the key to this area but it is available to all teachers of SPHE and other teachers who have RSE as a component at all times.

Ethical and Moral Consideration

It is very important that teachers of RSE are familiar with the RSE policy and the Catholic Ethos of Our Lady's Grove. Teachers will act consistently with the ethos and removed from personal opinion when answering questions on sensitive issues that students may ask.

It should be explained to students at the beginning of the school year that while personal stories will be respected, the teacher cannot offer total confidentiality. If a teacher becomes aware that a child may be a risk, then in accordance with the Child Protection Procedures, the appropriate procedure must be followed.

Should a teacher become aware that a student under 17 years of age is sexually active; the child's parents/guardians must be informed.

In respect to the ethos of the school, teachers of SPHE/RSE should be informed about the attitudes towards sexuality and sexual activity. Even though it may seem that the experience of the students and the ethos of the school are in conflict, it is important to deliver the RSE programme in respect of the ethos of the school. The school must promote sexual activity in the context of a marriage which is a loving respectful relationship and is open to procreation. The teacher should also inform the students that the age of consent for both boys and girls is 17 years of age. (Criminal Law Act, 2006).

The RSE programme also covers the area of contraception. The school must give students, at the appropriate time, information about the various methods of contraception. This must and can be taught with respect to the ethos of the school.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) must also be taught within the RSE programme. Information must be provided for students to stay healthy at all times. Students need to know that there are cures for STIs and they also need to know where to go for help if they are concerned.

Homosexuality is also part of the RSE programme. This is nearly always taught at Senior Cycle. Students must receive information with regards to sexual orientation and time to reflect on how this affects them personally, as this is relevant for all students. Again, this can be taught with respect to the ethos of the school. If this topic is avoided, then this sends out a message about the type of school and further causes discrimination and hurt towards homosexuals.

Practical Issues

- ❖ At Junior Cycle, all first and second year students receive one class period per week
- ❖ Fourth and Fifth/Sixth year students receive one class period per week for SPHE
- ❖ Class sizes, as far as possible, are kept to a minimum which is desirable for creating a suitable environment in which students feel relaxed and able to talk and ask questions.
- ❖ In the area of RSE, speakers can be invited to Our Lady's Grove subject to approval by Senior leadership and appropriate vetting procedures. Guest speakers should be provided with a copy of the RSE policy well in advance of their visit.
- ❖ SPHE is a subject that is accessible to students of all abilities. However, structures are set in place for the education of students with Special Educational Needs as per our Special Educational Needs policy.
- ❖ In accordance with the Education Act, 1998 (section 30, subsection 2(e)) parents/guardians have the right to withdraw their daughter from RSE lessons when to partake in the class would be against the parents/guardians conscience. This is also the case for students of 18 years of age and older.

Inclusion of Parents

As the relationship between school and parents/guardians of the students is seen as a partnership, it is important to include parents in our policy document. Parents can be included in the effective delivery of the RSE programme in the following ways.

- ❖ When time permits, information evenings, for parents occur in the area of RSE.
- ❖ Parents are informed when the RSE programme is being taught in school.
- ❖ Relevant literature may be sent to parents in relation to RSE (for example the 'Going forward Together' booklet).
- ❖ Parents should also be consulted and allowed express their views on the draft policy document.

Links to Other Policies and to Curriculum Delivery

- ❖ Child Protection Policy
- ❖ Guidance Plan
- ❖ Pastoral Care Policy
- ❖ Anti-Bullying Policy
- ❖ Special Education Policy
- ❖ Intercultural Education in the Post-Primary School
- ❖ Literacy and Numeracy Initiative
- ❖ The Report of the Expert Advisory Group (DES, 1995)

Cross-Curricular Links

- ❖ Religious Education
- ❖ Science
- ❖ Biology
- ❖ Home Economics
- ❖ Civic, Social and Political Education
- ❖ Guidance and Counselling
- ❖ Physical Education

How RSE will be Reviewed and Evaluated?

Policy Monitoring and Timeframe

Effective policy required constant monitoring and evaluation to ensure successful implementation and to review what adjustments may be necessary from time to time.

Therefore:

- ❖ The SPHE Department will monitor policy implementation.
- ❖ The SPHE Department will liaise with management regarding SPHE/RES policy implementation
- ❖ At the end of each year, the SPHE department meet to evaluate the success of the policy implementation

Timeframe

This policy will come into effect in February 2019

It will be reviewed after One Year