

# Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy



**2018**

**St. Brogan's College**

## **School**

St. Brogan's is a constituent College of the Cork Educational Training Board. The school is a co-educational, multi-denominational school.

## **Mission Statement**

St. Brogan's College strives to be a happy, safe, caring and inclusive community where everyone is supported to reach their potential.

## **Philosophy**

The ethos of the school is enshrined in caring for all the community within St. Brogan's. All students are cherished equally and encouraged to make a positive contribution to their school, teachers, visitors and their peers. It is expected that all students will acquire a sense of pride of place within the school and that their individual and collective contribution is recognised and valued at all times.

## **St Brogans aims at:**

Providing schooling where each pupil can participate in a wide range of learning opportunities designed to promote their spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development at school and within society.

Such aims demand a high level of co-operation in ensuring the provision of good organisational structures, a comprehensive curriculum, effective communication with parents on the progress of individual students, special education, Guidance and Counselling and a secure and happy environment within which staff and pupils can work together to achieve their aims.

Issues either threatening or interfering with the rights of the individual within the school require an immediate response in order to safeguard that individual's concerns.

## **Definition of R.S.E.**

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.

## **Relationship of R.S.E. to S.P.H.E.**

The most recent 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.

### **Current Provision**

For 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and Transition Year students, RSE constitutes one module within the SPHE programme and is mainly delivered by the SPHE teacher. In addition, the school invites a speaker from the Sexual Health Centre in Cork to provide a workshop on sexual health to 2<sup>nd</sup> Year and Transition Year students. Aspects of RSE are also taught in Religious Education, Home Economics, Science, Biology, Physical Education and CSPE.

Access to in-career development in RSE and SPHE in general has been and will be made available to all teachers. SPHE teachers are strongly encouraged to participate in all SPHE in-service and other relevant training available.

The teaching methodology is facilitative and participative. A structured experimental method is widely recognised as being the most appropriate method to use in all forms of SPHE and RSE. The major work takes place between the students themselves, the teacher acting as facilitator.

Group work allows for the creation of an atmosphere that respects privacy and treats all students with due sensitivity and care. Confidentiality, ground rules and codes of behaviour are discussed and agreed by both students and teacher. Some methods used include case studies, brainstorming, debates and videos. Students with special needs will be facilitated according to their needs.

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from RSE classes but it is hoped that sensitive dealing with issues will delete the necessity for this.

All issues will be dealt with an age appropriate approach and sensitively.

This policy and programme will be reviewed by Teachers, Parents and Board of Management. Amendments, if necessary, will be undertaken on completion of this review.

### **Aims of R.S.E.**

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

- To help pupils 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 pupils to develop attitudes and values toward their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework in keeping with the policy of the school
- 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.

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

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

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. This policy has been designed in consultation with Parents' Association representatives and the views expressed by parents will be taken into account when reviewing the policy. A copy of this policy will be made available to any parent on request to the school Office.

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 behaviour and contraception – however 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.

4. Explicit Questions:

It may not be appropriate to deal with some explicit questions in class. 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 or the Principal. 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.

#### 5. Confidentiality:

In circumstances where a pupil is considered at some risk of any type of abuse or in breach of the law, the teacher must refer this immediately to the Principal. The Principal will decide whether to inform the parents and/or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling.

The following is also school policy:

- a) teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality;
- b) pupils 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 pupil 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 pupils when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential - the pupil can then decide whether to proceed or not.

The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary schools 2017 state in 4.1.1. and 4.2.1.

4.1.1 The Children First Act, 2015 has placed a statutory obligation on specific people to report child protection concerns that are at or above a threshold of harm (as defined in that Act) to Tusla. Such persons are referred to as “mandated persons” under the Act. All teachers who are registered with the Teaching Council are mandated persons under the Children First Act, 2015.

4.2.1 In accordance with the best practice (non-statutory) requirement of the Children First National Guidance 2017, these procedures continue the previous requirement that any member of school personnel including a registered teacher who receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected, is still required to report the matter, without delay, to the DLP in the school. Every registered teacher, as a mandated person, now also has a statutory obligation to make his or her own mandated report to Tusla where the concern about the child is at or above a threshold of harm as defined in the Act. Therefore in addition to reporting his or her concern to the DLP, a registered teacher must also consider whether or not the concern is at or above the defined threshold of harm at which the registered teacher has his or her own statutory obligation under the Children First Act, 2015 to submit a mandated report to Tusla. Chapter 5 of these procedures requires that the registered teacher shall liaise with the DLP in relation to determining if the concern in question is at or above the defined threshold of harm at which the registered teacher

must submit a mandated report. Chapter 5 also requires that the registered teacher shall follow the relevant reporting procedures set out in section 5.2, including, where applicable, those requiring the registered teacher to submit a mandated report jointly with the DLP.

6. The division between biological and non biological aspects of sex education:

The school policy is that the Science Department deals primarily with the biological aspects of reproduction.

7. Withdrawing pupils from the RSE programme:

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.

8. Using visiting speakers and others

- 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 as long as they are used in addition to, not instead of a 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.
- c) All visitors must present proof of their Garda vetting. They must sign in at the school office on arrival and sign out on departure.

9. Sexual orientation

Teachers will discuss sexual orientation in an inclusive manner and with sensitivity. They will address prejudice and deal with the topic in an age appropriate manner.

10. Contraception

This topic will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issues in a non-directive way.

11. Special Needs

Students with special needs may need additional support in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up; they may also additional guidance regarding relationships and sexuality.

## **Monitoring**

The SPHE Co-ordinator will monitor policy implementation. Any teachers using this policy should discuss any reactions, concerns, suggestions that may arise during the course of implementation. The SPHE Co-ordinator will in turn discuss these with management.

## **Reviewing and Evaluating the Policy**

The policy will be reviewed in 2020. Ongoing review and evaluation will take cognizance of changing information, guidelines, legislation and feedback from parents/guardians, students, teachers and others.

**There is no prescribed resource for RSE, however, the following are recommended:**

- SPHE Resource materials for Relationships and Sexuality Education prepared by the NCCA and approved by the Department of Education and Science (1999)
- Trust (RSE) Senior Cycle
- On your own two feet
- B4U Decide
- Growing up LGBT
- Cancer Awareness Programme
- Mental Health Matters
- Be Safe Be Wise

**Web Sites:**

- [www.sphe.ie](http://www.sphe.ie)
- [www.pdst.ie](http://www.pdst.ie)
- [www.sess.ie](http://www.sess.ie)
- [www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie)
- [www.webwise.ie](http://www.webwise.ie)
- [www.thinkcontraception.ie](http://www.thinkcontraception.ie)
- [www.tes.ie](http://www.tes.ie)
- [www.ted.ie](http://www.ted.ie)
- [www.kahoot.ie](http://www.kahoot.ie)
- [www.mentimeter.ie](http://www.mentimeter.ie)
- [www.teni.ie](http://www.teni.ie)
- [www.crisispregnancy.ie](http://www.crisispregnancy.ie)
- [www.glen.ie](http://www.glen.ie)
- [www.belongto.org](http://www.belongto.org)