

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy



St. Brogan's College

Circulars relating to RSE

0027/2008
0037/2010
0043/2018
0054/ 2023

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.

Ethos

St Brogan's College adheres to the ethos of the ETB which is underpinned by the core values of Excellence in Education, Care, Respect, Equality and Community.

Definition of R.S.E. at Post-Primary level

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.

At Junior cycle, RSE explores the cognitive, physical, emotional and social aspects of relationships and sexuality through a positive, inclusive, rights and responsibilities-based approach. The focus is on family relationships, friendships, romantic and potential sexual relationships in the future. (Updated Specification 2023)

At Senior Cycle students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships. (**Draft specification 2023)

Relationship of R.S.E. to S.P.H.E. and Wellbeing

Our RSE policy, is seamlessly integrated into the SPHE and the Wellbeing programmes as per the updated specification 2023. It serves as a vital bridge for teenagers navigating the complexities of adolescence in Irish Secondary Schools. In this nurturing environment, students develop essential life skills such as self-awareness, responsible decision-making, and

empathy, crucial for their holistic growth. The policy places a profound emphasis on open dialogues about relationships and sexuality, providing a safe haven for teenagers amidst the overwhelming influences of the digital age. Guided by their teachers and rooted in the principles of respect and inclusivity, we strive to empower young minds to become active, responsible, connected, resilient, respected, and aware individuals. SPHE not only fosters personal growth but also contributes to building a compassionate and fair society whilst always embracing diversity.

Current Provision

RSE (Strand 3) of the updated SPHE specification is embedded in the teaching and learning of SPHE across the three years of junior Cycle. Using a spiral approach, themes will be revisited each year taking into account the age and stage of our students. This will build upon the learning undertaken at Primary level.

At Senior Cycle, students engage in timetabled, rotational, 6-week RSE modules.

Aims of R.S.E.

- To build upon the learning already undertaken at primary level and at home.
- To enable young people to understand and develop friendships and relationships.
- To promote an understanding of sexuality.
- To promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and the sexuality of others.
- To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction
- To enable young people to develop attitudes and values in a spiritual, moral and social context.

(Curriculum Guidelines, Pg 10 NCCA)

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 in accordance with the Post-Primary, Wellbeing Guidelines.
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. A copy of this policy is available on our school website.

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 and stage 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 DLP or either of the DDLPs in line with the school's referral system. When deciding whether or not to answer questions the teacher will 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 Designated Liaison Person. The Designated Liaison Person will decide whether to inform the parents and/or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling.

The following is also school policy:

- a) Teachers, as mandated people, 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 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 (Revised 2023) 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. If a parent would like their child to refrain from partaking in any specific element of SPHE/ RSE teaching, the student can remain in the classroom without participating. Otherwise, it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to remove the student from the school grounds and return them for the following class.

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. Circular 43/2018 outlines best-practice for the use of external facilitators.
- b) 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 need additional guidance regarding relationships and sexuality.

Monitoring

The SPHE department will monitor policy implementation. Any teachers using this policy should discuss any reactions, concerns, suggestions that may arise during the teaching of RSE. The SPHE convenor will in turn discuss these with management.

Reviewing and Evaluating the Policy

The policy will be reviewed in 2026. Ongoing review and evaluation will take cognisance of changing information, guidelines, legislation and feedback from parents/guardians, students, teachers and others.

The Policy was ratified by the Board of Management in April 2024

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

- On your own two feet
- B4U Decide
- Growing up LGBT
- Cancer Awareness Programme
- Mental Health Matters
- Be Safe Be Wise
- RSE Special Needs Resource list
- RSE Students with Mild learning Difficulties
- Coco's Law
- Making the 'Big Talk' many small talks
- PDST Health and Wellbeing SPHE Personal Safety Handbook
- Van Der Bilt Healthy Bodies Resource – for students with SEN
- Being LGBT in School
- Different families, same love
- RESPECT Guidelines

Web Sites:

- www.sphe.ie
- www.pdst.ie
- www.sess.ie
- www.healthpromotion.ie
- www.webwise.ie
- www.thinkcontraception.ie
- www.tes.ie
- www.ted.ie
- www.kahoot.ie
- www.mentimeter.ie
- www.teni.ie
- www.crisispregnancy.ie
- www.glen.ie

- www.belongto.org
- www.oide.ie
- www.hse.ie
- www.myoptions.ie
- www.scoilnet.ie
- www.webwise.ie
- <https://www2.hse.ie/services/healthpromotion/>
- www.sexualwellbeing.ie
- www.spunout.ie
- <https://www.mentalhealthireland.ie/>
- <https://www.childline.ie/sexuality-and-relationships/>
- <http://www.drcc.ie/>
- <http://www.reachout.com/>
- <http://www.bodywhys.ie/>
- <https://www2.hse.ie/services/unplanned-pregnancy-support-services/my-options-freephone-line.html>
- <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/5/sexhealth/>
- <https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/>
- <https://www.drcc.ie/assets/files/pdf/>