

ST FINTINA'S POST PRIMARY SCHOOL

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

Introduction

St Fintina's Post Primary School is a small rural co-educational, non-selective second-level school under the umbrella of County Meath Vocational Education Committee. The school is devoted to catering for the needs of a diverse student population by exposing them to a broad and balanced educational experience through formal and informal programmes of instruction.

Scope

This policy governs all aspects of teaching and learning pertaining to relationships and sexuality. It applies to all staff, students, parents, visiting speakers and external facilitators.

Definition

" RSE aims to provide opportunities for young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way" (Going Forward Together-DES 1997) It is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy.

Relationship to the Mission Statement

The school endeavours to provide a caring and supportive learning environment where the potential and uniqueness of each student are recognised and celebrated. In this context the RSE programme helps the students to acquire knowledge and understanding as well as attitudes and values about sexual identity in addition to developing personal and social skills.

Relationship of RSE to SPHE

Relationships and Sexuality Education is an integral part of the SPHE programme in the school. The SPHE programme is formally timetabled for one class period per week at junior cycle and RSE is taught in a modular fashion as part of the Pastoral Care Programme at senior cycle. SPHE deals with other issues such as: self esteem, assertiveness, communication decision making skills, healthy eating, alcohol, drugs, safety and social responsibility which complement the RSE programme.

Aims

- To help students understand and develop friendships and relationships
- To give students a better understanding of human sexuality, sexual health and emotions.
- To promote knowledge of and respect for human reproduction.
- To learn how to recognise and manage exploitation and abuse.
- To provide accurate information about RSE issues and to dispel myths.
- To increase student confidence and self-esteem.

Roles and Responsibilities

RSE is a whole- school responsibility and all members of the school community have rights and responsibilities.

Senior Management

1. Ensure RSE is embedded in the school curriculum.
2. Oversee the development of an RSE policy and ensure it reflects the views of all members of the school community.
3. Provide resources and support for the teaching of the programme.
4. Ensure that teachers involved in delivering the programme receive appropriate in-career training.

SPHE/Pastoral Care Co-ordinators

1. Be well versed in all aspects of the programme and keep up to date with new developments and methodologies.
2. Meet with RSE teachers to discuss teaching strategies, assessment and evaluation.
3. Identify suitable training for staff.
4. Liaise with outside agencies and speakers.
5. Maintain records of all training and speakers.
6. Liaise with school management with respect to resources and training.

Staff

All staff in the school plays an important pastoral role in the overall RSE programme through monitoring and supporting students.

Teachers directly involved in teaching the programme should:

1. Be knowledgeable about the content of the programme
2. Use a variety of teaching strategies in the delivery of the programme
3. Keep up to date with new developments and resources
4. Prepare and plan for each lesson delivered
5. Assess student knowledge and understanding of RSE content at regular intervals
6. Be well briefed in Child Protection Guidelines and confidentiality matters

Parents/Guardians

1. Parents are the primary educators of their children and they have a very important role concerning relationships and sexuality education
2. All parents should be fully familiar with the RSE programme offered in the school.
3. They have the right to withdraw their son/daughter from some or all aspects of the programme following consultation with the school and the signing of a withdrawal form.

Pupils

1. Avail of all resources and support offered in the school
2. Acquaint themselves with the content of this policy
3. Protect and support one another

Current provision in the school

The main RSE programme is delivered through SPHE lessons by class teachers. The SPHE programme is scheduled for one period per week for junior cycle students. At senior cycle RSE forms part of the Pastoral Care/Guidance programmes.

Relationships and Sexuality Education is one of the ten modules of the SPHE programme which is revisited each year as students mature and their needs and abilities change.

Aspects of the SPHE and RSE programmes are also addressed in subjects such as:

- Science
- Biology
- Religion
- Home Economics
- CSPE
- Guidance

Guidelines for the management and organisation of RSE in the school

Offering advice

- The school's function is to provide a general education about sexuality and relationships. The school does not offer individual advice to students.
- Sources of professional confidential sexual advice may be identified subject to appropriateness to the age of the students.

Explicit questions

It may not be appropriate to deal with a pupil's explicit question in front of the class.

- If a question is too explicit or inappropriate to answer teachers may acknowledge it and deal with it later in private with the student concerned.
- In deciding whether to answer a specific question or not the teacher will take into account the age and the readiness of the students.
- If the teacher becomes concerned about a specific matter then s/he will seek advice from the SPHE co-ordinator/Guidance Counsellor or the principal.

Confidentiality

While an atmosphere of trust is a pre-requisite of the SPHE classroom school staff cannot promise confidentiality if approached by a pupil for help in relation to the following:

1. Child abuse
2. Self-harm or intention to harm others
3. Substance misuse

4. Underage sexual activity
5. Any circumstance where the wellbeing of the student or others may be compromised
 - Teachers will consult with school management where a student is considered to be at risk
 - The school management will decide whether to inform the parents and/or appropriate authorities.

Teachers are required to inform students that confidentiality may not be maintained before a disclosure is made.

Visiting speakers

It is school policy to use visiting speakers to supplement and to enhance the delivery of the RSE programme in the school.

- a) The SPHE co-ordinator/Pastoral Care co-ordinator will discuss the following issues with the speaker:
 - i. The degree of explicitness of the content and presentation
 - ii. The time and date of the visit
 - iii. Resources required
 - iv. Payment details if appropriate
 - v. How the visit will be built upon and followed up
 - vi. Should the teacher remain in the classroom or not
 - vii. The speaker will be made of the Child Protection and RSE policy in advance
- b) The visitor should be welcomed at the front door and escorted to the classroom
- c) At the end of the session a vote of thanks should be conveyed to the guest and s/he should be offered some refreshments before being escorted to the main exit

Special needs

Students with special needs may require additional help in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up.

On-going support

Training

Teachers of SPHE/Pastoral Care have undertaken specialist training to assist them in the teaching of these subjects. In addition the school ensures that these teachers receive relevant in-service training in this field.

Withdrawal from RSE

Each parent has a right to withdraw a child from some or the entire RSE module. It will be necessary for the parent to notify the principal in writing and to make suitable arrangements with the principal for the supervision of the child during this period. Intent to withdraw a student must be notified to the principal at the start of the school year.

Resources

Appropriate RSE teaching materials which have been identified by staff will be purchased in consultation with the principal. Various resources are centrally located in the school for the teaching of the RSE module within the SPHE and Pastoral Care programmes

Review

There will be an annual evaluation of this policy by members of the SPHE/Pastoral department. The policy will be amended in line with new directives and developments. There will be a major review of the policy five years after it has been implemented.

This policy was drafted by the SPHE department and the principal in consultation with the other members of the school community.

Students consulted on: 13th December 2010

Teachers consulted on: 13th December 2010

Parents consulted on: 24th January 2011

Board of management consulted on: 3rd February 2011

Ratified by the BOM on: 3rd February 2011

Ratified by VEC on:

Implemented on:

Appendix 1

Ground Rules for Group Discussion

Confidentially: Personal details revealed in class may not be discussed outside of the class

Punctuality: I will be punctual

Responsibility: I will take responsibility for the sharing of personal information.

Freedom: I have the freedom to opt out or pass in discussions

Respect: I will respect others' views even if I don't agree with them

Request: If I need something I will ask for it in a respectful manner

Participation: I will participate but not dominate

Listening: I will listen when another person is talking

Time- Keeping: I will stick to the allotted time for the task

Materials: I will bring the materials required for the class and complete any tasks assigned