



St Kilian's Community School

Relationships & Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

(Revised and adopted by the Board of Management, December 15th 2014)

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

(A) Philosophy of Education and Mission Statement

The school has been established in accordance with the Deed of Trust for Community Schools, with the object of providing a comprehensive system of post-primary education open to all the children of the community. It aims to combine instruction in academic and practical subjects, and ongoing education for persons living at or near St. Kilian's Community School in Co. Wicklow, for the purpose of contributing towards the spiritual, moral, mental and physical well-being and development of the local community.

The school's mission statement says:

St. Kilian's works to ensure that each and every pupil is enabled to learn to the best of his/her ability and to mature with confidence and dignity.

The school endeavours to achieve this mission in all its activities.

In 2010, the school adopted the following *Core Professional Purpose and Operating Principles*:

Core Professional Purpose (CPP)

Learning for Excellence, for Life, for All

Organisational Principles (OPs)

To ensure the **best possible education** for our students, St. Kilian's C.S. believes that everyone

- has **rights** with **responsibilities**.
- must be treated **fairly** and **equally**.
- should be **supported** to be the **best** they can be.
- should get **value** for the **time** they spend.
- must be shown **respect**.
- should feel **welcome** and have **fun**.
- must be able to **access** high quality **facilities**.

St Kilian's Community School places a great emphasis on strong and healthy relationships between the various members of the school's community. This underpins and informs the school's Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy.

B. Definition of Relationships & Sexuality Education

The Draft Guidelines for Relationships & Sexuality Education, (NCCA June 1995, 1.2), state that Social Personal and Health Education is "spiral, developmental in nature and age appropriate in content and methodology". Relationships and Sexuality Education forms a part of Social, Personal & Health Education, 6-7 classes are allocated to Relationships & Sexuality Education in the school year. The aims of Relationships & Sexuality Education set it within a moral, spiritual and social framework. A positive attitude to sexuality will be expressed in responsible and respectful attitudes and behaviour towards oneself and others. It will recognise that sexual behaviour is not just a personal and private matter, but has social and community implications as well. Decisions about such attitude and behaviour are made in the light of the knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes delivered in Relationships & Sexuality Education, inside and outside school. By its nature, Relationships & Sexuality Education explores issues which give rise to differing views and sensitivities. Issues such as sexual intercourse, teenage pregnancies, divorce and homosexuality will all enter into the Relationships & Sexuality Education programme. The methodologies used and the approach to teaching the Social, Personal & Health Education and Relationships & Sexuality Education Programme by trained teachers may be quite different from other classroom experiences for the students. The atmosphere will be relaxed and informal with participative and collaborative learning methods. However, students will be expected to follow the classroom rule structure that has been recommended and implemented by NBSS from 2014.

C. Relationship of Relationships & Sexuality Education to Social, Personal & Health Education

Social, Personal & Health Education contributes towards the development of all aspects of the individual – emotional, moral, social and spiritual as well as their intellectual, physical, political, religious and creative development. Social, Personal & Health Education looks at issues such as relationships at home and in school, building self-esteem and learning skills of communication, decision making and expressing feelings in an appropriate way. Sexuality is a key element of healthy social and personal development in all of our lives but especially in the life of the adolescent. There is greater freedom, responsibility and exposure to a bewildering variety of messages about sexuality, issues of sexual orientation and the place of sexuality in personal and social life. Relationships & Sexuality Education will provide structured opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality through processes that will enable them to form values and establish behaviour within a moral, spiritual and social framework.

D. The school currently provides:

- One Social, Personal & Health Education class per week to Junior Cycle. At Junior Cycle six to seven classes are allocated to Relationships & Sexuality Education in the school year.
- Social Skills programme for JCSP classes; two periods a week for 1st and 2nd Years, one period a week for 3rd Years.
- Guest speakers within context for Social, Personal & Health Education following guidelines for visitors to classroom.
- Religious Education programme – Social & Moral Development.
- Science – Reproduction in Junior Cycle & Senior Cycle Biology.
- Home Economics – Social & Health Studies.
- Personal Development for all Transition Year Students. This uses the Trust resource.
- RSE module for Senior Cycle students.

E. Resources

- Resources are available to support Lesson Themes for Junior Cycle and in keeping with DES Planning Guidelines.
- The *Trust Resource* for Senior Cycle Students

F. Aims of the Relationships & Sexuality Education Programme

To help students:

- Understand & develop friendships.
- Promote an understanding of sexuality.
- Promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and one's relationship with others.
- Promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction.
- Help develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral/spiritual and social framework.
- It is acknowledged that in a course of limited duration these aims are aspirational.

G. Objectives of the Relationships & Sexuality Education should enable students to:

- Develop an understanding and the skills necessary to form healthy relationships.
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness and self-esteem.
- Be aware of the many ways in which people grow and change and to develop respect for the differences.
- Understand the physiology of reproduction, human fertility and sexually transmitted infections.
- Understand sexual development including sex roles, gender issues, stereotyping and cultural influences on sexuality.
- Value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood.
- Develop skills for coping with peer pressure, conflict and threats to personal safety.
- Develop strategies for decisions and actions consistent with personal moral integrity and respectful of the rights of others.

H. Guidelines for management and organisation of Relationships & Sexuality Education in schools

The curriculum is being implemented in the school in line with the DES and Relationships & Sexuality Education guidelines.

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 and will be available on the schools website. 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.

In order to ensure the safety of all students, ground rules will guide the activities within the classroom and will be emphasised.

Teaching of the programme and development of staff is facilitated by the Principal.

Policy development process allow for issues of concern to each of the participating groups to be raised, discussed and decided upon.

Students' questions will be answered in response to the programme taught within the school, in an appropriate and sensitive manner.

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. The school's Care Team may, however, identify and source professional information, advice and support, where appropriate.

Appropriateness of Questions / Discussion: Teachers will use their professional judgement to decide whether or not particular lines of discussion and/or questions are appropriate in classroom situations. Such decisions will be informed by the age and maturity of the students, the Relationships & Sexuality Education programme content, the ethos of the school and the Relationships & Sexuality Education Policy.

Confidentiality:

St Kilian's Community School Department's has adopted and fully implements the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools* as part of its Child Protection Policy. This policy may be accessed on the school's website.

The **Designated Liaison Person (DLP)** is **Mr. John Murphy, Principal** and the **Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP)** is **Ms. Leah Bools**, Deputy Principal.

General guidelines:

- (a) RSE/SPHE teachers may not assure confidentiality in relation to matters that may arise in class, where there are concerns around a student's safety or wellbeing.
- (b) Serious concerns are reported to the DLP, as per the school's Child Protection Policy.
- (c) Teachers may also discuss matters with the school's Care Team.

Withdrawing Pupils from Relationships & Sexuality Education:

A request for withdrawal from the Relationships & Sexuality Education programme should be made, in writing, to the Principal, by a parent. Following such a request, the following may happen:

- (a) Discussion between the parent and SPHE teacher and/or SPHE Coordinator.
- (b) Discussion between the parent and the Principal.
- (c) While it is the school's aim that all students avail of the DES – approved programme, the possibility of some modifications for the students involved may be explored.

Visitors to the Classroom:

- The school's RSE programme is mainly delivered by the students' regular teachers, whom they know and trust.
- Visiting speakers may sometimes be used to supplement the work of the school's teaching staff.
- All such visits happen only by permission of the Principal, and after discussion with the SPHE Coordinator.
- In their work with students, visiting speakers are, at all times, accompanied by a member of the school's teaching staff.

Sexual Orientation: Through its RSE programme, the school promotes positive and inclusive discussion of matters relating to sexual orientation. The RSE programme encourages respect

for difference and provides opportunities to address prejudice. (Ref.: The Equal Status Acts 2000 – 2004)

Special Needs: Children with special educational needs may need extra support in dealing with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up. They may also need more help in learning what sorts of behaviour are and are not acceptable, and in being warned and prepared against abuse by others. The Social, Personal & Health Education Teacher may liaise with the Special Educational Needs team and individual parents if deemed necessary.

I. Provision of ongoing support, development and review

Our policy statement includes provision to support all members involved in Relationships & Sexuality Education at policy and programme level by supporting the following steps:

- Access to professional in-career development opportunities.
- Provision of school resources within the normal budgetary framework.
- Providing information regarding Relationships & Sexuality Education as part of Social, Personal & Health Education to parents at parent teacher meetings.
- Regular monitoring, review and evaluation of this Policy and associated programmes.

Provisional Date of Review: December 2015