



## RSE Policy Document Approved by the BOM 12/5/26

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### **College Mission Statement**

“Our college is a vibrant, friendly, learning community where students, teachers and parents are encouraged, supported and challenged in pursuit of the highest standards of achievement and academic excellence. We foster equality, respect and integrity in our college. We embrace diversity and recognise that everyone is unique and has a positive contribution to make”.

### **Rationale**

RSE is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. In a post-primary setting, it helps students to understand human development, friendships, family life, personal safety, consent, communication, relationships and responsible decision-making in ways that are appropriate to their age and stage of development.

In Coláiste Pobail Setanta, the rationale for RSE arises from the school’s commitment to holistic education, student wellbeing and mutual respect. RSE contributes to a school culture where students are supported to feel safe, respected and included, and where they can discuss relevant issues in a structured and educational context.

### **Relationship of RSE to SPHE and Wellbeing**

The Department of Education’s best practice guidelines state that RSE should be provided within the context of SPHE at post-primary level. In Coláiste Pobail Setanta RSE is therefore understood as a core element of SPHE and as part of the school’s broader wellbeing provision.

The school’s wellbeing policy identifies SPHE as one of the key areas in which wellbeing is embedded and notes that whole-school wellbeing is supported through policy, curriculum, relationships and school culture. This policy therefore recognises RSE as both a curriculum area and a whole-school responsibility.



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## **Policy Aims**

The aims of RSE in Coláiste Pobail Setanta are:

- To provide students with accurate, age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate information about relationships, sexuality and human development.
- To support students in developing self-awareness, self-respect and confidence.
- To promote dignity, mutual respect, empathy and responsible behaviour in relationships in keeping with the ethos of the school.
- To help students recognise healthy and unhealthy relationships, personal boundaries, consent and sources of support.
- To support students in making informed, thoughtful and responsible decisions.
- To affirm inclusion, equality and respect for diversity within the school community.
- To complement the role of parents and guardians as the primary educators of their children.

## **Scope of the Policy**

This policy applies to all students of Coláiste Pobail Setanta and to all staff involved in planning, supporting or delivering SPHE/RSE. It should be read alongside other relevant school policies, including the Wellbeing Policy, Child Safeguarding Statement, Code of Behaviour, Anti-Bullying Policy, Guidance-related supports and any relevant SEN or inclusion policies.

RSE is not limited to one lesson or one year group. It is a spiral approach which aims to have RSE present in all aspects of the course, as per Department of Education policies and guidelines.

## **Child Protection**

Child Protection Procedures 2.1.6 state “In all cases where a school becomes aware of underage sexual intercourse the school should take appropriate steps to inform the child’s parents”. The age for consent is 17 for boys and girls for heterosexual and homosexual sex. All students of RSE are made aware of the limits to confidentiality that should a teacher become aware that a student is at risk they are obliged to pass this information on to the



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DLP. However, should a student who is not at risk choose to confide in a teacher about something, the teacher should keep this information to him or herself.

## **Students with Special Educational Needs**

The college's published information highlights its commitment to inclusion and to meeting the diverse needs of students, including through dedicated supports. RSE should therefore be accessible to students with additional educational needs, with content and methodologies adapted as necessary to support participation and understanding.

Teachers will use appropriate differentiation, in consultation where necessary with relevant support staff, to ensure that all students can engage meaningfully with the programme.

## **Content and Teaching Methodologies**

RSE content will be delivered in accordance with Department of Education guidance and the SPHE/RSE curriculum for post-primary schools. Content will be age-appropriate, developmental and sensitive to the needs of the class group.

Topics may include:

- Friendship and relationships.
- Self-image, self-esteem and identity.
- Puberty and adolescent development.
- Emotional wellbeing and communication.
- Personal safety, boundaries and consent.
- Respectful relationships and decision-making.
- Online relationships, media influence and digital safety.
- Sexual health education as appropriate within the curriculum framework.
- Help-seeking, support networks and trusted adults.

## **Teaching and learning approach**

RSE will be taught by teachers who are supported in delivering SPHE/RSE using appropriate methodologies and approved resources. Teaching approaches will be student-centred,



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respectful and suited to the maturity of the students, and may include discussion, reflection, scenarios, group work, agreed classroom procedures and teacher-led explanation.

All teaching will be delivered in a factual, balanced and sensitive manner. Teachers will use professional judgement in responding to questions and will maintain clear boundaries so that classroom discussion remains safe, respectful and educational.

## **Cross Curricular Links**

The following subject areas form the cross-curricular links with the RSE Programme:

SPHE

P.E.

Science

R.E.

CSPE

I.T.

English

Home Economics

Wellbeing

## **Creating a safe and inclusive learning environment**

Coláiste Pobail Setanta is committed to a safe and caring environment and to fostering co-operation and mutual respect. RSE classes should therefore be characterised by agreed ground rules, respectful language, inclusion, sensitivity and recognition of student dignity.

Teaching and resources should reflect the diversity of students' experiences and backgrounds in a respectful way. No student should be made to feel excluded, embarrassed or judged because of family background, gender, identity, beliefs, culture, ability or personal circumstance.

## **Withdrawal from RSE aspect of SPHE lessons**

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a mandatory and integral component of the SPHE curriculum at post primary level and forms part of the college's Wellbeing provision. RSE is delivered in a developmentally appropriate, inclusive, rights based and respectful manner, consistent with the national curriculum and the core values and ethos of the Education and Training Board (ETB). The college recognises parents/guardians as the primary educators of their children and acknowledges their right, in accordance with Section 30(2)(e) of the Education Act 1998, to request the withdrawal of their child from RSE lessons



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only, where participation is considered contrary to their conscience. Any request concerning withdrawal will be managed in line with department guidance and school procedures. The college will aim to respond respectfully; clarify the programme content where needed and consider arrangements in the best interest of the student while fulfilling its curricular responsibilities.

Parents/ guardians requesting withdrawal from RSE will be required to meet with the principal and/or a member of the school management team in September each year, to discuss the aims and content of the RSE programme, ensuring that the request is fully informed and understood. The parent/guardian will be required to make appropriate alternative arrangements for their child during these lessons and inform the college of these arrangements. The college is not required to provide alternative supervision, tuition or learning activities during RSE lessons.

It is acknowledged that SPHE is delivered through a whole-school and relational approach. Consequently, parents/guardians should be aware that themes related to relationships, wellbeing, respect and personal development may arise informally in classroom discussions or across other areas of school life. As a result, the college cannot guarantee complete exclusion from all incidental references to RSE-related topics.

The college cannot accept responsibility for any information relating to RSE that may be shared informally among students.

## **Confidentiality**

While an atmosphere of trust is a pre-requisite of RSE class, the following limits of confidentiality must be observed. These limits are:

Child abuse-physical, emotional, sexual, neglect  
Intention to harm self or others  
Substance misuse  
Underage sexual intercourse

Any disclosure will be reported to the Designated Liaison Person in compliance with the Child Protection Policy.

RSE teachers will inform students of the limits of confidentiality at the beginning of the year, remind them at necessary points throughout the year and where possible before making a disclosure.

## **External Speakers and Programmes**



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External speakers or programmes may occasionally supplement aspects of the school's RSE provision where this is considered educationally beneficial. Such input must support, not replace, the role of the teacher and the planned SPHE/RSE programme.

Any external provider used by the school must be consistent with Department guidance, the ethos of Coláiste Pobail Setanta and the school's safeguarding responsibilities. Teachers remain present and retain responsibility for class management and follow-up learning.

## **Parents and Guardians**

The College accepts that it is in the interests of all parents that the child grows up in a healthy and mature fashion. The College will strive to keep parents informed of the contents of the RSE Programme. The RSE Policy is available online at [www.cpsetanta.ie](http://www.cpsetanta.ie) and notifications regarding reviews are also published online.

The involvement of parents at the core of every aspect of RSE gives it extra impetus, depth and validity and from time to time training and/or input and development opportunities will be offered to parents in certain aspects of RSE.



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