

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy (R.S.E.)

Our school Mission Statement

St. Aidan's C.B.S. promotes the Edmund Rice Charter through nurturing *faith*, promoting *partnership*, excelling in *teaching*, creating *community* and inspiring *leadership*.



Our school

St. Aidan's C.B.S. is a voluntary secondary school for boys. We are located in north Dublin and we currently have an enrolment of over 700 students. Our school is a Catholic school operating under the patronage of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (E.R.S.T.). The characteristic spirit of our school is based on the vision and values of the E.R.S.T. Charter as outlined above in our mission statement. This is reflected in the operations of our school and in our school policies.

Rationale

The Education Act, 1998 requires that all schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.

The Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools requires schools to have an agreed policy for R.S.E. incorporating a suitable programme for all students.

Department of Education circulars request schools to commence a process of R.S.E. policy development.

St. Aidan's CBS, considering all of the above requirements, has designed a policy and programme for R.S.E. that suits the needs of our school with a particular focus on our own mission statement/school ethos.

Table of Contents

What is RSE?	P.3
Aims of the Policy	P.3
RSE with SPHE	P.3
Guidelines for the management and organisation of RSE	P.4
Communication, Involvement and Dissemination	P.4
Offering Advice	P.5
Explicit Questions	P.5
Confidentiality	P.5
Consent	P.6
Visiting Speakers	P.6
Withdrawal of Students	P.6
Support	P.7
Resources	P.7
Monitoring and Evaluation	P.7
Review & Development	P.8
Ratification	P.8

What is R.S.E. and what are its aims?

- R.S.E. at post-primary level deals with three main themes:
 - 1. Human relationships
 - 2. Human growth and development
 - 3. Human sexuality
- R.S.E. emphasises the importance of self-awareness and self-esteem and the development of one's ability to interact respectfully with others. It provides students with an opportunity to understand different types of relationships and the attitudes, values and life skills that support the healthy development of these relationships.
- R.S.E. helps students to develop a positive attitude to their own and others' sexuality and sexual health. Students can also develop an understanding of familial, cultural and religious values and consider how these values support healthy informed choices in relation to relationships, sexuality and sexual health. (N.C.C.A. curriculum)
- R.S.E. aims to provide opportunities for children and young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.
(Department of Education, R.S.E., *Going Forward Together*)

R.S.E. with Social Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E.)

R.S.E. aims to:

- help students understand and develop friendships.
- promote an understanding of sexuality.
- promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's relationships with others.
- promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction.
- enable students to develop attitudes and values toward their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework in keeping with the policy of the school.
- 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.

[*R.S.E. guidelines by N.C.C.A., 1995 state that S.P.H.E. is "age appropriate in content methodology"*]

At senior cycle, it specifically aims to:

- develop self-awareness through opportunities to reflect on thoughts, values and feelings.
- enhance students' knowledge and understanding of essential health concepts and the wider influences on health and wellbeing to enable informed decision making.
- develop students' self-efficacy; the confidence to think and behave independently especially in the face of social pressure.
- strengthen students' capacity to empathise with another person's situation, feelings and motives in order to enhance relationships with other people.
- develop coping strategies for adolescence and adult life in support of greater resilience.
- develop students' health literacy skills, including the ability to obtain, critically evaluate and act on health information in support of health and wellbeing.
- develop a willingness to participate in the creation and maintenance of healthy communities and environments.

Guidelines for Management and Organisation of R.S.E. in Our School

What our school currently provides:

- R.S.E. is covered for all of our junior students during S.P.H.E. classes. Schools are required to provide R.S.E. as part of the national S.P.H.E. curriculum.
- The fifth year students are timetabled for S.P.H.E. classes which incorporate a module on R.S.E.
- As part of the Transition Year (T.Y.) programme, the school facilitates R.S.E. in their S.P.H.E. modules.

Communication, Involvement and Dissemination

Informing and Involving Parents

- Parents are their children's primary educators, and their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality is seen by the school as important. This policy has been designed in consultation with Parents' Association/ Board of Management representatives and the views expressed by parents will be considered when reviewing the policy. A copy of this policy will be available to any parent/guardian on the school website.

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 counseling on aspects of sexual behavior and contraception; however, sources of professional information and advice will be identified when appropriate. Teachers may provide students 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. The advice offered should not be directive and should be appropriate to the age of the student.

Explicit Questions

- It is natural that students may ask questions in RSE, but 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. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter raised, they should seek advice from the Principal. When deciding whether 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.

Confidentiality

- The normal limits of confidentiality will apply to any information coming to the teacher's attention. Any concerns about a student's welfare will be dealt with discreetly and sensitively within the Child Protection Guidelines for post-primary schools issued by the DES. It is school policy that 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 DLP or DDLP. They will decide whether to inform the parents and/or appropriate authorities (*further details are available in our Child Protection Policy*).

The following is also school policy:

- A. Teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality;
- B. Students must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the DLP / DDLP and to parents/guardians if the principal decides that it is in the best interests of the student to notify parents/guardians;
- C. Teachers must use their professional judgement, with consideration to our school's Child Protection Policy/Safeguarding statement and the Children First legislation, to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard the information;
- D. Teachers must indicate clearly to students when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential - the student can then decide whether to proceed or not.

Consent

- Students should be provided with information on the age of consent which is seventeen years of age for both males and females. In all cases where the school becomes aware of underage sexual activity the school will take appropriate steps to inform the students parents/guardians, in accordance with Children First legislation.

Visiting speakers

- Our R.S.E. programme is provided by teachers. However, visitors can enhance the quality of the provision of R.S.E. and can provide additional support to the school and our students.
- In the case of visiting speakers, one of the school's teachers will always be present while the talk/presentation/workshop is taking place. This supervision will be organised by the event coordinator in the school.
- All guest speakers on R.S.E. to the school are approved by the Principal.

Withdrawal of students

- Our school is mindful of objections to the inclusion of elements of this programme and recognises the rights of parents to act in accordance with their stated beliefs.
- Parents/Guardians do not have to give reasons for withdrawal, but we respectfully invite them to do so. It may be that a misunderstanding can be resolved at this stage.
- If a request to withdraw a student from R.S.E. is made to the school we ask parents/guardians to be aware that additional supervision may not always be available. In such cases, parents/guardians may be asked to make alternative arrangements themselves. With regard to any of the above, we request that communication is made with the school to discuss the issues of concern before a decision is made.

Support

Training

- S.P.H.E. teachers receive training through the Professional Development Service for Teachers (OIDE). Through this process, teachers in our school who are timetabled for S.P.H.E., also attend a specific R.S.E. module.
- Teachers will require sensitivity to the needs of the group, an ability to deal with questions honestly and preparedness to refer to more expert advice if necessary.
- In a situation where an S.P.H.E teacher is awaiting training on R.S.E., which may happen from time to time, other teachers in the school and school management will provide support to them.

Resources

- The school will use approved Department of Education materials. Suitable materials are often provided for teachers at S.P.H.E. in-service training.
- The school may also source appropriate teaching materials which have been identified by staff as useful.
- Applying for resources is, as always, considered within the normal budgetary framework and as school funding will allow. All resources must come from a factual, unbiased educational source.

Monitoring, evaluating, and reviewing the RSE programme:

- The school will provide appropriate RSE teaching materials which have been identified by staff as useful and which have been approved by the Principal, within the normal budgetary framework and as general school resources allow. The school provides access to teacher CPD for RSE. We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this programme. Specifically, important to the RSE Programme are: a) student feedback; b) staff review and feedback; c) parental feedback.
- This policy was written by the school planning co-ordinator. The formation of this policy was done by engaging in a process of collaboration involving the principal and deputy principal, S.P.H.E. teaching staff, the school care team, our guidance counsellor, the students' council and the parent's council.

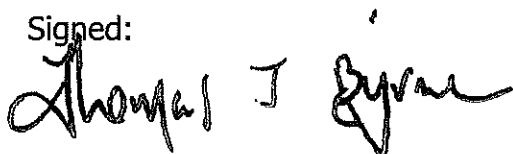
Review and Development

- We are also committed to the review and development of our school policies. As part of our ongoing review process, this policy will be examined to reflect feedback from our evaluation practices and also to ensure legal compliance and the maintenance of best practices.

Ratification History

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 13th May 2026

Signed:



Thomas J Byrne
Chairperson of the Board



Liam Reilly
Principal