



Relationships & Sex Education Policy 2025-26

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Mission Statement of Mount Seskin Community College

Our mission is to provide an inclusive learning environment which promotes academic excellence, built on the personal, social and spiritual development of all.

We endeavour to develop confident, creative life-long learners in an atmosphere of equality, justice and respect.

Our school is a co-educational designated post-primary school with a rich history, following its' establishment in September 1986. Pupils enjoy a broad curriculum offer at Junior Cycle and we are proud to have two groups this year enjoying our popular Transition Year curriculum offer. From Fifth Year, we support pupils to achieve across a trio of programmes including the Leaving Certificate programme, the LCVP (vocational) programme and the LCA (applied) programme.

We work in partnership with the Junior Cert Schools Programme, Access to College Education (ACE) Programme alongside other local partners to enhance our pupils' school experience and preparation for success in third level education.

Mount Seskin Community College is part of Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board. The DDLETB core values of **care, community, respect** and **equality** and **excellence** run throughout school life.

Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education

RSE is a developmental process through experiential learning in which students participate to help cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships.

RSE is mandatory for all students from First to Sixth year, incorporated into SPHE in the junior cycle and as part of the curriculum in the senior cycle, as SPHE is formally introduced.

National guidance & legislation underpinning

Our RSE policy addresses key circulars related to the provision of SPHE & RSE in post-primary schools. Core circulars include [0037/2010](#) and 0023/2010, which set out best practices and mandatory requirements for RSE and SPHE implementation, building upon older directives.

- [Circular 0037/2010](#): Mandates RSE policy development and implementation of programmes at Junior and Senior Cycle, superseding previous guidance.
- [Circular 0023/2010](#): Outlines best practice guidelines for RSE/SPHE, emphasizing the role of the teacher and a whole-school approach.
- [Circular 0027/2008](#): Focuses on the role of the Board of Management in the implementation of RSE.
- [Circulars M4/95, M20/96, M22/00, M11/03, M27/2008](#): Initial and follow-up directives regarding the introduction of RSE policy and mandatory provision.
- [Circular 0043/2018](#): Advises on best practices for visiting speakers in the context of RSE.

Related Resources and Guidelines:

- [Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice](#): Supports the holistic approach to student health.
- [Child Protection Procedures for Post-Primary Schools](#): Crucial for managing confidentiality and student safety in RSE lessons.
- [Being LGBT in School \(2024\)](#): Resource to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying
- [Framework for Junior Cycle](#), NCCA 2015)

This policy builds on the requirements more generally including

- Education Act (1998), Education (Welfare) Act 2000 & Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act (2004)
- Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools: Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools (2017)
- Code of Behaviour guidelines (NEWB) (2008 – due to be updated this year)
- Bí Cineálta (2024) & Anti-Bullying Procedures (2013)
- Equal Status Acts (2000-2018)

Aims of our Relationships and Sexuality Education programme

Relationships and sexuality education which is located in the overall framework of Social, Personal and Health Education, has as its specific aims:

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

Relationships and Sexuality Education within Social Personal and Health Education:

Social Personal and Health Education is "spiral, developmental in nature and age appropriate in content and methodology".

The RSE programme is designed to follow this principle and pattern. Apart from the specific lessons of RSE, SPHE covers other areas which would be pertinent to the development of a healthy attitude to sexuality in oneself and one's relationship with others.

SPHE deals with many issues such as self-esteem, assertiveness, communication and decision making skills - all of which can contribute to the effectiveness of the RSE programme.

Guidelines for the management & organisation of RSE in our school

1. **SPHE & RSE Teaching team**

Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff will be made by the Principal in consultation with the SPHE Coordinator. All staff delivering SPHE and RSE have completed extensive training.

2. **Parent communication:**

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.

Our SPHE curriculum including RSE is available on our website and we communicate with parents when content will be taught and arrange to meet and discuss any area or concern. A copy of this policy is also available to any parent via 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 will not be directive and will be appropriate to the age of the pupil.

4. **Sensitive or explicit questions:**

Sensitive issues are handled professionally and in accordance with Child Protection Procedures.

When deciding whether or not to answer questions the teacher considers the age and readiness of the students, the RSE programme content, the ethos of the school and the RSE policy. 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/they/ them should seek advice from the SPHE Coordinator, Guidance Counsellor or the Principal. If it is a Child Protection Concern then this must go directly to the DLP as per Child Protection Guidelines.

5. **Confidentiality:**

In relation to confidentiality:

- Teachers do not promise absolute confidentiality
- 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
- Teachers use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard the information

The Principal as DLP adheres to Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary schools in all matters.

7. **Visiting speakers**

It is school policy that most of the RSE programme is best discussed openly with trained teaching professionals, who are known and trusted by the pupils.

There may a rare occurrence where the Principal and SPHE coordinator invite an external professional to provide specific expertise. This would be a fully vetted and qualified professional providing information in addition to, not instead of a planned programme of RSE. The visitor would be accompanied by the SPHE teacher at all times, who would co-present where possible.

9. **LGBTQ+**

Teachers do not promote any one life-style as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that LGBTQ+ will be discussed during a programme of sex education. In exploring any issue concerning LGBTQ+, the teacher addresses any assumptions or prejudice. As with all content, discussion of LGBTQ+ will be appropriate to the age of the pupils.

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. **Additional Educational Needs**

Children with AEN may need more help than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up. The curriculum and delivery will be tailored as appropriate by the teacher delivering to meet all students' needs.

12. **Request for withdrawal from RSE Programme by a Parent**

Parents in post-primary schools have the right to withdraw their children from Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) components of the Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum if it conflicts with their conscience.

Scope of Withdrawal: SPHE at Junior Cycle and RSE at Senior Cycle is a core curricular subject. Each parent has the right to withdraw their child from some or all RSE classes but parents are encouraged to provide alternative RSE at home. The right applies specifically to the sensitive or sex education aspects (RSE) rather than the entire SPHE subject. The school will respect this choice as parents' right.

Supervision: Schools are not obligated to provide alternative supervision, which may require parents to make specific arrangements for their child during these classes. It will be necessary for parents of any student opting out of RSE to make suitable arrangements with school management for the welfare of their child at these times.

Requesting withdrawal: Parents must meet with the Principal/ SPHE Coordinator in person to discuss their decision to withdraw their child from the RSE module.

- a) We explain that RSE is a legal requirement in line with Child Protection procedures
- b) We discuss the nature of the concerns with the parent and outline content taught
- c) We consider whether the programme can be amended or improved in a way that will reassure parents – within the remit of the prescribed RSE programme
- d) We cause minimal embarrassment to the pupil being withdrawn from their class
- e) We recognise we cannot prevent information shared from peers
- f) We offer parents access to appropriate information and resources for their own delivery of the content

It is key that parents/ guardians have a conversation with their child/children about being withdrawn from parts of the SPHE/RSE programme. This discussion can help ensure that they understand the reasons for the withdrawal, preventing any unexpected confusion or surprise should they be directed to a different location during those class times.

Learning outcomes & provision

This appendix outlines the delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) from 1st to 6th Year within the school's Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme. Provision is informed by NCCA SPHE/RSE guidelines for Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle and reflects a whole-school approach to wellbeing, safeguarding, and inclusion.

Teaching and learning are developmentally appropriate, inclusive, and underpinned by respectful dialogue, enabling students to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values required to make informed and responsible decisions in relation to relationships and sexuality.

Junior Cycle RSE (1st–3rd Year)

1st Year

NCCA SPHE Strand: Self-Management | Relationships and Sexuality

Students are supported to:

- Develop self-awareness, self-esteem, and confidence during the transition to post-primary school
- Recognise and manage a range of emotions in a healthy manner
- Build and maintain positive peer relationships
- Understand personal space, boundaries, and respect for self and others
- Begin to explore the concept of consent in everyday interactions
- Develop awareness of online safety, digital communication, and responsible use of technology

Learning experiences promote student voice, active participation, and a supportive classroom climate where students feel safe to engage and seek support.

2nd Year

NCCA SPHE Strand: Self-Management | Relationships and Sexuality

Students are enabled to:

- Understand physical, emotional, and social changes during adolescence
- Develop empathy and respect for diversity and difference
- Identify characteristics of healthy and unhealthy friendships
- Recognise bullying and cyberbullying and know how to access support
- Strengthen decision-making and coping skills
- Identify trusted adults and appropriate help-seeking pathways

Teaching methodologies support inclusive practice and foster respectful interactions among students.

3rd Year

NCCA SPHE Strand: Self-Management | Relationships and Sexuality

Students are supported to:

- Explore personal identity, values, and influences
- Develop skills for managing peer pressure and making informed choices
- Understand consent, boundaries, and mutual respect in relationships
- Develop awareness of sexual orientation and gender identity in an age-appropriate manner
- Strengthen digital literacy and personal safety skills
- Prepare for transition to Senior Cycle

Assessment for learning approaches support reflection, personal growth, and responsible decision-making.

Senior Cycle RSE (4th–6th Year)

4th Year / Transition Year

NCCA SPHE Strand: Relationships and Sexuality | Personal Wellbeing

Students are facilitated to:

- Examine characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships
- Develop effective communication and conflict-resolution skills
- Explore consent within romantic and intimate relationships
- Analyse the influence of media, social norms, and body image
- Build resilience, self-esteem, and emotional literacy
- Develop awareness of online relationships and digital safety

Learning is experiential and reflective, supporting students' personal and social development.

5th Year

NCCA SPHE Strand: Relationships and Sexuality | Personal Wellbeing

Students are enabled to:

- Develop mature, respectful, and responsible attitudes to relationships
- Understand sexual health, including contraception and STI awareness
- Explore reproduction, pregnancy, and related health supports
- Understand the legal context of consent and relationships
- Recognise coercion, pressure, and abusive behaviours
- Access reliable information and appropriate health services

WSE Focus:

Teaching is informed, factual, and sensitive, ensuring student wellbeing and safeguarding are prioritised.

6th Year

NCCA SPHE Strand: Relationships and Sexuality | Personal Wellbeing

Students are supported to:

- Consolidate learning related to relationships, sexuality, and personal values
- Engage in responsible decision-making in intimate relationships
- Understand pregnancy options and available supports (presented factually and sensitively)
- Reflect on rights, responsibilities, and personal safety
- Prepare for transitions beyond school, including independent living and further education
- Know where and how to seek help, advice, and support

Provision supports students' readiness for life beyond school and promotes confidence, autonomy, and wellbeing.

Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the RSE programme

We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this programme.

Specifically, important to the RSE Programme are:

- Pupil feedback – ongoing and in specific pupil voice
- Parental feedback– welcomed during SPHE/RSE communciations, regular parent meetings and in specific parent voice
- Staff review and feedback – as aprt of subject meetings, training and observation by colleagues and our inspection team
- Regular review by our Board of Management

Relationships & Sex Education Policy

Ratification by Board of Management

Date: 6/2/26

Chair: *Cllr M Duff*

Principal: *Ms A Ryan*