**St. Dominic’s College**

**Cabra**



# Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

**December 2022**

## Introduction

## An RSE policy is a written statement of the aims of the RSE programme, the relationship of RSE to SPHE and the organisation and management of RSE within the school.

This RSE policy was drawn up in consultation with:

* Relationships and Sexuality Education-Policy Guidelines as well as the government template showing issues to consider and prompt questions in drafting an RSE policy, assets.gov.ie
* Circulars M4/95, M20/96, M22/00, M11/03 and 0037/2010, 0027/2008, C23/10, 43/2018
* Guidance from the SPHE Department and SPHE Department Coordinator.
* The School’s Management Team
* Consultation with the SST-Student Support Team and the Guidance Department.
* Child protection Procedures for primary and Post Primary Schools 2017
* Consultation with the Student Council and the Parents Association and teachers

**School Context**

St Dominic’s College is an all-girls school with 779 student enrolment. The trustees of the school are Le Chéile Schools Trust. The school has an entrance from both the Navan Road and Ratoath Road.

**Scope**

The policy will apply to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality. Discussion about relationships and sexuality also take place in classes other than SPHE/RSE- Biology, Science, Religion etc. It is important that all teachers are familiar with the RSE policy.

The policy will apply to school staff, students, board of management, parents/guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators.

**Rationale**

Sexuality is a key element of healthy social and personal development. Young people are exposed to a bewildering variety of messages about sexuality and sexual activity. Schools, in consultation with parents/guardians, need to reflect on how to provide for the needs of their students.

The [Education Act, 1998](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1998/en/act/pub/0051/index.html) requires that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.

Section 4 of the Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools requires schools to have an agreed policy for RSE and a suitable RSE programme in place for all students at both Junior and Senior Cycle. At Junior and Senior Cycle, the RSE programme is part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).

Circulars [M4/95](http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobservlet/m04_95.doc) and [M20/96](http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobservlet/m20_96.doc) requested schools to commence a process of RSE policy development.

Circular 0027/2008 and Circular 0037/2010 reminds schools of their obligation to develop a school policy in regard to RSE and to implement a programme in this areas as an element of Social Personal and Health Education at Junior cycle and as an RSE programme in senior cycle.

Circular 0027/2008 states It is the responsibility of the Board of Management of the school to ensure that an RSE programme is made available to all students.

The effectiveness of an RSE programme is dependent on a collaborative policy process involving teachers, parents/guardians, members of the board of management and students.

**Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school (school’s mission/vision/aims)**

The policy relates to the school’s mission/vision and aims. The RSE policy acknowledges the importance of SPHE/RSE being taught in the context of a whole school climate that is inclusive and respectful.

The school supports every student to reach their full potential inside the classroom and via Co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. The school wants every student to be happy and fulfilled. In this context the school understands the importance of wellbeing to each and every student and knows that children and young people learn more effectively, believe in themselves and feel acknowledged and supported in their schools (Wellbeing policy statement and framework for practice 2018).

The RSE policy reflects the values of the trustees and the ethos of the school as outlined below:

Spiritual, moral and ethical issues will arise when teaching RSE. Teachers of RSE understand that their role is to express the views of the whole school community on sensitive issues, not their own personal views and to use their professional judgment. All aspects of the RSE curriculum including those in relation to sexual orientation, contraception, sexually transmitted infections, etc. will be done within a context in which teaching of the programme is informed by the school’s ethos.

As teachers we express our ethos while at the same time facilitating students in discussing a range of views in relation to topics within the RSE programme, within a moral and spiritual framework.

**Values and Mission**

Le Chéile schools are committed to the promotion of a value based education built on the shared purpose of Welcome, Wisdom and Witness.

**Welcome**

This recognizes the unique dignity and worth of each person building on the catholic tradition of being inclusive.

**Wisdom** recognizes our pursuit of wisdom and knowledge which enables our students to achieve an academic excellence that supports them to reach their potential, understand the world and seek to improve it.

**Le Chéile Schools provide Witness** to the gospel value of Inclusivity, Truth, Forgiveness, Service, Concern, Spirituality, Teaching and Learning on a daily basis. We recognise that every person is made in the image and likeness of God.

The motto Veritas (Truth) epitomizes the aim of Dominican schools and colleges which is the pursuit of truth in all its forms. It acknowledges the unique giftedness of each individual and their journey in discovering the truth about themselves, others, the universe they share and the Creator of all.

We strive as a Dominican school to be communities centered on Christ, and on Gospel values. We all learn to work together, learn to make informed judgments, pray together and forgive each other.

**Mission Statement**

At St. Dominic's College, we are committed to enabling each and every student develop her potential, both in the academic and non-academic fields. We encourage the development of a healthy self-image, whilst teaching the student to respect the backgrounds, traditions and beliefs of all those with whom she comes into contact. We provide an environment in which the student is encouraged to take responsibility for her own work, whilst participating in school activities as part of the community.

## Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

The DES Guidelines for Developing an RSE Policy (1997) define RSE as

‘a *lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy*. *This education is delivered consciously and unconsciously by parents, teachers, peers, adults and the media*.’

Further,

RSE is part of the mission of St. Dominic’s College to educate the whole person.

*‘It should be carried out as part of the holistic education which seeks to form as well as inform young people in preparation for adult life.’* (NCCA, 2019)

RSE is a developmental learning process which provides students with the unique opportunity to develop the skills and competence to learn and care about themselves, and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives, and social development. This is in line with the National Sexual Health Strategy for Ireland 2015 – 2020, which sets out to ensure that all students receive *‘comprehensive and age appropriate sexual health education’.*

**Relationships of RSE and SPHE**

The Draft Guidelines for RSE (NCCA, June 1995 1.2) state that 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. As part of 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.

Section 4 of the Rules and Programme for secondary schools require schools to have an agreed policy for RSE and a suitable RSE programme in place for all students at both Junior and Senior Cycle. At all levels, the RSE programme is part of the Social, Personal and Health education (SPHE). It is the responsibility of the Board of Management to ensure that an RSE programme is made available to all students.

In January 1995 and May 1996 the Department of Education and Science issued circulars M4/95 and M20/96 respectively to post primary schools. The circulars requested schools to begin the process of developing their policies to include RSE and wider aspects of SPHE in their curricula for all students from first year to sixth year.

Circulars M22/00 and M11/03 required schools to introduce the SPHE Junior Cycle Curriculum on a phased basis with full implementation by September 2003.

In Circular 0037/2010 schools are required to teach RSE as an integral component of Junior Cycle SPHE up to third year, as outlined in the Junior Cycle SPHE Curriculum Framework produced by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

In 1997 The Department of Education and Science issued Relationships and Sexuality Education policy guidelines to assist schools with the process of developing a policy for RSE. A template showing issues to consider in drafting the policy is also on the government website.

In St. Dominic’s College, the RSE programme in Junior cycle is delivered within the context of our school’s SPHE programme. SPHE, which is timetabled one period per week at Junior Cycle provides students with a unique opportunity to develop skills and competencies, to learn about themselves, to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, their personal lives and their social development. SPHE develops the work of the school in promoting the health and wellbeing of students.

Within this context, RSE aims specifically to provide structured opportunities for students to acquire a knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviors within a moral, spiritual and social framework. RSE helps students to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

**Aims of RSE**

The specific aims of RSE are to:

* help students understand and develop healthy friendships and relationships
* promote an understanding of sexuality and provide sexual health education in order for students to make informed choices.
* encourage a positive attitude to one’s own sexuality and in one’s relationship 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 ethos of our school.
* to support the creation of a cultural and pastoral environment in which the sexual health and wellbeing can flourish.
* provide opportunities for students to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

**Objectives of the RSE Programme**

RSE should enable students to:

* Acquire the understanding and skills necessary to form healthy friendships and relationships
* Develop a positive sense of self awareness and the skills for building and maintaining self-esteem and self-worth.
* Become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change, especially during adolescence and to develop respect for difference between individuals.
* Understand human physiology with particular reference to the reproductive cycle, human fertility and sexually transmitted infections. (STI’s)
* Understand sexual development and identity and explore aspects of sexuality including sex roles, stereotyping, gender issues and gender identity and cultural influences on sexuality.
* Value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood.
* Develop strategies for decisions and actions consistent with personal moral integrity and respectful of the rights and dignity of others.
* Develop skills for coping with peer pressure, conflict and threats to personal safety.

**Objectives of the RSE policy**

* The policy will ensure clarity and consensus on how RSE is taught in the school.
* It will articulate the relationship of RSE to SPHE.
* It will articulate the aims of the RSE Programme.
* It will clarify the rights, roles and responsibilities of all within the school community, in relation to the RSE Programme, with particular reference to school staff, students, parents/guardians and the board of management/trustees.
* It will ensure that teachers, parents/guardians and students understand how the teaching of RSE is linked to the school ethos.
* It will provide information on the practicalities of delivering the programme.

## Provision of training and staff development

## Arrangements regarding the deployment of staff will be made by the Principal.

## Teachers will be consulted and where practicable, teachers who express an interest in teaching SPHE/RSE will be timetabled.

## All teachers involved in this work do not have to be “experts” on the issues concerned. However, they do require sensitivity to the needs of the group, an ability to deal with questions openly/honestly and preparedness to refer to more expert advice if necessary. The skills acquired in general teaching apply also to RSE.

## In- service training for the teaching of RSE will be encouraged and facilitated by the school. Available training opportunities will be identified via www.PDST.ie

## The school has an SPHE Coordinator. This Coordinator makes available all relevant links to PDST training and resources on the SPHE Google Classroom Platform. All SPHE teachers are part of this sharing platform.

## Inclusion of Parents/Guardians

## Parents/Guardians are the primary educators of their children and their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality education is seen by the school as very important.

## A copy of this policy which includes a list of the topics covered will be made available to any parent/guardian on request to the general office and will be available on the school website.

## Parents will also be advised to look at the publication Relationships and Sexuality - Going Forward Together https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/PostPrimary-School-Policies/1997-RSE-Going-Forward-Together-an-Introduction-to-RSE-forParents-.pdf

## SPHE at Junior Cycle is a core curricular subject.

## However, The Education Act 1998 provides that a student is not required to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parents or, in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18, the student. Hence parents have the right to opt out of the sensitive issues in RSE if they wish to do so.

## Parents who wish to withdraw their child from RSE class are asked to inform the school in writing and meet with the Principal in person to discuss the issue. Parents do not have to give reasons for the withdrawal but we respectfully invite them to do so as sometimes we can offer further reassurance and/or resolve misunderstandings. Once the student is withdrawn, provisions will be put in place to accommodate this situation. However, the school cannot take responsibility for any versions of class content passed onto them by other students. This accommodation is on the understanding that the parent/guardian is taking full responsibility for this aspect of the student’s education themselves. In certain circumstances a child with special education needs can be withdrawn from particular aspects of the RSE programme at the discretion of and in consultation with their parents.

## Ethical/Moral Consideration

This policy sets out to provide guidance for teachers on the moral and ethical issues which might arise.

## Answering Questions: While it is important to create an environment in SPHE/RSE in which students can discuss issues openly, teachers may not be able to answer all questions asked by students and can set appropriate limits. Students may ask questions about sensitive issues about sex. On these, and on all questions, teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, the RSE curriculum and the RSE policy for the school. When deciding whether or not 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. The teacher being the professional person delivering the content will be sensitive to the students’ religious beliefs.

## Offering Advice: The school’s function is, through RSE class, 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 should not be directive and should be appropriate to the age of the pupil.

**Confidentiality:** While students should not be encouraged to disclose personal or private information in SPHE/RSE classes, there may be times when they do talk about their own lives.

Confidentiality should be respected unless a teacher becomes aware that a child is at risk, in which case the appropriate action should be taken e.g. follow the procedures set down in the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary schools 2017 for Post-Primary, notifying the DLP (Ms Ann Cameron) or in her absence DDLP (Ms Irene Maher Smith) without delay and/ or refer to any of the school policies such as substance abuse, notify parents etc.

## The Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary schools 2017 state in 5.1.1. and 5.2.2 state:

## If any member of school personnel, including a registered teacher receives an allegation, or has a suspicion that a child may have been abused or neglected, is being abused or neglected, or is at risk of abuse or neglect as described in chapter 2 of these procedures, he or she shall, without delay, report the matter to the DLP in the school.

It is important that students are made aware of the limits of confidentiality and that teachers do not give unconditional guarantees of confidentiality.

Further, the aim of RSE is to provide an education about relationships and sexuality and not to offer individual advice, information or counselling. A teacher may provide students with the necessary information regarding seeking professional advice ‘

**Sexual Activity and Consent**

It is advisable for teachers to give young people information on the age of consent which, following the passage of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act, 2006, is 17 years of age for both males and females for heterosexual and homosexual sex. Accordingly, a sexual relationship where one or both parties is under 17 years of age is illegal. The Child Protection requirements in respect of underage sexual activity as detailed in section 4.7.1 of the Child Protection procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools 2017 (Department of Education and Skills) apply to all mandated persons in the school.

The legal definition of consent to a sexual act, as defined in the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017 will also be discussed within the RSE programme. The PDST Personal Safety Handbook will also be used for reference.

**Family Planning/Contraception**

The Post-Primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines state that the subject of family planning should be covered within the Senior Cycle RSE programme.

The RSE programme requires that young people are provided with information about methods of contraception, including Natural Family Planning. The topics of contraception and abortion will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issues in a non-directive way. Schools can use their discretion with regard to the age at which students receive any aspect of the RSE programme.

**Sexual Orientation**

The Post-Primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines include the subject of sexual orientation. Our school may decide if the topic needs to be addressed before Senior Cycle, especially if homophobic bullying is an issue. Teachers do not promote any one lifestyle as the only acceptable one for society. One of the many advantages of exploring issues concerning sexual orientation is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions and address prejudice. Discussion of sexual orientation should be appropriate to the age of the pupils. The Equal Status Act 2000 and the Equality Act 2004 prohibit discrimination across nine grounds, including sexual orientation. Consideration needs to be given to the messages that are conveyed if the subject of sexual orientation is not discussed in schools. It is important that any student who is coming to terms with their sexual identity should not experience any harassment, embarrassment or isolation which may impact on their mental and emotional health and they should be offered support from the Student Support Team.

**Sexually transmitted infection**

An awareness of this module is first introduced in 3rd year. This module is examined in more depth in senior cycle.

**Students are taught the following content:**

The definition of an STI

The difference between STI’s and STD’s including HIV and the importance of early medical intervention

Students compare different methods of contraception to prevent STI’s.

We discuss the moral social and cultural issues that impact on sexual behaviour.

**Online Safety**

Sexting, Sexual Imagery and Pornography

In a digital age, the risks and threats faced by children growing up today include the exposure to more sexual imagery online. The results of the Secondary School Digital Trend Report released in January 2018 have found that 13% of Secondary school students have sent a nude or semi-nude photo of themselves.

Sexting behaviour has increased throughout secondary school years, 36% of adolescents attending sixth year self-reported to send text messages with sexually suggestive content, (Zeko trend report 2016 – 2018).

Unfortunately, once material is sent via mobile or online, the individual loses control of that information. Pictures may be distributed beyond the intended recipients either online or through mobile phone. Sending sexts also increases the young person’s risk of victimisation (i.e. cyberbullying) where the young person can be harassed, intimidated even blackmailed for sending such material. Most importantly, the sharing of explicit images of minors is captured by the Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998. Self-produced explicit images exchanged by adolescents, under the age of 17, could be considered as child pornography. As a result, there is a need for education programmes that teach adolescents how to critically assess the content and potential risks associated with sexting. Other sexual imagery and pornography are increasingly becoming easier to access. Students must be taught about how to eliminate the exposure to this content and also the implications of viewing, sharing or liking such imagery. Students are made aware of the dangers of image sharing, cyberbullying and the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020 (also known as Coco’s law) on our Annual Safer Internet Day.

**Practical Issues**

RSE has six timetabled classes per year in the SPHE programme at Junior level.

RSE at senior cycle is a year-long programme and students study RSE one period per week at this level with other topics covered in this programme.

The SPHE programme is one period per week with the exception of fourth year who study a 10 week SPHE module.

The size of the class will be determined by the base class.

Practical examples of programmes for RSE learning are:

The Baby Think It Over Programme.

LGBTQ+ week –stand up week.

Individual packs of tampons and towels handed out in class.

**Content covered**

Junior Cycle RSE Curriculum One of the required modules in SPHE is Relationships and Sexuality (RSE). This is covered in Term 2 and/or Term 3 in 1st, 2nd and 3rd Year. It should also be noted that many of the general SPHE topics have links with the RSE programme. The following lessons are taught as part of the school Junior Cycle RSE programme:

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| **1st year – Health and Wellbeing SPHE1** |
| Me as unique and different   * How I see myself and others * Building on my self esteem |
| Friendships   * Having a friend and being a friend * Qualities of a true friend * Making and keeping friends |
| Changes in adolescence   * Being an adolescent- Are teenagers all the same? * Changes at Puberty – Psychological, social, emotional and physical changes |
| The reproductive system   * About a boy – the reproductive system * About a girl – the reproductive system |
| Images of male and female   * Through adolescence to becoming a parent * Conception/sexual intercourse/Ovulation/fertilisation/pregnancy/menstruation |
| Respecting myself and others   * Sexuality, Gender Identity and Sexual Health * Gender stereotyping |
| **2nd year Health and Wellbeing SPHE2** |
| Health and personal safety   * Self-confidence and Wellbeing * A sense of belonging |
| Managing relationships   * Changes in your friendships * Changing values * What type of friend are you |
| Recognising and expressing feelings and emotions   * Families – all the same and all different * Family influence * This is me |
| From Conception to birth   * Making a baby * Stages of pregnancy |
| Peer pressure and other influences   * Media influences on relationships and sexuality |
| Making responsible decisions   * Respecting myself and others * Personal space and Boundaries * Is this behaviour acceptable |
| Sexuality and Sexual Orientation   * Being Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender * Different identities * Being valued and feeling safe |
| **3rd year Health and Wellbeing SPHE3** |
| Where am I now?   * The tasks of adolescence * Sexuality |
| Relationships what’s important?   * Boyfriends, Girlfriends and Romantic Relationships * Relationship difficulties |
| The three R’s respect, rights, and responsibilities   * Consent and the Law * Sexually transmitted infections (STI’s) |
| Conflict   * Sexuality * Sexual Orientation * Growing up transgender |
| Body Image   * Media influences on relationships and Sexuality * Sexual Objectification |

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| **Senior Cycle RSE – plan based on the 7 stages from the Social, Personal and Health Education Curriculum Framework with the NCCA- Timing** |
| 1.Self-awareness and personal skills |
| 2.Relationship skills |
| 3.Sexual and reproductive health |
| 4.Sexual identity |
| 5.Parenting |
| 6.Personal rights and personal safety |
| 7.Being health literate |

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| **Senior Cycle RSE – plan based on the 7 stages from the Social, Personal and Health Education Curriculum Framework with the NCCA-** |
| 1.**Self-Awareness and Personal Skills**  • Compare what they value in relationships with what is valued by significant other groups, e.g. family, church, older people, friends, different cultures  • Compare what they value in relationships with the values portrayed in relationships in the media • identify the personal strengths that they bring to relationships  • Construct a personal life plan including consideration of their personal, social and vocational goals and the place of parenthood in this plan  • Analyze the concepts of love, being in love and the importance of love in its various aspects, including closeness, intimacy, distance, pleasure and commitment |
| 2.**Relationship skills**  • Demonstrate genuineness, empathy and respect in different types of relationship scenarios  • Demonstrate relationship skills which support the setting up, maintenance and ending of relationships  • Design an awareness campaign highlighting different ways to negotiate sexual relationships in order to avoid unwanted sexual activities and/or unprotected sexual intercourse  • Devise an SPHE class for Junior Cycle students which focuses on healthy and safe engagement in online and virtual communications |
| 3.**Sexual and reproductive health**  • Explain the different stages of adolescent development, including the physical, emotional and sexual changes that take place in puberty  • Explain the reproductive process including an understanding of fertility from both a male and a female perspective  • Research sexually transmitted infections including Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus (HIV) and the importance of early medical intervention for STI’s  • Compare different methods of contraception and protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and pregnancy  • Examine different lifestyle choices about sexual activity, the arguments for delaying sexual activities and the consequences of being sexually active for themselves and their personal relationships  • Discuss the complexity of moral, social and cultural issues that impact on sexual behaviour including the pressure on youth to be sexually attractive and sexually available  • Discuss different cultural values and beliefs about sex and sexual health |
| 4.**Sexual identity**  • Distinguish between sexual activity, sexuality and sexual orientation  • Clarify their understanding of and comfort with different sexual orientations  • Demonstrate how to relate respectfully to others of a different sexual orientation |
| 5.**Parenting**  • Compare their understanding of the responsibilities of being a parent/guardian with parents/guardians’ understanding of their responsibilities  • Discuss the role of commitment and relationship skills in marriage and other committed relationships, that help to support lasting relationships and family life  • Compose an ‘open’ letter to adults/guardians emphasizing the importance of supportive adult/child relationship on the development of self-esteem and independence and how this might be achieved  • Design a scenario which explores the consequences of crisis pregnancy, teenage pregnancy and/or parenthood for different males and different females |
| 6.**Personal rights and personal safety**  • Argue in support of their right to personal safety, privacy and their own space, and the consequences for them when these are not respected  • Explain what sexual harassment is, including issues of power and control  • Make a short presentation explaining sexual harassment and the law as it applies to it  • Demonstrate skills for dealing with sexual harassment including how to assess risk and take steps to deal with it including where to access help and support  • Formulate suggestions for a school policy on sexual harassment  • Design an information campaign highlighting safety tips to protect against rape and sexual assault including where to access help and support if one is a victim |
| 7.**Being health literate**  • Discuss the law as it relates to the age of consent for sexual activity • research the services offered by statutory and voluntary agencies in the community which support the sexual health and wellbeing of young adults  • Describe the statutory and voluntary agencies which offer support to those experiencing relationship difficulties  • Evaluate the reliability and credibility of two sources of information about sexual health, sexuality and sexuality orientation.  • Design an awareness campaign about young people’s rights and responsibilities in relation to ?? online/virtual communications |
| **The objectives of this area of learning are to:**  1. Explore personal thoughts, values, attitudes and feelings about relationships  2. Develop an understanding of the different types of relationships, what is important in them and the skills to enhance relationships  3. Promote empathy with others who have different cultural values, attitudes and beliefs about family, relationships, sex and sexuality  4. Develop students’ knowledge, understanding and skills in support of sexual and reproductive health  5. Develop students’ understanding of sexuality and sexual orientation and the importance of an inclusive environment  6. Develop personal and interpersonal skills which support beginning, maintaining and ending relationships  7. Develop skills for coping with peer pressure, conflict, and threats to personal safety. |

**Visiting Speakers**

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

However, visitors can enhance the quality of the provision as long as they are used in addition to, not instead of a planned programme of RSE.

The SPHE Coordinator will provide the visitor, well in advance of the visit, with a copy of this RSE policy. After gaining approval from the Principal for the visit the organiser makes the visitor aware of the ethos of the school and the manner of delivery of the RSE programme.

The SPHE coordinator will ensure that the information delivered is documented and discussed with the coordinator and the Principal may be consulted on this prior to delivery of the talk, and that the ethos of the school will be upheld always.

The SPHE coordinator will view the visitor’s content and presentation before delivery. The teacher will remain in the room whilst the presentation is occurring as is school policy. All programmes and events delivered by visitors and external agencies must use appropriate, evidence based methodologies with clear educational outcomes.

Such programmes are best delivered by those specifically qualified to work with the young people for whom the programmes are designed. Visitors will be given advanced notice of the class and an idea of how their contribution fits into the scheme of work.

The school will take guidance from the circular 0043/2018 which documents guidance for engaging external facilitators. The organisation- Accord for senior students give talks on relationships and marriage when learning about RSE in school. Other organisations come into the school as part of the Religion senior cycle programme.

**Guidelines for students with special education needs**.

If learning activities are to be made meaningful, relevant and achievable for all students, it is important that the teacher finds ways to respond to students’ diversity by using differentiated approaches and methodologies. Children with special needs may need more help than others in coping 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. Sources that will be consulted by teachers in this regard are:

NCCA Guidelines for Teachers of Students with Mild General Learning Disabilities: Post – Primary (SPHE) for more information. The advice of the Special Education Support Service (SESS) will be used in such circumstances.

Consideration and sensitivity will always be given to the needs of students with special circumstances. These students are identified in consultation with the SST- student support team and senior management.

**Link to other policies**

Anti-Bullying policy

Child Safeguarding statement and risk assessment

Guidance plan

Code of behaviour

Religion policy

Vetting policy

**Links to Curriculum Delivery**

Social Personal and Health Education SPHE contributes to developing the work of the school in promoting the health and wellbeing of students. This happens in the context of their emotional, moral, social and spiritual growth as well as their intellectual, physical, religious development. This includes providing information on relationships and sexuality.

SPHE looks at issues such as relationships at home and in school, building self-esteem and learning skills of communication, decision making and expressing feelings. All of these can contribute to the effectiveness of the RSE programme. Aspects of RSE are also delivered across the curriculum through subjects such as Religion, Science, Biology and Home Economics.

Topics related to RSE covered in 6th year Religion class include, the rape crisis centre, human trafficking, self-esteem amongst others.

In St. Dominic’s College, our aim is to ensure that all students receive a full and balanced RSE programme from first year to sixth year.

**Ongoing support**

**The schools supports teachers, students, parents/guardians, board members involved in RSE at policy and programme level.**

The school is very committed to ensuring access to in-career development opportunities for teachers and the policy committee and for teachers to obtain expert training in the field.

The school will support efforts of parents to provide educational opportunities for other parents.

The school will purchase appropriate RSE teaching materials which have been identified by staff as useful and which have been approved by the Principal and as much as school budgetary resources allow.

**Implementation Arrangements, Roles and Responsibilities**

**Roles and Responsibilities**

**Trustees and Board of Management**

The Board of Management fosters and supports the development of an RSE policy and programme by collaborating with teachers and parents. The Board also facilitates the consultative process whereby the school community can respond and contribute. The Board of Management should examine and approve the completed policy and programme prior to their implementation in the school and review the policy at regular intervals.

At all times the Board of Management seek to accommodate and be sensitive to the religious and cultural beliefs of both teachers and parents while fulfilling their responsibility to ensure the availability of appropriate and educationally excellent RSE for all young people.

**Principal and Senior Management Team**

As with all subject areas, it is the role of the Principal to make possible a coherent and coordinated approach to RSE in keeping with the ethos of the school. Communicating the vision of the human perspective and human relationships at the heart of a Catholic school’s provision for RSE, is a key responsibility of the Principal and the management team along with the coordinator. It is the role of the Deputy Principals to support the work of the Principal. The Principal and Senior Management Team coordinate the school’s approach to RSE in consultation with the coordinator and consult the Board of Management, staff, parents and health professionals as appropriate.

The ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­ Principal is assigned the role of coordinating the implementation of the RSE policy but delegates the responsibility for the monitoring of the programme to the RSE Coordinator and RSE team and for the teaching of the RSE program to the staff.

This policy will be implemented as soon as the policy is ratified by the Board of Management and implemented in accordance with the timetable planning as directed by the School’s RSE Policy and DES guidelines.

**RSE Coordinator**

* Responsibility for coordinating all issues related to the RSE policy, the curriculum and the programme designed for the students.
* To be respectful and committed to the school’s ethos and the aims and direction of RSE within the school.
* To liaise with the Board of Management and the Principal, Deputy Principal, the Student Support Team on RSE matters in our school.
* To work with the School Development Planning Coordinator with regard to amending and reviewing the RSE policy to ensure that this is a whole-school process and up to date with current changes in RSE
* To complete the RSE plans in accordance with the NCCA criteria for the Junior and Senior Cycle Programme.
* To ensure that the programme is taught effectively and is appropriate to the age and maturity of the students by making sure that all SPHE teachers teaching RSE have the appropriate plans.
* To attend in-service training and disseminate appropriate information to all RSE staff members.
* To meet with the RSE teachers to give them guidance and reassurance on what they are teaching and discuss different methodologies we use within our RSE classes.
* To monitor the sharing platform that has been set up online to communicate our resources and plans and pass on relevant information such as in-service training dates and venues.
* To meet with visitor speakers to the school and provide them with the RSE policy and to check the content that they are teaching so that all is appropriate within the school ethos.
* To uphold and ensure that the programme is taught in accordance with the school’s Catholic ethos.

**Role of Teaching Staff for RSE**

* Teaching staff will have direct responsibility for delivering the SPHE and RSE programme at Junior and Senior Cycle.
* Within this programme to deliver information on RSE to young adults aging from 12-18/19 years of age.
* To liaise with the Coordinator on matters of planning, curriculum and content for RSE and to identify one’s own needs around ongoing professional development in the RSE curriculum.
* To be responsible for the education of young people receiving RSE on an age and stage bases and to ensure that each student receives the relevant information in a carefree and safe environment in accordance with the school ethos.
* To be responsible for delivering high quality RSE classes to ensure that the young people are equipped with the knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence to cope with the many pressures and challenges of modern society. Learning about friendships and family in RSE are the building blocks to help them to understand themselves and others.
* To be part of any review of RSE provision and policy on RSE. Teachers actively promote the implementation of RSE by running programmes such as LGBTQ+ Friendship Week, and the Baby Think It Over Programme.
* To be aware of the DLP and DDLP in our school in case we are made aware of any student who may be at risk of harm.
* Teachers will help students in cooperation with their parents to develop key skills such as good communication skills, form and maintain healthy relationships, make sound judgements, develop interpersonal skills, recognising unhealthy relationships and develop strategies to manage situations.

**The Role of the Guidance Counsellor**

The Guidance Counsellor may be involved in the delivery of the RSE programme as part of SPHE at Junior and Senior Cycle. The wellbeing of the student is their main priority with many school policies as the foundation: Child Protection, Anti-Bullying, AUP (acceptable Usage policy) and the RSE policy.

This will involve liaising with many stakeholders as the Guidance Counsellor does on a daily basis i.e. subject teachers, management and parents. If issues arise referrals can be made to the Guidance Counsellor for personal counselling and if required further referrals to outside agencies.

Student issues and concerns are also raised and discussed in-depth at the SST (Student Support Team meeting) on a weekly basis with input from the Guidance Counsellors, Chaplin, SEN and Management. Some include difficult friendships and relationship issues, unhealthy behaviour, sexuality and identity. Personal counselling may continue in school with involvement of parents or outside referrals may be required for further support help and support.

**The Chaplain**

The school Chaplain’s role in relation to RSE is to support the teaching of RSE and to support the moral and ethical framework of the school. The chaplain’s role is to support student centered pastoral care, and to promote inclusion, respect, dignity and care for all.

The Chaplain promotes the need to help students recognise that compassion, forgiveness, mercy and tolerance are essential dispositions to develop within relationships. Pastoral care seeks to promote respect for all individuals regardless of sexual orientation, race, gender or creed and to promote Gospel values within the school.

Chaplaincy in relation to RSE acts to promote our sacred dignity and value as human persons in the eyes of God, while promoting Positive Mental Health and Body Image, Respect for all students, and Catholic Social Teaching.

The Chaplain will liaise with the coordinator of the RSE programme and its delivery in school.

**Role of the Year head**

If a student queries their gender orientation and wishes to be called a different name, the Year Head will inform the Principal.

The school will use the certified name unless the parents have told the school to do otherwise.

**Role of the Parent**

Role of the parent in St. Dominic’s College

The parent is the primary educator of their child and their role in education is seen by the school as very important. The school endorses a partnership approach between home and school life.

To make themselves aware of the policy and the topics covered in the curriculums which is documented in the policy. This policy is on our school website.

To make themselves aware of any publications that the school deems necessary and appropriate to look at, in the teaching of RSE

**Student Support Team**

A Student Support Team is a central part of the student support system in a school. It is the overarching team concerned with the progressing of actions for the welfare and wellbeing of all students. It is a mechanism through which many of the existing student supports are co­ordinated and planned.

A student support team acts as a school hub, bringing coherence to the support system by coordinating the valuable work of departments, teams and/or groups such as the Special Education Needs (SEN) department, along with guidance and pastoral staff. School Leadership also has a significant role guiding and supporting the school’s student support team.

**What the SST is:**

An opportunity to work collaboratively at a weekly meeting of Principal, Deputy Principals, Guidance Counsellors, SEN team, Chaplain and Pastoral Care Team, in a supportive way to address the social, emotional, behavioural and academic needs of all students.

Student concerns are discussed by all groups involved and the best considered plan of action is put together for implementation as soon as the situation allows.

In St. Dominic’s College the core purpose of the SST is

* To focus support re. students’ social and emotional development
* To implement actions that are preventative, proactive and reactive to students social and emotional development
* To look holistically and systematically at wellbeing within the school community.

*Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools; A Guide to Establishing a Team or Reviewing an Existing Team (2021*)

**Ratification and Communication**

When the policy is ratified by the Board of Management it becomes the agreed RSE policy of St. Dominic’s College. A copy of the RSE policy will be available to staff. The entire teaching staff will familiarise themselves with the policy and make themselves aware of any changes implied in curriculum delivery.

Parents/guardians will be informed of the RSE policy from the time of enrolment of their daughter.

A copy of the RSE policy will be made available at all times in the school office and on the school website. Notification that the RSE policy has been updated will be communicated in the newsletter to parents/guardians, students, staff and an email will be sent to staff.

**Implementation Date**

This updated policy will apply from 7 December 2022

This policy was drawn up by an RSE team who had several meetings to design this policy.

The Parents Association, the Student Council, the staff and the Board of Management were consulted for feedback. The draft was circulated to staff via email and both the Parents Association and the Student Council had it on their agenda at their respective meetings before the policy was ratified. Some amendments received were that we would be cognisant of all religions whilst we are teaching it. Another amendment was that 6th year Religion includes RSE topics such as Human Trafficking, Rape Crisis Centre as part of their programme. Other amendments were considered and included.

These amendments were made before it was presented to the Board for ratification.

Although Board members and management were part of the team the final amended draft policy was circulated to all.

**Reviewing, Monitoring and Evaluating the policy**

The Principal is responsible for the implementation of the policy but assigns the monitoring to the RSE staff and RSE Co-coordinator. Ongoing review and evaluation will take place with due cognizance of changing information, guidelines, legislation and feedback from parents/guardians, students teachers and others.

The policy will be revised as necessary in the light of such reviews and within the framework of school planning. Any amendments necessary as a result of such review will be undertaken.

The policy will be reviewed at 2 year intervals or sooner if deemed necessary.

In practice, this process of review and evaluation might be coordinated by the policy committee in consultation with the wider community.

Some practical indicators that will be used to gauge the impact and effectiveness of the policy might include:

* A student/teacher evaluation form may be given to some classes at the end of the RSE module.
* The range of resources available to teachers will be evaluated.
* The in-service training availed by teachers will be extended to other teachers.
* Parents/Guardians/students’ awareness of the policy will be enhanced at intervals.
* Feedback received from teachers, students’ council, parents/guardians and members of the Board of Management will be sought.

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management on 6th December 2022.

Review Date December 2024

**Signed**

Frances Cooke

Chairperson of the Board of Management December 6 2022

Ann Cameron

Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management December 6 2022

**Appendices**

**Resources used by SPHE teachers**

1. Google Classroom – SPHE google classroom is set up for all the appointed SPHE teachers and a platform for sharing/adding content, planning and resources for all the SPHE classes in St. Dominics College, Cabra.

Here is the following link: <https://classroom.google.com/c/MTUzNTU2NjAwNTEy?cjc=66p5ljx>

1. PDST.ie for in-service for teachers and planning and resources

[Relationships and Sexuality Education | PDST](https://pdst.ie/primary/health-wellbeing/RSE)

1. NCCA – SPHE resources for SPHE teachers.

[Relationship Sexuality Education; RSE (ncca.ie)](https://ncca.ie/en/primary/primary-developments/social-personal-and-health-education-sphe-relationships-and-sexuality-education-rse/)

1. Planning for RSE

[Resources for learning and teaching SPHE/RSE (curriculumonline.ie)](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Senior-cycle/SPHE-(1)/SPHE-Toolkit/Resources-for-learning-and-teaching-SPHE-RSE/)

1. Class book for Junior Cycle –Health and Wellbeing 1,2,3 for 1st-3rd years

<https://www.edcolearning.ie/Book/List>

1. Class book for Senior Cycle – Ways to Wellbeing – John Doran

Trust Pack, [Workbook V7 CMYK.indd (pdst.ie)](https://www.pdst.ie/sites/default/files/TRUST-Main_0.pdf)

Growing up LGBT [Growing UP LGBT PDF\_0.pdf (pdst.ie)](https://www.pdst.ie/sites/default/files/Growing%20UP%20LGBT%20PDF_0.pdf)

1. Websites for classroom:

* [B4uDecide:Junior Cycle RSE/SPHE - www.b4udecide.ie](https://b4udecide.ie/parents/rse-in-schools/)
* [Growing Up LGBT: Junior and Senior Cycle SPHE - www.pdst.ie (pdf)](https://pdst.ie/sites/default/files/LGBT%20English%20Print.pdf)
* [Sexual Wellbeing:www.sexualwellbeing.ie](https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/)