



## RELATIONSHIP AND SEXUAL EDUCATION POLICY

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The following policy will apply to school staff, students, Board of Management, parents/guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators and will be freely available to all personnel via our school website.

This RSE policy was developed in accordance with:

- The school's vision, values and Mission Statement
- Department of Education and Skills guidelines as set out in Circular M4/95, M20/96, C23/10 Social and Personal Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education-Best Practice Guidelines for Post Primary Schools and C37/2010
- Guidance from the Wellbeing Committee
- Guidance from Ethos Team
- The Senior Management Team
- Board of Management
- The Parents Association
- The Student Council

### 2. SCHOOL CONTEXT

Clongowes is a fee-paying Catholic boarding school for boys. It aims to create an open, happy, stimulating, mutually respectful and supportive community where young people are able to develop the full range of their talents and academic abilities in a balanced, integrated and generous way, striving for excellence in all that they do.

### 3. PHILOSOPHY

RSE in Clongowes Wood College SJ is grounded in the Catholic Church's teaching of the human person; the belief in the dignity of the human person created in the image and likeness of God. This Christian revelation encourages students to see the human body as sacred, and gender and sexuality as a gift from God. Further, it instils in students the Christ-centred vision that every human person must be treated with dignity and respect. It is within the context of this Christian relationship that students are invited to reflect on the meaning of human life, dignity of the human person, and

the meaning of human love. For it is there that healthy relationships and sexuality grows and develops.

#### 4. DEFINITION OF RELATIONSHIP AND SEXUAL 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 Clongowes Wood College SJ 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 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’.

#### 5. RATIONALE

As a key element of the school’s SPHE programme, RSE

- Ensures that Clongowes Wood College SJ meets its obligations under the Education Act in promoting the social and personal development of students and providing 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.
- Addresses a wide variety of messages about sexuality and sexual activity that young people are exposed to.
- Provides young people with accurate knowledge about relationships and sex, and helps them develop the necessary skills to enable them to make informed choices.

#### 6. RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION WITHIN SOCIAL PERSONAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION

Guided by the Department of Education and Skills Circular 0037/2010, RSE is taught at both Junior and Senior Cycles.

- All Junior Cycle classes (Elements, Rudiments and Grammar) are timetabled for one period of SPHE per week.
- Syntax Health Education is timetabled for two periods per week for an eight week module. Six class periods are allocated specifically to RSE.
- Poetry and Rhetoric students will receive a six lesson module of RSE delivered within the time allocated to Religious Education.
- Parents will be notified by the Academic Year Head in the beginning of the academic year notifying parents when the classes will be taught, as well as the themes and content to be taught in SPHE/RSE.
- The Unit of Learning for each year group, including RSE topics, can be found on the College parent portal and in the Appendix of this policy.

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.

In this school we teach aspects of RSE in any subject in which they form part of the syllabus as laid down by the Department of Education and Skills. Therefore discussion about relationships and sexuality also takes place in other classrooms other than SPHE/RSE; it is therefore important that all teachers are familiar with RSE policy.

In the event of a teacher wishing to introduce a module on RSE where it does not form part of a syllabus it is advised that a suitable recognised and educationally sound programme be followed. This programme should be agreed with the Headmaster in advance of teaching beginning. Parents should be notified about such modules in advance of the programme beginning.

## 7. THE 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 and ethos 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.

It is acknowledged that in a course of limited duration these aims are aspirational.

## 8. PARTICIPATION

SPHE is a core curricular subject on the Junior Cycle Curriculum. Relationships and Sexuality (RSE) is one module of the programme. Parents/Guardians should be informed of the RSE Policy from the time of enrolment of the student. While all partners in the school community – teaching and boarding staff, parents and management – are agreed on the programme we recognise, nevertheless, the right of any parent/guardian who wishes to request that his/her son should not participate in the programme. The school will respect this choice. Where students are withdrawn from RSE the school cannot take responsibility for any versions of class content passed on to them by other students. Parents/Guardians wishing to withdraw their son must contact the Academic Year Head in the first instance. After discussion with AYH, if the Parent/Guardian still wishes to withdraw their son from RSE, then this request should be made in writing to the Headmaster in September of each year; otherwise the student will take part in the RSE classes.

## 9. 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 and should set appropriate limits. Inappropriate questions will not be answered by a teacher in class. Students may ask questions about issues which are not included on the curriculum. On these and all questions asked, teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, together with the student's emotional maturity, the RSE Curriculum and RSE Policy for the school.

## 10. MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION & CONFIDENTIALITY

It is school policy that if a teacher receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a pupil is being abused (as defined in *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*), the teacher should, in the first instance, report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP). DLP will decide whether to inform the parents/guardians and /or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling. Although there is no legal duty on a teacher, or DLP, to inform the parents/guardians of matters which a child has confided in them:

- Teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality.

- Students must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the DLP and possibly to parents/guardians if the DLP decides that it is in the best interests of the student to notify parents.
- 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.

Where the matter is reported to the DLP and s/he satisfied on advice that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation, a report should be made to TUSLA as per the school's Child Protection Policy, in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education and Skills' Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary. The DLP will report to the Board of Management as per section 4.3 of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary. It is essential that all times the matter be treated in the strictest confidence and not discussed except among the parties mentioned above.

## 11. OUTSIDE SPEAKERS

Outside speakers are invited to speak at Clongowes Wood College SJ and will be directed to the school's website for the school's RSE policy. All visitors require advance preparation by the SPHE/RSE teacher ahead of their visit. While visitors to the classroom can be immensely valuable as part of the SPHE programme, the delivery of the programme remains the responsibility of the teacher. In light of this, where visitors/outside agencies are used to support SPHE, the SPHE/RSE teacher must remain with the class group during the visit.

The engagement of outside speakers by staff should take the ethos and values of the school into consideration when inviting such speakers to address students. Students must be addressed appropriately and relative to the age and life experience of the students.

## 12. RSE TOPICS

### **Sexual Activity**

Teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, together with the student's emotional maturity, the RSE Curriculum and the RSE Policy for the school, while dealing with the topic of Sexual Activity. It is advisable that teachers give young people information on the age of consent which, following the passage of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act, 2006, is 17 years for both males and females. In the case of under-age sexual activity, the teacher must familiarise themselves with Section 4.2.2 of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

## **The division between biological and non-biological aspects of sex education**

The school policy is that the Science and SPHE Departments deal with the biological aspects of reproduction.

### **Family Planning**

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. Teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, together with the student's emotional maturity, the RSE Curriculum and RSE Policy for the school, while dealing with the topic of family planning.

### **Sexual Orientation and Identity**

Teachers do not promote any one life-style as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that sexual orientations and identity will be discussed during a programme of sex education. One of the advantages of exploring such issues in a classroom setting is to provide students the opportunities to correct false ideas, assumptions and address prejudice. The RSE program is conducted in accordance with DES Guidelines. The Equal Status Act, 2004 prohibits discrimination across nine grounds, including homosexuality and LGBTQ+. Teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, together with the student's emotional maturity, the RSE Curriculum and RSE Policy for the school, while dealing with the topic of sexual orientation.

### **Sexually Transmitted Infections**

Creating awareness of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) is undertaken in second level schools. Information on STIs is mainly addressed in the Senior Cycle. Teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, together with the student's emotional maturity, the RSE Curriculum and RSE Policy for the school, while dealing with the issue of Sexually Transmitted Infections.

### **Out-of-School Factors**

The College recognises that many out-of-school factors affect the development of a positive attitude to relationships and sexuality during adolescence – media, social media, access to explicit material, peer expectations and social circles. The RSE programme attempts to heighten students' awareness of the influences of these forces on the development of their values and attitudes. Thus, empowering them to make informed decisions and choices.

### 13. PROVISION OF TRAINING AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

To enable teachers to acquire the necessary knowledge, understanding and skills to deliver the RSE programme staff are encouraged and supported to undertake ongoing professional development in the area of SPHE, RSE, and Wellbeing.

### 14. RESOURCES

The school will purchase appropriate RSE teaching materials which have been identified by staff as useful and which have been approved by the Headmaster, within the normal budgetary framework and as general school resources allow.

### 15. MONITORING OF POLICY

The implementation of the RSE policy will be monitored at Wellbeing/SPHE/RSE department meetings and other meetings deemed necessary by the Headmaster or Board of Management.

### 16. EVALUATING AND REVIEWING THE RSE PROGRAMME

Within the framework of the College self-evaluation and policy planning the school will review this policy periodically after its ratification by the Board of Management. RSE policy may be reviewed and amended, prior to that date, where necessary. The review and evaluation process will include the above named stakeholders, the Wellbeing Committee, Ethos Team, Senior Management Team, Board of Management, Parents Association and Student Council. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Clongowes Wood College SJ Child Protection Policy.

# APPENDIX

## SPHE LONG-TERM PLANNING 2024-25

**Year group:** 1st to 3rd year

**Reviewed:** September 2024

**Teachers:** Emma Browne (EB), Mary Burke (MBB) Andrew Carlos (ACa), Helen Hickson (HH)

**Date of next review:** May 2026

**YEAR 1:** ACa, HH,

	Summer - Midterm 1	Midterm 1 - Christmas	Christmas - Midterm 2	Midterm 2 - Easter	Easter - Summer	Reflection
<b>Unit Titles</b>	<i>Friendship Week</i> Having a Friend and Being a Friend Being Healthy	<i>Positive Mental Health Week 1</i> How I see myself & others Belonging	Respectful Communication Impact of Media (WebWise)	Anti-bullying	<i>Positive Mental Health Week 2</i> Positive mental health	
<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	3.1, 3.2, 3.3 2.1, 4.3	1.1, 1.2 2.3, 4.3	2.8, 2.9 2.2, 4.3	2.10, 2.11, 2.12 4.3	4.1, 4.2 4.3	
<b>Assessment</b>	Class participation contest  Headmaster reports	Reflective diary  Headmaster reports	'How would you respond' advice blog	Role plays, anti bullying ads  Headmaster reports	Create stress relief pack  Headmaster reports	

**YEAR 2:** ACa, HH,

	Summer - Midterm 1	Midterm 1 - Christmas	Christmas - Midterm 2	Midterm 2 - Easter	Easter - Summer	Reflection
<b>Unit Titles</b>	<i>Friendship Week</i> Being an adolescent	<i>Positive Mental Health Week 1</i> Loss & bereavement	The relationship spectrum Sexuality & gender identity	Intro to substance use Substance Use & mental health My rights & the rights of others	<i>Positive Mental Health Week 2</i> Mental health & mental ill-health	
<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	1.3, 1.4 4.3	4.10, 4.11, 4.12, 4.13, 4.3	3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.8, 3.9	2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 4.7 1.8, 1.9, 4.3	4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6	
<b>Assessment</b>	Reflective diary Advice for 1st Years  Headmaster reports	Reflective diary <i>? 2nd Year CBA</i>  Headmaster reports	Co-create checklists for being inclusive Role plays	Drug info pamphlets  Headmaster reports	Positive mental health awareness campaign Headmaster reports	



YEAR 3: EB, ACa, HH

	Summer - Midterm 1	Midterm 1 - Christmas	Christmas - Midterm 2	Midterm 2 - Easter	Easter - Summer	Reflection
Unit Titles	<i>Friendship Week</i> Self-management	<i>Positive Mental Health Week 1</i> Dealing with tough times	Re-visit Substance Use Taking care of sexual health	Sexuality of self Media influences on relationship & sexuality Making study plans	<i>Positive Mental Health Week 2</i> Review & Reflection Mindfulness	
Learning Outcomes	1.5, 1.6, 1.7	4.3, 4.8, 4.9	2.6, 2.7 3.7	3.10, 3.11	4.3	
Assessment	Making study plans  Headmaster reports	Reflection diary, mental health campaign	Drug info pamphlets  Headmaster reports	Role plays, advice letters, reflection diary, study plans	Headmaster reports	

- Unit 4.3 runs through the whole SPHE course and Wellbeing programme as it is practised on a weekly basis.
- See detailed list of Junior Cycle Learning Outcomes below.

## JUNIOR CYCLE SPHE LEARNING OUTCOMES

STRANDS

1. Who am I?

**How I see myself and others**

1.1 appreciate the importance of building their own self-esteem and that of others

1.2 welcome individual difference based on an appreciation of their own uniqueness

**Being an adolescent**

1.3 participate in informed discussions about the impact of physical, emotional, psychological and social development in adolescence

1.4 recognise how sexuality and gender identity is part of what it means to be human and has biological, psychological, cultural, social and spiritual dimensions

**Self-management**

1.5 identify short, medium and long-term personal goals and ways in which they might be achieved

1.6 apply decision-making skills in a variety of situations

1.7 source appropriate and reliable information about health and wellbeing

**My rights and the rights of others**

1.8 explain how stereotyping can contribute to a person's understanding and experience of rights and wellbeing

1.9 appreciate the importance of respectful and inclusive behaviour in promoting a safe environment free from bias and discrimination

2. Minding myself & others

**Being healthy**

2.1 evaluate how diet, physical activity, sleep/rest and hygiene contribute to self-confidence, self-esteem and wellbeing

2.2 critique the impact of the media, advertising and other influences on one's decisions about health and wellbeing

2.3 describe what promotes a sense of belonging in school, at home and in the wider community and their own role in creating an inclusive environment

2.4 distinguish between appropriate care giving and receiving

**Substance use**

2.5 demonstrate the personal and social skills to address pressure to smoke, to drink alcohol and/or use other substances

2.6 reflect on the personal, social and legal consequences of their own or others' drug use

2.7 critique information and supports available for young people in relation to substance use

**Respectful communication**

2.8 use the skills of active listening and responding appropriately in a variety of contexts

2.9 use good communication skills to respond to criticism and conflict

**Anti-bullying**

2.10 describe appropriate responses to incidents of bullying

2.11 appraise the roles of participants and bystanders in incidents of bullying

2.12 review the school's anti-bullying policy and internet safety guidelines explaining the implications for students' behaviour and personal safety

3. Team up

**Having a friend and being a friend**

3.1 establish what young people value in different relationships and how this changes over time

3.2 evaluate attitudes, skills and values that help to make, maintain and end friendships respectfully

3.3 recognise their capacity to extend and receive friendship

**The relationship spectrum**

3.4 explain the different influences on relationships and levels of intimacy

3.5 analyse relationship difficulties experienced by young people

**Sexuality, gender identity and sexual health**

3.6 describe fertility, conception, pre-natal development and birth, and the particular health considerations for each

3.7 explain what it means to take care of their sexual health

3.8 demonstrate assertive communication skills in support of responsible, informed decision-making about relationships and sexual health that are age and developmentally appropriate

3.9 reflect on the personal and social dimensions of sexual orientation and gender identity

**Media influence on relationships and sexuality**

3.10 critically analyse the use of sexual imagery and gender stereotyping in various forms of media

3.11 critique the influence of media on their understanding of sexuality and sexual health

4. My mental health

**Positive mental health**

4.1 explain what it means to have positive mental health

4.2 appreciate the importance of talking things over, including recognising the links between thoughts, feelings and behaviour

4.3 practise some relaxation techniques

**Mental health and mental ill-health**

4.4 participate in an informed discussion about mental health issues experienced by young people and/or their friends and family

4.5 appreciate what it means to live with mental ill-health

4.6 critique mental health services available to young people locally

4.7 explain the significance of substance use for one's mental health

**Dealing with tough times**

4.8 practise a range of strategies for building resilience

4.9 use coping skills for managing life's challenges

**Loss and bereavement**

4.10 explain the wide range of life events where they might experience loss and bereavement

4.11 outline the personal, social, emotional and physical responses to loss and bereavement

4.12 compare how loss and bereavement are portrayed in a variety of contexts and cultures

4.13 describe how they might care for themselves and be supportive of others in times of loss or bereavement

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