

Ardcoil Mhuire

Mackney, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway.
H53CP40

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Ardcoil Mhuire App



RSE Policy



CEIST
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Scoileanna Cothaithe Sláinte
Health Promoting Schools

**Ardscoil Mhuire
Ballinasloe
Co.Galway**

**Relationships and Sexuality Education
Policy**

Introductory Statement

This RSE policy was developed in accordance with:

1. Our Mission Statement
2. Guidelines as set out in Circulars 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.
3. Guidance from SPHE Department
4. Consultation with the Religion Department
5. Consultation with the Care Team

This RSE policy is a written statement of the aims of the RSE programme within Ardscoil Mhuire. The policy reflects the relationship of RSE to SPHE, Religious Education and other subjects, e.g. Science, Biology and Home Economics.

School

Ardcoil Mhuire is an all girls post primary school with an enrolment of approx 450 students.

Our School Mission Statement

In the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy we in Ardcoil Mhuire strive to build our school on values of a Christian community. We aim to treat each member of our school community with dignity and Christian love. In this atmosphere students are encouraged to realise their full potential.

Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education

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

Relationships and Sexuality Education within Social Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E.)

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. 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.

The aims of our Relationships and Sexuality Education programme:

- 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.

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

Guidelines for the management and organisation of Relationships and Sexuality Education in our school

Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff will be made by the Management of the School.

Informing and Involving Parents:

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. This policy has been designed in consultation with Parent's Association representatives and the views expressed by parents will be taken into account when reviewing the policy. A copy of this policy will be made available to any parent on request to the school office. All parents/guardians are informed about the teaching of RSE within all class groups every year with a time frame and a brief outline of the topics covered for each year group. (See appendix 2)

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 should not be directive and should be appropriate to the age of the pupil.

Explicit Questions:

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 should seek advice from the SPHE co-ordinator or the Principal. 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.

Confidentiality:

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 Principal. The Principal will decide whether to inform the parents and/or appropriate authorities.

The following is also school policy:

- a) teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality;
- b) 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 interest of the pupil to notify parents;
- c) teachers must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard the information;
- d) teachers must indicate clearly to pupils when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential - the pupil can then decide whether to proceed or not.

The Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary schools state in 4.1.1. and 4.2.1.

If a member of staff receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse he/she should, without delay, report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person in that school. A written record of the report should be made and placed in a secure location by the Designated Liaison Person. The need for confidentiality at all times, as previously referred to in Chapter 1 Paragraph 1.2 of these guidelines, should be borne in mind. The supports of the school should continue to be made available to the child.

If the Designated Liaison Person is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation he/she should report the matter to the relevant health board immediately.

Special Needs:

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. The school will endeavor to modify the content of the SPHE/RSE programme to assist the learning within the classroom. In some cases, outside agencies may be called upon to assist in providing resources for such class groups.

Biological aspects of teaching RSE:

The school policy is that the Science Department and the Home Economics departments deal primarily with the biological aspects of reproduction from second year upwards.

Withdrawing pupils from the RSE programme:

1. Relevant sections of this policy are made available to parents in the school and it is the parent's right to withdraw their child from sensitive aspects of RSE – parents will always be provided with a full copy of this policy following a request to do so.
2. Issues such as over population and birth control are met in a minor way in subjects such as Geography and RE, Social education, Economics etc. However, as any discussion is limited and set within the context of the other subject concerned, it **does not constitute** part of the RSE Programme.
3. Parents do not have to give reasons for withdrawal, but we respectfully invite them to do so - sometimes we can then resolve misunderstandings. Once a parent's request to withdraw is made, that request must be complied with until revoked by the parent. (See next section)

What we do if a request for withdrawal from the RSE programme is made by a parent:

Management discuss the nature of the concerns with the child's parents and if appropriate attempts to reassure them are not met, the following steps may be taken:

- ✓ we consider whether the programme can be amended or improved in a way that will reassure parents - care is taken not to undermine the integrity of the RSE programme and the entitlement of the other pupils.
- ✓ We attempt to ensure that where a pupil is withdrawn there is no disruption to other parts of their education.
- ✓ We point out that pupils who have been withdrawn are vulnerable to teasing - we therefore attempt to cause minimal embarrassment to the pupil and minimal disruption to the programme.

- ✓ We also point out that pupils may receive inaccurate information from their peers.

Visiting speakers and others

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 invited in addition to, not instead of a planned programme of RSE.

Guidelines as per D.E.S. Circular 0023/2010:

- *“Visitors to the classroom or school, particularly those engaging directly with students, should be aware of relevant school policies including the school’s child protection policy, RSE policy and substance misuse policy. Any such visit must be carefully planned in advance in line with the relevant whole-school SPHE/RSE programme(s) and policies.*
- *Talks/programmes delivered by outside agencies or speakers must be consistent with and complementary to the school’s ethos and SPHE/RSE programme. Visits should be planned, researched and implemented in partnership with school personnel.*
- *Relevant teachers need to liaise and be involved with all visitors and external agencies working with the school.*
- *The school’s SPHE/RSE coordinator may also help in the process of whole-school planning and coordination to support the effective implementation of SPHE/RSE.*
- *It is of the utmost importance that classroom teachers remain in the classroom with the students and retain a central role in delivery of the core subject matter of the SPHE/RSE programme. The presence of the classroom teacher should ensure that the school follows appropriate procedures for dealing with any issue(s) that may arise as a result of the external input(s).*
- *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.*

- *Where appropriate all programmes, talks, interventions and events should be evaluated by students and teachers in terms of the subject matter, messages, structure, methodology and proposed learning outcomes”.*
- In order to inform the visitor of the precise requirements of a group and to make better use of the time of the visitor it is advisable for the group to draw up questions in advance and these should be forwarded to the visitor. This will involve the pupils in the visit and will make the experience more relevant for them - it also facilitates planning.
- Management will be informed of the date and name of the visitor.
- The visitor will be welcomed at the main door and sign in at the main office.
- At the end of the session a vote of thanks will be given by a pupil and the visitor escorted to the main door after the talk.

List of topics covered in the Senior RSE Programme are:

- Relationships – Values, Influences, Healthy relationships etc.
- LGBTQIA
- Self Esteem
- Understanding Boundaries
- Intimacy
- Consent
- Human Reproduction
- Contraception
- Unplanned Pregnancy
- STI's
- Gender Fluidity
- Abortion
- Divorce/ Annulment
- Family Structures

This list is constantly being updated as society changes in accordance with the ethos of the school.

Ongoing support, development and review

Training:

1. All teachers involved in this work do not necessarily 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 a feeling of confidence in judicious handling of questions and answers. Teachers will refer to more expert advice if necessary. The skills acquired in general teaching apply also to health education. Furthermore, many teachers have training in related areas such as counseling.
Some teachers have expert training in the specific areas of health, relationships and sexuality education and will be encouraged to train/advise other teachers.
2. The school will facilitate teachers to obtain further or future training in this field, bearing in mind the overall budgetary framework and the need for the ongoing teaching and learning programmes of the school to continue with as little disturbance as possible.

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:

- a) Pupil feedback;
- b) Staff review and feedback;
- c) Parental feedback.

Appendix 1

Possible Resources:

There is no prescribed resource for RSE, however, the following are recommended:

- Class Books for 1st to 3rd year – My Life 1,2,3
- Materials prepared by the NCCA and approved by the Department of Education and Science (1999)
- TRUST Senior Cycle
- 5th Year SPHE Textbook
- Relationships and Sexuality Education – Going Forward Together
- On Your Own Two Feet
- Jigsaw – mental health resources
- HSE- 1st Year SPHE resources
- B4U Decide
- Growing up LGBT
- Cancer Awareness Programme
- Mental Health Matters
- Be safe Be wise
- Relationships and sexuality education. Guidance for Catholic Post-Primary schools: Republic of Ireland (Council for Education of the Irish Episcopal Conference)

Websites:

- www.sphe.ie
- www.pdst.ie
- www.sess.ie
- www.ncca.ie
- www.webwise.ie
- www.thinkcontraception.ie
- www.tes.ie
- www.ted.ie
- www.Kahoot.ie
- www.mentimeter.ie
- www.teni.ie
- www.crisispregnancy.ie
- www.glen.ie

- www.belongto.org
- www.bodywhys.ie
- www.hse.ie
- www.mentalhealtheducate.ie
- www.ispcc.ie
- <https://www.actionforhappiness.org/toolkit-for-schools>
- <https://www.samaritans.org/ireland/how-we-can-help/schools/>
- <https://www.pieta.ie/>

Letter to Parents/Carers

Appendix 2

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Dear Parent/Guardian,

This letter is to inform you about **Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)**, which is taught to all students in our school. Your daughter will also have studied SPHE in primary school.

Topics may often be of a sensitive nature, as we have an obligation to complete a minimum of 6 classes of RSE (Relationships and sexuality Education) within our SPHE curriculum.

We recognise that parents and guardians have the primary responsibility for the personal development of their children and we aim to complement that role. We hope that you can support the SPHE/RSE programme at home by communicating with your teenager about their own growth, development, friendships, decisions and health and sexuality.

Attached to this letter, you will see a breakdown of the themes and a timeframe on when these themes will be covered within each year group within SPHE/RE Class.

If you have any queries or would like to discuss the programme further, please contact the school to make an appointment. If you would like to find out more about SPHE/RSE, you can visit www.sphe.ie or www.ncca.ie for curriculum guidelines. You can also look up www.b4udecide.ie, www.sexualwellbeing.ie and section 5 of TUSLA's Healthy Sexuality and Relationships Toolkit which all provide advice and information for parents/carers.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Pauric Hanlon

Principal