

# **Our Lady's Secondary School, Templemore**

## **Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy**

### ***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. The RSE policy should be read in conjunction with the school's policies on Pastoral Care, Attendance and Participation, Special Educational Needs, Homework and Assessment, Guidance, SPHE, Anti-Bullying and the Code of Behaviour. The policy is published on the school website and is available from the school office on request.

### ***School Details:***

Our Lady's Secondary School is a mixed Catholic Voluntary Secondary School with an enrolment of 500+ students. The school is under CEIST trusteeship.

### ***Mission Statement***

We endeavour to provide a caring, safe and disciplined environment in which all students are challenged and supported to reach their educational and personal potential. It is our aim that students leaving our school should be well adjusted, responsible and enterprising individuals capable of meeting the challenges of a changing society. We strive to further the Christian and moral development of each student within an atmosphere that reflects the Mercy ethos and long tradition of education.

### ***Rationale - Why is it necessary to devise a policy on RSE?***

The policy is required to bring clarity and consensus in relation to the content and delivery of the RSE programme at Our Lady's. It was developed in consultation with staff, students and parents/guardians and it complies with the legislative requirements<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Education Act (1998), Circular Letters M4/95, M20/96, 37/00, 48/00, M11/03, M27/08, 0037/2010 and 0023/2010.

### ***Scope***

The policy will apply to aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality. The policy will apply to school staff, students, board of management, parents/guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators. Discussion about relationships and sexuality also takes place in other subject areas (for example, home economics, science subjects and religion) where DES curriculum requirements are followed.

### ***Definition of Relationship and Sexuality Education***

Relationship and Sexuality Education is a developmental process through which pupils acquire knowledge and understanding about sexual identity and relationships. It encourages pupils to make positive, responsible choices about themselves and their relationships with others.

### ***RSE and the school ethos***

The RSE programme reflects the educational philosophy of the trustees, and the core values and Catholic ethos of the school. It is cognisant of DES requirements and best practice guidelines as set out in Department circulars.

### ***Aims/Objectives:***

The RSE programme seeks:

- To help young people understand and develop friendships and relationships
- To promote an understanding of sexuality.
- To promote a positive attitude towards one's own sexuality and in one's relationship with others.
- To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction
- To enable young people to develop attitudes and values concerning their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- To enable students to develop the skills for coping with peer pressure, conflicts and threats to personal safety.

## Management and organisation of RSE

### *Practical arrangements*

Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff will be made by the principal in consultation with the teaching staff.

### *Parents/Guardians*

Parents/guardians are the primary educators of their children and their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality is crucial. The RSE programme at Our Lady's supports parents/guardians in this role.

### *Outline of the Programme*

	<b>RSE plan</b>	
Year 1	Human Growth & Development (Puberty)	Emotional wellbeing
Year 2	Fertility, Conception & Birth	Emotional wellbeing
Year 3	Respect & tolerance of difference	Personal Safety
Year 5	Positive relationships	Family planning including contraception, Age of consent, Sexually Transmitted Infections Reproductive system (revision)
Year 6	Positive relationships	Gender & Sexual orientation (attitudes & values) Sexual harassment & abuse Pregnancy and development of the foetus Sexual harassment and abuse

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. The content of the school's SPHE programme includes a wide range of topics such as self-esteem, self-identity, assertiveness, motivation, effective communication, decision-making skills, bullying, healthy eating, hygiene and personal safety; all of which can contribute to the effectiveness of the RSE programme.

## **Guidelines relating to the delivery of the RSE programme**

### ***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 students with information about where, and from whom they can receive confidential sexual advice and treatment (e.g. their doctor or other agency).

In some circumstances it may not be appropriate to respond in class to a question(s) raised by the students. In such incidents the teacher will endeavour to provide a response to the query at an appropriate time.

### ***Confidentiality***

Teachers cannot promise confidentiality to a student. Disclosures made by students will be dealt with in line with Child Protection Guidelines (*Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*).

### ***Homosexuality***

Teachers do not promote any one lifestyle as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that homosexuality will be discussed during the RSE programme. One of the many advantages of exploring issues concerning homosexuality is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions and address prejudice. Discussion of homosexuality should be appropriate to the age of the students.

### ***Contraception***

This topic will be discussed in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issues in a non-directive way.

### ***Visiting speakers***

Visiting speakers can play a valuable role in supplementing, complementing and supporting the work of the teacher. Speakers invited to address topics relating to RSE will be informed of the RSE policy, the child protection policy and the school ethos in advance of their visit to the school. The subject teacher will liaise closely with the visiting speaker and the content of the presentation will be agreed in advance. The classroom teacher will remain with the students during the presentation.

### ***Delivery of the Programme***

RSE will be delivered to Junior Cycle classes for six class periods during SPHE time in January and February each year. RSE will be delivered to fifth and sixth year students including LCA during three double periods in November/December each year. Parents/guardians who do not wish for their son(s)/daughter(s) to attend these lessons should complete *Appendix 1* and return it to the school by the last school day in October.

### ***Continuous Professional Development***

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 preparedness to refer to more expert advice if necessary. The skills acquired in general teaching apply also to health education. Some teachers have training in the specific areas of health, relationships and sexuality education. The school will facilitate teachers to obtain training in this field where feasible.

### ***Resources***

Within budgetary constraints, all resources needed in terms of time, finance and personnel, will be made available to develop and support the RSE programme in the school.

### ***Reviewing and evaluating the policy***

The policy will be reviewed in two years. On-going review and evaluation will take cognisance of changing information, guidelines, legislation and feedback from parents/guardians, students, teachers and others.

# Appendix 1

## Withdrawal from RSE classes

The school is obliged to provide a programme of RSE. To fulfil Department of Education and Skills regulations six class periods will be given to this programme each year. In Junior Cycle the lessons will be delivered during SPHE classes in January/February each year. In Senior Cycle the classes will be delivered in three double class periods in November/December. If you wish to have your son/daughter withdrawn from these lessons please sign this page and return it to the school by the last school day in October.

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*Re: Non Attendance at RSE classes*

**Name of Student:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Class:** \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Principal,

I wish to withdraw my son/daughter from RSE classes at Our Lady's.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

(Parent/Guardian)

**It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to ensure that this letter is delivered to the school office.**