



DRAFT

Relationships & Sexuality Education Policy

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Category: Vocational

Introductory Statement

Cabra Community College, formally Coláiste Éanna was first opened in 1945 by the City of Dublin VEC as a vocational school for the boys and girls of Cabra. It was the first ever co-educational school of its kind in Ireland. The school has greatly expanded its range of courses in the intervening period. It now provides Education for Second Level Students and Adult Students.

Our School Philosophy

The mission of Cabra Community College is to enable the provision of quality education, anchored in a warm safe secure stimulating learning environment, inclusive of all and conducive to the purposeful use of time and successful learning.

Cabra Community College strives to educate by infusing in our students a set of values that will serve them well in coping with life in its opportunities and its challenges. Our values are built on a moral code that informs our conscience and guides our behaviour.

These values are

1. A safe, healthy orderly, learning environment for all in an atmosphere of mutual respect and dignity
2. A warm welcoming space comfortable and conducive to the purposeful use of time and the pursuit of excellence in all learning endeavours – Academic, Artistic, Sporting, Practical and Technological.
3. The acquisition of essential life skills by our students necessary to live fulfilling lives and contribute to society. These are:
 - (a) Learning to get along with people, learning to look after each other , learning to resolve conflict and difficulties in a non-aggressive way with fair and just outcomes
 - (b) To be able to act responsibly and to take responsibility to make well balanced decisions
 - (c) To develop healthy lifestyles by encouraging involvement in a variety of activities that will enhance personal well- being and promote a positive attitude and outlook in life.
 - (d) The integrity of school life and confidential issues at school to protect and preserve by appropriate and responsible usage of social media.

From these value judgements we set our standards. These standards then guide OUR APPROACH TO POLICY AND EDUCATION, ON THE TOPIC OF Relationships and Sexuality.

Definition of Relationships in Sexuality in Education

Relationships and Sexuality are key elements of healthy social and personal development in all our lives, but particularly in the life of an adolescent. Adolescence is marked by the onset of physical sexual maturity. This stage of development is also marked by the establishment of first significant boyfriend/girlfriend relationships, by the first experience of sexual attraction and by the experience of falling in, and out, of love. There is greater freedom and responsibility and exposure to a bewildering variety of messages about sexuality, issues of sexual orientation and the place of

sexuality in personal and social life. Sexual development calls for the critical evaluation of the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values with which adolescents are bombarded.

Building on the work done in primary school, Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) at post-primary level seeks to provide opportunities for young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that will enable them to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way. It is a developmental process through experiential learning in which pupils participate to cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships.

RSE Aims and Objectives

Aims

- to help young people 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 young people to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework.

Objectives

RSE should enable the 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
- 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
- understand sexual development and identity and explore aspects of sexuality including sex role stereotyping, gender issues 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

Some of these objectives are supported by the SPHE Programme and by the broader curriculum taught at Junior Cycle in the school.

Scope

The policy applies to all aspects of teaching and learning about Relationships and Sexuality. Discussion about Relationships and Sexuality also takes place in classes other than SPHE/ RSE; it is therefore important that all teachers are familiar with the RSE policy.

The policy will apply to school staff, students, College Committee, parents /guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators.

Current School Provision

At Cabra Community College the teaching and learning for RSE takes place within the subject Social Personal & Health Education SPHE at Junior Cycle. Other subjects support aspects of RSE at different stages. These include Home Economics, Science, Religious Education and Civic Social & Political Education.

Management and organisation of RSE in the school

Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff will be made by the Principal. Teachers will follow the guidelines and lesson plans drawn up by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

- SPHE will be timetabled for Junior Cycle Classes and out of the SPHE programme 4 1hour periods will be assigned to RSE

Classroom Issues

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 the enrolment of the student. While all partners in the school community – teaching staff, parents and management are agreed on the programme we recognise nevertheless the right of any parent / Guardian who so wishes to request that his / her son / daughter 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 onto them by other students. Parents / Guardians wishing to withdraw their son / daughter must contact the Principal / Deputy Principal in the first instance. After a discussion with the principal / Deputy Principal if the parent or Guardian still wishes to withdraw their child from RSE then this request should be made in writing to the Principal / Deputy Principal in September of each year otherwise the student will take part in the RSE Classes.

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 in 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.

Management of Information

It is the schools 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 Principal / Designated Liaison Person (DLP) or in exceptional circumstances to the Chairperson of the Board

The Principal /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 Principal / DLP to inform the parents / Guardians of matters which a child has confided to them:

- Teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality
- Students must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the Principal and possibly to parents / Guardians if the Principal decides that it is in the best interest 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 to proceed or not.

Where the matter is reported to the Principal / (DLP) and he or she is satisfied on advice that there are reasonable grounds for suspicion or allegation, a report should be made to the HSE as per the schools Child Protection policy, in accordance with the Department of Education & Skills' ***Child Protection Procedures for Post Primary***

The Principal will report to the Board of Management as per section 4.3 of the Department of Education & Skills' ***Child Protection Procedures for 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.

Outside Speakers

Outside speakers are from time to time invited to speak to students on issues in SPHE Classes at Cabra Community College. SPHE visitor to the classroom Guidelines see Appendix A will be followed.

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, it is recommended that where visitors / outside Agencies are used to support SPHE, the SPHE Teacher will remain with the class group during the visit.

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 male and females.

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 the 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 the RSE policy for the school, while dealing with the topic of family planning.

Homosexuality

Teachers do not promote any one life-style as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that homosexuality will be discussed during a programme of sex education. The post primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines include the subject of sexual orientation. The Equal Status Act 2004 prohibits discrimination across nine grounds including homosexuality. Teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, together with the student's emotional maturity, the curriculum and RSE policy for the school, while dealing with the topic of sexual orientation.

Sexually Transmitted Infections

Creating awareness of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's) is undertaken in second level schools. Information on STI's 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.

Special Needs

Young people with special needs may require more help than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up.

Links to Other School Policies

School policies being examined or reviewed , should be considered with reference to the schools RSE Policy; while the implications of other school policies for the RSE policy also need to be considered such as

- Child protection Policy
- School Guidance Plan
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Substance Use Policy
- ICT policy

Continuous Professional Development

The Principal at Cabra Community College has appointed a teacher to teach SPHE. The SPHE Supports Service provides training to teachers in SPHE and RSE on an ongoing basis. Staff are allowed to attend inservice if required.

[See Appendix.....](#)

Resources

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

Monitoring of policy

The implementation of the RSE policy will be monitored at SPHE/RSE department meetings and other meetings deemed necessary by the Principal or Board of Management. In the short term it will be reviewed annually as the mainstream school is expanding and as the current cohort of students move on up into Senior Cycle.

Evaluating and Reviewing the RSE Programme

The school will review this policy periodically after its ratification by the College Committee. The RSE policy may be reviewed and amended, prior to that date, where necessary.

Appendices

Discussion Process

This policy was reviewed and redrafted during the Academic Year 2014/15. It involved all educational partners, teachers, parents, students and the College committee

Appendix