**Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy**

**School Details:**

Name: Scariff Community College
Address: Scariff, Co. Clare, V94Y9W2.

**Introductory Statement and Rationale**

The following policy was drafted by the RSE policy committee, the Parents’ Council and the Students’ Council. The RSE policy is an accumulation of consultation, collaboration and research, and it is hoped that this document will be comprehensive and informative and will provide guidance and direction to all in the teaching of RSE.

# School Philosophy and Mission Statement

It is our policy to view the development of the student in the widest possible sense, seeking to provide a learning experience both of a formal and informal nature which will lead to the development of the total personality of the student. Through a broad curriculum we seek to facilitate the development of our students, so that each may leave the College equipped with good life skills.

We are conscious that the traditional interpretation of what constitutes an intelligent human being has often been too narrow and has sometimes been interpreted in strictly cognitive terms, ignoring other critical elements of intelligent human behaviour whether of a social, emotional, psychomotor, moral or physical nature. In providing a balanced curriculum, we aim to redress that traditional shortcoming. The development, therefore, of a knowledgeable, analytical, confident, articulate student who has a good moral sense, a well developed internal discipline, a positive and proactive social awareness, tolerant of difference, courteous and empathetic, is the essential core of what we pursue. That is our mission.

There is a definite consciousness that such development cannot take place in isolation from either the parents or the wider community. Consequently, it is part of the philosophy of our school to work in intimate harmony with both agencies, nurturing and being nurtured in the process.

Our school motto is Beart do reir ár mbriathar : Action according to our word

It is our objective to be a caring school in the pursuit of excellence.

**Relationship to the School Mission Statement**

The mission of Scariff Community College is the holistic education of the individual person. Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a process which provides structured information and promotes the development of responsible attitudes, values and beliefs about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy.

The RSE programme reflects and contributes to the ethos of Scariff Community College.

**Rationale**

Schools, in consultation with parents/guardians, need to reflect on how to provide for the needs of their students and promote healthy social and personal development.

The Education Act 1998 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 Cycle, the RSE programme is part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and the wellbeing curriculum.

Circulars M4/95 and M20/96 request schools to commence a process of RSE policy development.

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.

**Scope**

The policy will apply to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality. Discussion about relationships and sexuality may take place in classes other than RSE and SPHE. It is therefore important that all teachers are familiar with the RSE policy. Furthermore, the policy will apply to school staff, students, board of management, parents/guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators.

**SPHE at Junior Cycle**

SPHE provides opportunities for teaching and learning directly related to health and wellbeing. Through the use of experiential methodologies, including group work, SPHE aims to develop students’ positive sense of themselves and their physical, social, emotional and spiritual health and wellbeing. It also aims to build the student’s capacity to develop and maintain healthy relationships. Through studying aspects of SPHE, students have time to focus on developing personal and social skills including self-management, communication, coping and problem-solving. (Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines, NCCA 2017, p46)

**RSE at Junior Cycle**

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is an integral part of junior cycle SPHE and the Wellbeing curriculum. Its aim is to help young people to acquire a knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework. At this age, students are exposed to a lot of information about sex, sexuality and relationships from a variety of sources. RSE provides the context within which students can learn about the physical, social and emotional and moral issues related to relationships, sexual health, sexuality and gender identity including where to source reliable information. Schools are required to teach RSE as part of SPHE in each year of the junior cycle SPHE programme. (Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines, NCCA 2017, p47)

**Aim and Objectives of SPHE at Junior Cycle**

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

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 diseases
* Understand sexual development and identity and explore aspects of sexuality including sex roles, 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

*Interim Curriculum and Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools (NCCA, 1996)*

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

**Aim and Objectives of SPHE at Senior Cycle**

**Aim**

Senior cycle SPHE aims to support students in making choices for health and wellbeing.

**Objectives**

The objectives for SPHE in senior cycle are to:

* develop self-awareness through opportunities to reflect on thoughts, values, attitudes and feelings
* enhance students’ knowledge and understanding of essential health concepts and the wider influences on health and wellbeing to enable informed decision making
* develop students’ self-efficacy; the confidence to think and behave independently especially in the face of social pressure
* strengthen students’ capacity to emphasise with another person’s situation, feelings and motives in order to enhance relationships with other people
* develop coping strategies for adolescence and adult life in support of greater resilience
* develop students’ health literacy skills, including the ability to obtain, critically evaluate and act on health information in support of health and wellbeing
* develop a willingness to participate in the creation and maintenance of healthy communities and environments.

*Social and Personal and Health Education Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2000, p10)*

**Relationships and Sexuality**

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is an integral part of Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle curricula.

Relationships and sexuality education (RSE) is important for all students. They are exposed to a lot of information from informal sources, the media and online.  SPHE provides the context within which young people can learn about important physical, social, emotional and moral issues around relationships, sexual health, sexuality and gender identity, including where to get reliable information from trusted sources. (NCCA, Short Course Specification 2016 p4)

The RSE programme forms part of the SPHE programme. The 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. 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 safety – all of which can contribute to the effectiveness of the RSE programme.

**Guidelines for the management and organisation of RSE in our School**

**Content Provision**

SPHE/RSE is offered to students through formal and informal activities in the school. Our school recognises a whole school approach to the development of the school SPHE/RSE programme, which promises the participation of all members of the school community, carries the greatest likelihood of success. The values inherent in the programme are consistent with the core values of the school ethos.

* To ensure an adequate response to the needs of all students, specific provision for RSE is made within the schools Social, Personal and Health Education programme at both Junior and Senior Level.
* At Junior Cycle, SPHE is allocated one class periods per week for 1st years, 2nd and 3rd years receive one class period per week.
* At Senior Cycle RSE will be covered as part of the Life skills programme which is also allocated one class period per week.
* All the resource materials for RSE developed and or used by teachers are in line with the NCCA RSE curriculum guidelines.
* Aspects of RSE/SPHE are also offered across the curriculum in subjects such as Science, Biology, Civic Social and Personal Education, Guidance and Counselling classes, Physical Education, Home Economics, Religious Education and during school developed programmes in Social Personal and Health Education.
* Counselling and Guest Speakers, Pastoral care teams, Form and year heads, management and the Student Support Team also deal with support pertaining to SPHE and RSE.

The teaching methods for the Relationships and Sexuality module within SPHE and Lifeskills will be based on sound pedagogic principles. These teaching methods will be student centred and appropriate to the age and stage of development of the students. Every effort will be made to create a class atmosphere which respects the privacy of each student and treats all students with sensitivity and care.

All programmes will be reviewed and evaluated regularly. The teacher in his/her professional capacity is usually the person who will deliver the school-based programme. Guest Speakers and community resources can be used to supplement, complement and support the already established RSE programme. Parents/Guardians may request to view the curriculum for SPHE/RSE.

**Provision of Training and Staff Development**

As part of the RSE programme all teachers will have access to RSE teaching materials. Management will facilitate in-service training where possible. Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme will be made by school management.

**Inclusion of Parents and Guardians**

Parents are the primary educators of their children and their role in education concerning education and sexuality is seen by the school as very important. therefore, this policy has been developed in consultation with Parents’ Association representatives and the views expressed by parents will be taken into account when reviewing the policy. A hard copy of the policy will be available on request from the school office and the policy will be published on the school’s website.

**Participation**

Each parent/guardian has the right to withdraw their child from some or all RSE classes but parents are encouraged to provide alternative RSE at home. The school will respect this choice. It will be necessary for parents of any student opting out of RSE to make suitable arrangements with the school Principal for the welfare of their child at these times. Where students are withdrawn from RSE the school cannot take responsibility for any versions of class content passed on to them by others. **Parents/Guardians wishing to withdraw their son/daughter from RSE must inform the Principal in writing before the start of each academic year, otherwise the students will take part in the RSE classes.**

**Sensitive Issues**

The schools’ function is to provide general RSE education, class discussion will be of a general nature, and will be respectful of all individuals in accordance with the class ground rules. Inappropriate questions will not be answered by a teacher in class. The SPHE teacher may exercise his or her own professional judgement. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised, he/she may seek advice from the Principal, Deputy Principal, Year head, Student Support Team and/or Guidance Counsellor.

**Confidentiality**

In accordance with the School’s Child Safeguarding Statement, it is school policy that in circumstances where a student is considered at risk, the teacher must report the matter to the DLP (Designated Liaison Person). Teachers cannot promise absolute confidentiality. Teachers must indicate clearly to pupils that this is the case. The teacher, in accordance with child protection guidelines for post-primary 2017 has a statutory obligation to make his/her own mandated report to TUSLA. In Scariff Community College this is in conjunction with the DLP or the Deputy DLP.

**Visiting Speakers**

Visiting speakers can play a valuable role in supplementing, complementing and supporting the SPHE/RSE programme. The SPHE teacher must;

* Follow the LCETB visiting speakers' guidelines
* Inform the Principal
* Make the speaker aware of the school ethos and relevant school policies
* Agree the content of the presentation
* Where applicable inform the parents
* Evaluate the presentation in terms of subject matter, messages, structure, methodology, and proposed learning outcomes
* Ensure all classroom teachers remain in the classroom for the duration of the presentation

**Implementation Arrangements, Roles and Responsibilities**

**How staff will be informed**

The policy will be available for all staff in the school to view. It will be available with all other policy documents.

**How Parents and Students will be informed**

Present students will be informed of this policy in their SPHE or Lifeskills classes. The policy will be available for parents to view on the school website.

**Reviewing and Evaluating the Policy**

The policy will be reviewed and evaluated on an annual basis. This practice will be coordinated by the policy committee. Parts of the policy may be adjusted from time to time in line with changing information, guidelines, legislation and feedback from parents and guardians, students, teachers and others. The policy will be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation and within the framework of school planning.

**This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Date of next review:**