

Introduction

This policy was drawn up to inform parents/guardians of the curriculum and provision of Relationships and Sexuality Education in Ardscoil Rís. The school wishes to support parents/guardians in this important aspect of a young person's education and preparation for life. The school has a complementary role in preparing young people for their place in society.

The School's Vision

- In Ardscoil Rís, we are committed to the development of a community of learners concerned for each individual in our care.
- We believe that education provides opportunity for all.
- We strive for excellence in all areas.
- We nurture the wellbeing of all so that they may grow in knowledge, integrity, and compassion.

We aim to provide:

- A school which promotes academic excellence and enables all students to realise their full potential.
- A programme, curricular and extra-curricular, which develops the whole person.
- A school true to the values of the Edmund Rice tradition.
- A partnership with parents, primary schools and the local community.

Definition of Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge, understanding and skills which enable students to develop attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy.

Relationship of RSE to Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)

At Junior Cycle, the RSE programme is a module within the SPHE programme. The NCCA Draft Guidelines for RSE state that SPHE is "spiral, developmental in nature and age-appropriate in content and methodology". The RSE programme is designed to follow this principle and pattern. SPHE supports the development of self-esteem, assertive communication, and decision making skills, all of which complement the RSE programme.

RSE Aims and Objectives

RSE Aims

RSE, which is located in the overall framework of SPHE, has as its specific aims:

- To help young people understand and develop friendships and relationships;
- To promote an understanding of sexuality;
- To promote a positive attitude towards one's sexuality and in one's relationships 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.

RSE Objectives

RSE should enable 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 (STIs);
- 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 (TRUST, 2009).

RSE Provision

The Board of Management recognises its responsibility to ensure that the RSE programme is taught throughout junior and senior cycle. It is school policy that the RSE programme is taught by trained SPHE/RSE teachers on our staff, where available or taught by trained personnel from outside agencies.

RSE at Junior Cycle is delivered within the SPHE programme. The SPHE specification was developed by the NCCA. SPHE is part of Wellbeing and is mandatory in all Junior Cycle years. SPHE is taught as a short course and we deliver 100 hours over 3 years, by providing one hour timetabled class of SPHE per week. We are following the NCCA 2023 specification available [here](#).

The specification focuses on 4 strands:

1. Understanding myself and others
2. Making healthy choices
3. Relationships and sexuality
4. Emotional wellbeing

For Senior Cycle, we are reviewing the implementation of the new specifications for SPHE, which have to be introduced by 2027. This will require a minimum of 60 hours of SPHE over the final 2 years of the education. Currently, in TY we have one hour a week of tutor class where SPHE topics are covered. In Fifth and Sixth year, students study 2 hours of RSE per year. This is supplemented by RE class which deals with topics such as respect, emotional wellbeing etc.

Other structures which support the provision of RSE in our school include:

- SPHE, RE, CSPE, Science, and Biology
- Timetabled Tutor time in TY
- Our Pastoral Care system including Year Heads and Class Tutors

- Guidance
- Digital learning and webwise initiatives
- Theme weeks e.g. Stand Up Awareness Week
- School policies e.g. Code of Behaviour, Anti-bullying Policy, etc.

Management and Organisation of RSE

The SPHE and RSE Teams are given time to meet on school planning days. Teachers are given opportunities to attend relevant Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses and share information received at CPD via the shared drive.

Informing and Involving Parents

An app message is sent to all parents before the beginning of any RSE module giving details of the upcoming RSE module. Alternative arrangements are made for any student who does not want to sit in RSE classes.

Confidentiality and Child Protection

Disclosures will be treated confidentially subject to the limitations and requirements of the Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children. Child protection concerns must be reported to Tusla. Students in all years receive information on the age of consent within RSE which, under the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act, 2006, is 17 years for both males and females.

This RSE policy was reviewed by the Board of Management 20th March 2025.

Signed: 

Date: 20th March 2025

Mary Fox, Chairperson of the Board of Management

Signed: 

Date: 20th March 2025

John McHugh, Principal