

Cabinteely Community School



Relationship and Sexuality School Policy **(Reviewed 2012)**

The RSE policy for Cabinteely Community School reflects the experiences and needs of our particular school and may differ significantly from what is appropriate in another. This policy was enacted after consultation between staff, parent representatives, the principal and the Board of Management.

In this policy document all references to gender are taken to be inclusive and the term “parent” is taken to include “guardian”.

A. Our School

1. The school is located on Johnstown Road, Cabinteely, Dublin 18.

It is a co educational school with a total enrolment of 522 students as of September 2011.

The school is managed in accordance with a Deed of Trust which was signed in the autumn of 1981.

The Trustees for the school are:

The Congregational Leader of the Irish Ursuline Union

The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin

County Dublin Vocational Education Committee

2. In the policy development and planning process, Cabinteely Community School recognises its responsibilities to its trustees and to the national legislative framework. Taking this into consideration, particular attention must be paid to the following:

- Safety , Health and Welfare at Work Acts 1989 & 2005
- Employment Equality Acts, 1998 – 2004
- Education (Welfare) Act 2000
- Equal Status Acts 2000 – 2008
- Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004

Additionally, the school seeks to uphold and implement all agreements made at national level between partners in education i.e. DES; Joint Managerial Body (JMB); the Association Of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI); the Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI); representative bodies of parents and students.

The School is mindful of the recommended best practice as outlined in inspection reports by the DES.

3. As stated above the RES Policy takes into account all relevant legal documents, in particular the draft Children First Bill 2012, the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post – Primary Schools, 2011(relevant aspects included in this policy under “Child Protection”) and the Equal Status Acts, 2000-2008 (relevant aspects included in this policy under “Homosexuality”)

B. School Philosophy and Ethos

Cabinteely Community School is a non-selective, co-educational, multi-denominational school. It caters for students from different backgrounds and different abilities. The individual student is valued and positively encouraged to grow as a person and fulfil his/her potential.

This spirit in our school will inform the delivery of the school programme on Relationships and Sexuality Education.

C. School Aims

The educational aims of Cabinteely Community School are as follows:

- Hold each and every individual in esteem as of right.
- Provide a wide and flexible curriculum which will meet with the individual needs of all students.
- Provide all students with a professional teaching service and seek to evaluate the extent to which each individual is successfully maximising his/her natural gifts and opportunities.
- Assist and encourage all students to develop their moral, ethical spiritual and religious lives, with respect for their consciences and the religious and moral values of their families.
- Provide all students with an ordered, disciplined, caring and supportive environment which will encourage and develop their self image, their confidence and their psychological well-being.
- Provide a wide range of co-curricular activities which will promote and develop the personality, character and social skills of the students.
- Provide structures for co-operation with parents in carrying out and enhancing their function as primary educators of their children

D. Definition of Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy

1. Relationships and Sexuality Education 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 (RSE) is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity , relationships and intimacy. This education is delivered consciously and unconsciously by parents, teachers, peers, adults and the media.

In Irish schools, RSE will provide structured opportunities for pupils 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.

This approach gives opportunities to children and young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in a way that will help them and act in a moral, caring and responsible manner.....At post-primary level, this means building on the primary programme and providing young people with information and skills to critically evaluate the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values offered today, and so make positive, responsible choices about themselves and the way they live their lives”

Relationships and Sexuality Education, Policy Guidelines, DES 1997.

In Cabinteely Community School RSE will be taught in the context of Social, Personal and Health Education.

E. Relationships and Sexuality Education within Social Personal and Health Education

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.

F. 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 will 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.

G. Guidelines for the management and organisation of Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

1. Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff will be made by the Principal.

2. 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 the Parents Association representatives and the views expressed by parents will be taken into account when reviewing the policy. A copy of the policy will be made available to any parent on request to the school office.

3. 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.

4. Classroom strategy regarding questions, which may arise in class:

It may not be appropriate to deal with some questions in class. Teachers may choose to say that it is not appropriate to deal with the question at this time. However, if a teacher felt the question is genuine he/she should advise the child to seek further information at home or may consult the parents to get their permission to answer the question.

When deciding whether or not to answer these questions the teacher should consider the age and the readiness of the student, the RSE programme content, the ethos of the school and the RSE policy. Teachers will not answer personal questions.

5. Confidentiality.

It is school policy that in circumstances where a pupil is considered at 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 and may arrange for counselling.

The following is also school policy:

- Teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality
- 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
- Teachers must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence is maintained having heard the information
- 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.

H. Child Protection

The Board of Management recognises that child protection and welfare considerations permeate all aspects of school life and must be reflected in all of the school's policies, practices and activities. Accordingly, in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education and Skills' Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, the Board of Management of Cabinteely Community School has agreed a child protection policy.

1. The Board of Management has adopted and will implement fully and without modification the Department's Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools as part of its overall protection policy.
2. The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Orlagh Brett (principal)
3. The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is James Moloney (Deputy Principal)
4. In its policies, practices and activities, Cabinteely Community School will adhere to the following of best practice in child protection and welfare:

The school will

- Recognise that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations.
- Fully cooperate with the relevant statutory authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters
- Adopt safe practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children and protect workers from the necessity to take necessary risks that may leave themselves open to accusations of abuse or neglect.
- Develop a practice of openness with parents and encourage parental involvement in the education of their children and
- Fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.

The school will also adhere to the above principles in relation to any adult pupil with special vulnerability.

The Child Protection Procedures for primary and Post Primary Schools state in 4.1 and 4.2.2

- 4.1.1 If a member of staff receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been abused or neglected, or is at risk of abuse or neglect he/she shall, without delay, report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person in that school. A written record of the report shall be made and placed in a secure location by the DLP. The need for confidentiality at all times as previously referred to in this section 1.9 of these procedures, should be borne in mind. The supports of the school shall continue to be made available to the child.

4.2.2 If the DLP is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation (section 3.4 of these procedures refers) he/she shall report the matter to the HSE immediately.

5. In September 2011, all members of the teaching and non-teaching staff, as well as any voluntary adult supervisors, signed a declaration stating that they have been provided with a copy of the school's child protection and vetting policy and that they agree to be bound by the contents thereof. This practice will be repeated every third year or more frequently if the policy changes in the intervening period.

I. The division between biological and non biological aspects of sex education

The school policy is that the Science and Home Economics department deals primarily with the biological aspects of reproduction.

However not all students avail of science and home economics within the curriculum, therefore RSE classes will include appropriate age relative biological information in respect of sex education. RSE will cover non-biological aspects of sexual health as outlined in its programme.

J. Withdrawing pupils from the RSE programme:

1. Relevant sections of this policy are made available to parents in the school publication entitled *Information for Parents* together with details about 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. 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.
4. Once a parent's request is made, that request must be complied with revoke by the parent.
5. What we do if a request for withdrawal from the RSE programme is made by a parent:
 - a) We discuss the nature of the concerns with the child's parent and if appropriate attempt to reassure them (initially such discussion takes place at a meeting with the SPHE teacher and SPHE Co-ordinator, the principal may become involved if necessary.)
 - b) We consider whether the programme can be amended or improved in a way that will reassure parents- care is taken not to under mind the integrity of the RSE programme and the entitlement of the other pupils,
 - c) We attempt to ensure that where a pupil is withdrawn is no disruption to other parts of their education
 - d) 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
 - e) We also point out that pupils may receive inaccurate information from their peers;
 - f) We offer the parents access to appropriate information and resources.

K. Using Speakers and Other

- a) 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 used in addition to, not instead of a planned programme of RSE.
- b) The SPHE coordinator will provide the visitor, well in advance of the visit, with a copy of this RSE policy. After gaining approval from the principal for the visit the organiser makes the visitor aware of the ethos of the school and the manner of delivery of the RSE programme. Issues to consider:
 - The degree of explicitness of the content and presentation
 - Will the visitor be accompanied by teaching staff
 - Will the staff take an active role in the visitor's activities?
 - How will the visitor be prepared for the visit?
 - How will the visit be built upon and followed up?
 - Visitors should be given advance notice of the composition of the class and an idea of how their contribution fits into the scheme of work.
 - 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 visitors. This will involve the pupils in the visit and will make the experience more relevant for them – it also facilitates planning.
 - The office should be informed of the date and name of the visitor.
 - Where applicable, refreshments should be arranged with the catering staff.
 - A note of thanks at the end of the session should be given by a pupil and the visitor should be escorted to the main door after refreshments.

L. 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 programme of sex education. One of the advantages of exploring issues concerning homosexuality is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions and address prejudice. Discussion of homosexuality should be age appropriate to the age of the pupils.

M. Contraception

This will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issue in a non-directive way. The beliefs of all churches will be taken into account in the presentation of this topic.

N. 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 Student Care Team

The school is ever-aware of the ongoing personal problems which many students have

to deal with on a daily basis. Many of our students need support and to co-ordinate this the Student Care Team consisting of the

- Guidance Counsellor,
- Chaplain,
- Home School Liaison officer,
- Resource Teacher and the
- Remedial teacher was set up.

The group both discusses general issues in the school which may affect student care and ensures that students who have particular problems always know that they have somebody to talk to.

O. 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 preparedness to refer to more expert advice if necessary. The skills acquired in general teaching apply also to health education. Furthermore, many teachers may have expert training in the specific areas of health, relationships and sexuality education and will be encouraged to train other teachers.
2. The school will facilitate teachers to obtain expert training in this field, bearing in mind the overall budgetary framework and the need for the ongoing teaching and learning programme of the school to continue with as little disturbance as possible.

P. Resources:

The school 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 school resources allow.

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

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____ [date].

Signed: _____ Signed: _____

(Chairperson of Board of Management) (Principal)

Date: _____

Date: _____