



RELATIONSHIP & SEXUALITY EDUCATION POLICY

**PRESENTATION COLLEGE
BRAY
CO. WICKLOW**

12th June 2024



This RSE policy is intended as a written statement of the aims of the RSE programme within Presentation College, Bray. The policy reflects the relationship of RSE to SPHE and other subjects e.g. Religious Education, Science and Biology and elements of the relationship aspect of the policy may be found in the English and History courses. This policy will seek to define the organisation and management of RSE within Presentation College. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Presentation College Bray Child Safeguarding Statement 2023, appended to this document and available under the policy tab on the college website.

This policy applies to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality. It also applies to all school staff, students, parents /guardians, visiting speakers, invited guests, volunteers and members of the Board of Management.

Mission Statement

Presentation College is a Catholic Boys' School.

The staff, students and parents of Presentation College, Bray, seek to promote a safe, caring environment and a well-balanced student-centred curriculum which encourages self-reliance, respect and responsibility.

Parents are recognised as the primary educators while teachers nurture and develop student learning. In partnership, we hope to enable all students to leave school with the skills necessary to participate fully in society and to live independent and fulfilled lives.

PBST MISSION STATEMENT

(Presentation Brothers School Trust)

We are committed to working together to make Christ's Gospel of love known and relevant to each succeeding generation.

Our educational tradition draws on the Gospel values of love, justice, freedom, mutual respect and hope. It is both a vision and a tradition, which sees education as the key growth and transformation in the context of the search for meaning, happiness and the common good. This tradition honours Mary, the mother of Jesus, Our Lady of the Presentation, as our model in faith and in living the teaching of Jesus and of His Church.

Rationale:

Presentation College believes that RSE is a key element in the development of our students. RSE seeks to address student health and to focus on the personal and social development of our students. Young people in Ireland today are exposed to a wide variety of messages about sexuality and sexual activity. Schools in consultation with parents/guardians need to reflect on how to provide for the needs of their students. Sexual development calls for the critical evaluation of the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values with which adolescents are bombarded. Relationship and Sexuality Education in our school hopes to respond to this challenge. Therefore Relationship and Sexuality Education will be an integral part of Social and Personal Health Education taught in our school.

The Education Act 1998 requires that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for students. 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. Circulars M4/95, M20/96, C23/2010 and C37/2010 also request schools to commence a process of RSE policy development. All these documents are included appended to this policy.

For students in Junior and Senior Cycle at Presentation College, the RSE programme is part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). Within Transition year students will also complete a short course in RSE. 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.

Spiritual, moral, social and religious issues will arise when teaching RSE. The RSE policy will guide teachers in the treatment of such issues in accordance with the ethos of the college.

It is important that teachers of RSE understand that their role is to express the views of the whole school community on these sensitive issues and not their own personal views. In this regard, it should be noted that: Schools are required to deliver all aspects of the RSE curriculum, including those in relation to sexual orientation, contraception, sexually transmitted infections etc.

This can be done within a context in which the teaching of the programme is informed by the school's ethos. A school can express its ethos while at the same time facilitating students in discussing a range of views in relation to topics within the RSE programme.

Aims and Objectives:

This RSE policy intends to achieve the following:

Aims:

Promote knowledge of and respect for issues involved in human reproduction.

Provide an opportunity to learn about relationships and sexuality.

Encourage students to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

Help students understand and develop friendships.

Help students understanding of relationships.

Help students understanding of sexuality.

Develop a positive attitude towards one's own sexuality.

RSE aims to enable students to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral spiritual and social framework, in keeping with the ethos of our school thus aiding them in making informed and thought out choices in relationships.

Help develop links between the teachings of RSE in collaboration with other subject departments

Objectives:

The policy will ensure clarity and consensus on how RSE is taught in Presentation College.

It will articulate the aims of the RSE programme. It will clarify the rights, roles and responsibilities of all within the college community in relation to the RSE programme with particular reference to college staff, students, parents/guardians and the board of management/patrons.

It will ensure that teachers, parents/guardians and students understand how the teaching of RSE is linked to the college ethos. It will provide information on the practicalities of delivering the programme.

KEY MEASURES:

A. Provision of training and staff development:

Arrangements regarding the deployment of staff will be made by the Principal. Consideration will be given to gender balance. However, it would be preferable to consult with and timetable teachers who express an interest in teaching SPHE/RSE.

All teachers involved in this work do not 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 RSE.

In service training for the teaching of RSE will be provided by the SPHE support service. In service training will be posted on the in-service notice board in the Staff room and staff will be encouraged to attend by the Principal and the SPHE coordinator. The appropriate teaching resources will be made available to staff subject to budget constraints.

B. Inclusion of Parents/Guardians:

Parents /Guardians are the primary educators of their children and their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality education is seen by the college as central. Moving forward the college may include relevant sections of this RSE policy in the Parent’s information pack on enrolment to the college and also in the student’s journal. This will apply to both senior and junior cycle. This policy may be altered in consultation with the Parents’ Association representatives and the views expressed

by parents will be taken into account when the policy is being reviewed. A copy of this policy will be made available to any parent/guardian on request to the general office.

C. Ethical/Moral Considerations:

RSE is a complex area of the curriculum. A school's RSE policy will provide guidance for teachers on the moral and ethical framework within which the programme will be taught. Issues may include the following:

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 by students and can set appropriate limits. Students may ask questions about issues which are not included in the curriculum. On these, and on all questions, teachers will use their professional judgment, guided by the age of the students, the RSE curriculum and the RSE policy for the school.

Students should be made aware at the beginning of the RSE programme that asking personal questions of staff and peers is inappropriate and unacceptable. It is suggested that teachers might make available a "question box" in the classroom, into which students may place questions of an embarrassing nature to be dealt with anonymously and in the strictest confidence. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised they should inform/seek advice from the DLP/Principal/Deputy Principal.

Confidentiality: While students should not be encouraged to disclose personal or private information in SPHE/RSE classes, there may be times when they do talk about their own lives. Confidentiality should be respected unless a teacher becomes aware that a student is at risk, in which case the appropriate action should be taken e.g. follow the procedures set down in the Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017. Under Section 2 of Children First 2015 Teachers are Mandated Persons and from 11th December 2017 will have additional statutory responsibilities. Mandated Persons are people who because of their training and/or employment, are in a key position to help protect children from harm. The Children First Act 2015 places a legal obligation on mandated persons to report child protection concerns at or above a defined threshold to Tusla - Child and Family Agency or their DLP (Principal) or assistant DLP (Assistant Principal)

In cases of under-age sexual activity, Children First, Chapter 2, Pg. 13 says "You should always inform DLP/ Tusla if you have reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected. You can report your concern in person, by telephone or in writing — including by email — to the local social work duty service in the area where the child

lives. You can find contact details for the Tusla social work teams on the Tusla website “, you may also inform the DLP for the school who is the Principal. The school DLP has responsibility for ensuring that the standard reporting procedure is followed, so that suspected child protection concerns are referred promptly to the designated person in the college /TUSLA the Child and Family Agency or in the event of an emergency and the unavailability of TUSLA, to An Garda Síochána. If you wish to report a child protection concern you should speak to the DLP in your school and you may make a joint report. It is important that the students must be made aware of the limits of confidentiality and that teachers do not give unconditional guarantees of confidentiality. Teachers may refer back to the ground rules agreed at the start of their SPHE programme. Students must be aware that any incident may be conveyed to the Principal and possibly the parents /guardian if the Principal decides that it is in the best interests of the child. Teachers do not always need to inform students when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential.

Sexual Activity: It is advisable for teachers to give young people information on the age of consent which, following the passage of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act, 2006, is 17 years of age for both males and females. For the purposes of criminal law, the age of consent to homosexual or heterosexual activity is 17 years. This means, for example, that a sexual relationship between two 16-year-olds is illegal, although it might not be regarded as constituting 'child sexual abuse'. However, if there are material differences in maturity or capacity to consent (e.g. if one child has an intellectual disability) or the relationship between the parties engaged in the sexual activity concerned is intimidatory or exploitative of either party then it would be viewed as grounds for concern and a report would need to be made to DLP/ Tulsa.

Family Planning/ Contraception: The post-primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines state that the subject of family planning should be covered within the Senior Cycle RSE programme. There is a lesson on family planning in the RSE Senior Cycle Resource Materials on P77 and also in the “TRUST “pack. The RSE programme requires that young people are provided with information about methods of contraception, including Natural Family Planning. Age appropriate information is already taught as part of the Junior Certificate science curriculum. Schools can use their discretion with regard to the age at which students receive any aspect of the RSE programme.

Sexual Orientation: The post-primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines include the subject of sexual orientation. There is a lesson on sexual orientation in the RSE Senior Cycle Resource Materials on P151. RSE training courses delivered by the SPHE Support Service provide teachers with further materials. The college may decide if the topic needs to be addressed before Senior Cycle, especially if homophobic bullying is an issue. Teachers do not promote any one lifestyle as the only acceptable one for society. Therefore it is inevitable and natural that homosexuality will be discussed during a programme of sex education.

One of the many advantages of exploring issues concerning homosexuality is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions and address prejudice. Discussion of homosexual/ heterosexual activity should also be appropriate to the age of the pupils.

The Equal Status Act 2000 and the Equality Act 2004 prohibit discrimination across nine grounds, including sexual orientation. Consideration needs to be given to the messages that are conveyed if the subject of homosexuality is not discussed in schools. It is important that any student who is coming to terms with their sexual identity should not experience any harassment, embarrassment or isolation which may impact on their mental and emotional health and they should be offered support from the Pastoral Team.

Abortion: This topic will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all aspects of the issues in a non-directive way.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs): While awareness of STIs is one of the objectives of the Second Year SPHE/RSE syllabus, STIs are mainly addressed in Senior Cycle. There is a lesson on STIs in the RSE Senior Cycle Resource Materials on P103 and also in the “TRUST “pack. Given that rates of STI transmission are increasing, it is important that the subject is addressed in schools. Visiting Nurses/ Medical professionals may attend or give presentations if needed but best practice is for the class RSE teacher to deliver information if possible, this is done so as to ensure continuity and promote openness /questions which student may feel uncomfortable asking a stranger.

D. Practical Issues –

All students in the Junior cycle have one period of SPHE per week. RSE will be included as part of their SPHE programme. Students in Transition Year will complete a short course (10 weeks) in RSE. Students in senior cycle have one period of SPHE a week and will receive tuition in RSE as part of their senior SPHE programme.

The size of the class groups will be determined by the base class.

The boundaries of the RSE programme will be delivered with due deference to : (a) The age of the students (b) The school ethos (c) Limits of confidentiality, limits to discussions and questions. (d) Ensuring that the RSE classroom is a safe place for all, including students and teachers. (e) RSE curriculum guidelines

All visiting speakers must be made aware of the schools RSE policy, Mission statement and the SPHE visitor guidelines as laid down by the Department of Education in circular 0023/2010 to secondary schools. The Pastoral Team are to be advised when visiting speakers are in the College.

Classroom teachers should remain in the classroom with the students; parents may be consulted and made aware of visiting people and agencies. All programmes and events delivered by visitors and external agencies must use appropriate evidence based methodologies with clear educational outcomes.

Such programmes are best delivered by those specifically qualified to work with young people for whom the programmes are designed. Evaluation of the speakers is compulsory.

Provision will be made for students with special needs as laid down by the NCCA guidelines. To comply with these guidelines it will be necessary for the class teacher to consult with the special needs co-ordinator, prior to the programme, to discuss any students with special needs and to ascertain how they can be supported throughout the programme.

Consideration and sensitivity must be given to the needs of students with special circumstances. Consult the Pastoral Team and check the pastoral teams weekly red/amber/green updates.

Links to other Policies and to Curriculum Delivery: School policies need to be consistent with one another, within the framework of the overall School Plan. Relevant college policies already in place, being developed or reviewed, will be examined with reference to the RSE Policy and any implications which may impact upon them will be addressed. Similarly the implications of other college policies and guidelines/plans for the RSE policy also need to be considered.

Identify any links to curriculum delivery: Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is a Junior Cycle core subject. SPHE provides students with opportunities to develop the skills and competencies to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development. This includes providing information on relationships and sexuality.

Aspects of RSE are delivered across the curriculum, through subjects such as Religious Education, Science, Biology, History and English. In Presentation College our aim is to ensure that all students receive a full and balanced RSE programme from First Year through to Sixth Year.

Implementation, Arrangements, Roles and Responsibilities: An RSE policy committee may be assigned the role of coordinating the implementation of the policy. Teaching Staff will have direct responsibility for delivering the RSE programme at Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle. Year Heads have a Pastoral care role in liaising with students, parents/guardians, Career Guidance, Special Education Needs Co-ordinator and teachers.

Ratification & Communication: When the finalised draft policy is ratified by the Board of Management, it becomes the College's agreed RSE Policy. A copy of the RSE policy will be available to staff in their handbook. The entire teaching staff should familiarise themselves with the policy and make themselves aware of any changes implied in curriculum delivery. Parents/guardians will be informed of the RSE Policy from the time of acceptance of the student. A copy of the RSE policy will be available at all times in the General Office and on the school Website.

Monitoring the Implementation of the policy:

The Principal is responsible for the implementation of the policy but may assign the monitoring to the RSE staff.

Reviewing and evaluating the policy:

Ongoing review and evaluation will take place with cognisance of changing information, guidelines, legislation and feedback from parents/guardians, students, teachers and others. The policy will be revised as necessary in the light of such reviews and evaluation and within the framework of school planning.

The policy will be reviewed at 3 year intervals or sooner if necessary. Some practical indicators will be used to gauge the impact and effectiveness of the policy. Such indicators include the following:

A student /teacher evaluation form may be given to some classes at the end of the RSE module.

Policy Completed- December 2018

Policy ratified by Board of Management - 12th February 2019

Policy agreed by staff- 23rd January 2019

Policy agreed by Parent's Association- 05th February 2019

Policy explained to Umbrella Student Council – 14th January 2019

Policy accepted by Pastoral Care Team - 23rd January 2019

Date of Implementation- 12th February 2019

Policy reviewed 12th June 2024

Carol Mooney

Signed _____ Date: 12th June 2024
Carol Mooney
Chairman, Board of Management

Martin Locke

Signed _____ Date: 12th June 2024
Martin Locke
Secretary, Board of Management