



**LORETO SECONDARY SCHOOL,  
CLONMEL**

**Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy**

**Ratified by  
The Board of Management  
September 2019**

## Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

### Introductory Statement

### Ethos and Mission Statement

*'Our school is a caring Christian Community in which students have the opportunity to achieve academic excellence and to grow spiritually, emotionally, socially, creatively and physically in a healthy environment.'*

Loreto schools are called on to model and promote a philosophy of life based on belief in God, finding God in all things, striving to live out Gospel values, convinced of the dignity and destiny of each individual.

The creation of a dynamic community where every student is valued equally and has a real sense of belonging is a priority in a Loreto school. Inclusivity and the celebration of diversity are the hallmarks of a Loreto school.

(Continuing the Journey: A Loreto Education)

### The Aims of Our Relationships and Sexuality Education programme:

Relationships and sexuality education which is located in the overall framework of Social, Personal and Health Education, has as its specific aims:

- (a) To provide opportunities for pupils to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that helps them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.
- (b) To help pupils understand and develop healthy friendships and relationships and appreciate and respect diversity.
- (c) To promote an understanding of sexuality.
- (d) To promote a positive attitude to sexuality and in relationships with others.
- (e) To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction.
- (f) To enable pupils to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework in keeping with the policy of the school.

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

### Rationale:

- All schools, as a result of the Children First Guidelines, are required to provide a minimum of 6 periods of RSE per year, to each student in their care. This policy governs that provision.
- 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 Wellbeing.
- Circular [M4/95](#) and [M20/96](#) and [0037/2010](#) request schools to commence 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 BOM and students.

## **Main Content**

### **(a) Provision of Training and Staff Development**

Loreto Secondary School has appointed an SPHE Coordinator(s). We make use of the SPHE Support Service (Health and Wellbeing PDST) which offers training and support to teachers in both JC and SC RSE and the school will endeavour to up skill and train the SPHE teachers in this important area of the SPHE curriculum on an ongoing basis. The SPHE Coordinator(s) inform/s each staff member teaching SPHE/RSE of training and in-service that is available in the SPHE/RSE area. As there can be cross curricular links the SPHE Coordinator(s) also advertises these courses for the attention of all staff on the main staff room notice board.

The school's policy is to allow all teachers to have access to SPHE/RSE training and the school encourages staff to attend in-service and provides substitution for in-service attendance where possible.

It is school policy when possible to consult with staff prior to being timetabled for SPHE/RSE.

Collaborative SPHE / RSE teams are established each year on Teams, and resources and curricular materials are shared in this online space. All teachers teaching SPHE / RSE are member of this team.

It is the school's policy that all staff teaching SPHE/RSE, including staff joining at the start of the year or during the year, should be familiar with the RSE policy and should, where possible, be trained in the subject area or be enrolled on a training programme.

### **(b) Inclusion of Parents/Guardians**

Information for parents/guardians is made available both through the school's website and through general communications between school and home, e.g. e-mails, texts, letters, school app etc.

Consultation of parents / guardians at the policy development stage is sought through the Parents Association.

The RSE policy is available our website for easy access by all parents/guardians. Parents/guardians can make contact with the school authorities regarding this policy who will then liaise with the appropriate personnel.

### (c) Ethical/Moral Considerations

- *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. Students may ask questions about issues which are not included on the curriculum. **On these, and all questions, teachers use their professional judgement to appropriately answer such questions, guided by the age of the students, together with the student's emotional maturity, the RSE curriculum and RSE policy for the school.**

- *Confidentiality*

While students are not encouraged to disclose personal or private information in SPHE/RSE classes there may be times when they do talk about their own lives. \* **Students are made clearly aware of the strict boundaries to the confidentiality a teacher can offer. Such boundaries include a real/perceived danger to the student or others; the use of illegal substances; or any issue that a teacher feels from his/her professional perspective needs to be referred on. The teacher will then follow the procedures set down in the Child Protection Procedures for Post Primary Schools or the school's other relevant policies. The teacher may if he/she wishes offer support to the student in the disclosure to the parents/guardians/relevant school personnel/Principal.**

\* Students, should they wish to discuss a matter privately with a trusted adult in the school setting, are very much encouraged to do so. Should this situation arise, the limitations to confidentiality are clearly outlined.

In the case of underage age sexual activity, P10 of the Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary Schools (2004) state:

*"In all cases where a school becomes aware of underage sexual intercourse the school shall take the appropriate steps to inform the child's parents."*

Staff must be aware that their obligation if entrusted with information by a student is different depending on their age. Therefore, it is important that students are made aware of the limits of confidentiality and that teachers do not give unconditional guarantees of confidentiality.

- *Sexual Activity*

The pace of social change in Ireland over the last number of years has been rapid. 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 topic of sexual activity. It is required 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 of age for both males and females, in heterosexual and homosexual relations.

- *Contraception*

The post primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines state that the subject of family planning should be covered within the RSE programme. The RSE programme requires that young people are provided with information about 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 RSE policy for the school, while dealing with the topic of family planning.

- *Sexuality*

The post primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines include the subject of sexual orientation. The Equal Status Act, 2000 and the Equality Act, 2004 prohibit discrimination across nine grounds, including Sexual Orientation and Gender. 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 topic of sexuality.

- *Sexually Transmitted Infections*

Creating awareness of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) is undertaken in second level schools. 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.

#### **(d) Practical Issues**

- *Timetabling*

The Principal and Deputy Principal assign staff members to teach SPHE / RSE in each year.

SPHE/RSE is timetabled for one class period per week.

Please refer to the SPHE Team for the course content.

In addition there may be Speaker Sessions/Workshops dedicated to SPHE / RSE.

- *Outside Speakers*

Garda vetted outside speakers who are invited to speak at Loreto Secondary School will be directed to the school's website for the school's RSE policy.

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 be actively involved and present at all stages.

- *Additional Needs*

All teachers are made aware of pupils with additional needs by the Inclusion Co-ordinators.

- *Parental Requests for withdrawal from RSE*

Parents/Guardians have an entitlement to withdraw their children from RSE classes. Parents/Guardians must contact the Principal in the first instance. After discussion with the Principal, if the parent/guardian still wishes to withdraw their child from RSE, then this request should be made in writing to the Principal. The Principal will inform the Coordinator of SPHE **and** the pupil's SPHE teacher of this request. Where students are withdrawn from RSE the school cannot take responsibility for any version of class content passed onto them by other students.

- *Resources*

In addition to and distinct from the text books on the school's book list, Loreto Clonmel uses many resources which have been recommended by approved agencies for RSE. Examples of these include (but are not limited to):

*TRUST Talking Relationships Understanding Sexuality Teaching Resources written by the HSE and the Crisis Pregnancy Agency*

*The Facts, a sex education resource written by the HSE and the Crisis Pregnancy Agency*

*Growing Up Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender by the HSE and Belong to*

*Cancer Awareness Programme by Marie Keating Foundation*

*B4udecide.ie by the HSE and the Crisis Pregnancy Agency*

*Lockers by www.webwise.ie*

It is the school's policy to add to these resources, as new recommended material becomes available.

## **5. Links to Other School Policies**

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

- Child Protection Procedures and Policy
- Whole School Guidance Plan
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Substance Use Policy
- ICT Policy.

## **6. Implementation Arrangements, Roles and Responsibilities.**

Ms. Anne Mc Grath, Principal has responsibility for the day-to-day running of Loreto Secondary School, including implementation of school policies. Ms. Niamh O'Dwyer and Ms. Niamh Tobin are joint SPHE Coordinator and Ms. Martina Williams is School Counsellor. Staff teaching SPHE/RSE may change on a yearly basis.

## **7. 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.

## **8. Reviewing and Evaluating.**

The School will review this policy three years after its ratification by the Board of Management. The RSE policy may be reviewed and amended, prior to that date, where necessary.

**9. Ratification and Communication.**

- Following consultation, the Board of Management ratified the RSE Policy Document on the date noted below.
- Following this ratification, the RSE Policy was circulated within the school community, via a letter from the Principal.
- Parent/Guardians should be informed of the RSE policy from the time of enrolment of the student.

This policy was agreed on the date noted below.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson of Board of Management

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Principal

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

This policy should be read in conjunction with the  
Loreto Secondary School Child Protection Policy.