



**ROCKWELL COLLEGE  
SOCIAL, PERSONAL AND HEALTH  
EDUCATION (SPHE) & RELATIONSHIPS AND  
SEXUALITY (RSE) POLICY**

## **Introduction**

Rockwell College recognises that Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) & Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) supports the development, health and well-being of young people and helps them to develop skills to maintain supportive relationships. The College recognises that the home is the natural environment where children grow, develop and mature into adults. However, it also accepts its own role in supporting parents in this work and in fostering the social, moral, spiritual and personal development of the pupil. This role is practised through a range of supports available to pupils which includes the SPHE and RSE programme.

## **Mission Statement**

Rockwell College is a Catholic, co-educational school, where boys and girls can grow and develop in a caring and supportive atmosphere. The pupil body comprises boarders and day-boarders educated in the Spiritan tradition. The College operates under the trusteeship of the Des Places Educational Association. The Spiritan Education Ethos is guided and grounded by seven core values: Openness to the Spirit, A Sense of Community, Option for the Poor, Commitment to Service, Global Vision, High Educational Standards, Personal and Faith Development

## **Scope**

This policy applies to the pupils and staff of Rockwell College and relates to all parties connected with the delivery of SPHE & RSE within the College.

## **Rationale**

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.

## **Aims**

It is the objective of this policy:

- To help the students develop skills for self-fulfilment and for living in our communities.
- To promote self-esteem and self-confidence.
- To enable students to develop a framework for responsible decision-making.
- To provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.
- To promote physical, mental and emotional health and well being

This policy is formulated in the context of:

- The Education Act 1998
- The Education (Welfare) Act 2000
- DES Child Protection Procedures for Primary & Post-Primary Schools
- Department Circular M20/96
- Department Circular M4/95
- Department of Education: Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy Guidelines, 1997

## **Glossary**

Appropriate person(s): A staff member who is qualified to deal with the relevant issue. This might be the Chaplain, Nurse or Guidance Counsellor. The appropriate person might also be the staff member that an issue MUST be reported to such as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) for child protection purposes.

Counsellor: A person trained to give guidance on personal or psychological problems.

Facilitator A person that makes an action or process easy or easier.

LGBTI Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex.

## **Outline of the SPHE programme:**

The curriculum for SPHE is presented in ten modules. The Department of Education and Skills recognises that each school has flexibility within this framework to plan the SPHE Programme most suitable for the students and the school.

### The Ten Modules are:

- Belonging and Integrating.
- Self-management: a sense of purpose.
- Communication skills.
- Physical health
- Friendship
- Relationship and sexuality.
- Emotional health.
- Influences decisions.
- Substances use
- Personal safety.

### **Issues of a sensitive nature:**

In light of the content and aims of the SPHE programme, it is recognised that class discussion is an effective means of raising and tackling certain issues. Class discussions, when they arise, may be of general nature and not be personally directed. If individual issues emerge, they will be referred on by the teacher to the appropriate person(s). The SPHE teacher will act as a facilitator and not a counsellor. Pupils have the right to participate or withhold personal information. A teacher cannot promise complete confidentiality. A pupil perceived to be at risk will be referred on to the relevant bodies as per the Child Protection Policy of Rockwell College. Supports available to pupils include but are not limited to:

- Prefects
- Teachers
- College Chaplaincy Team
- College Nurse
- Guidance Counsellor

### **Roles of parties involved:**

#### 1. Principal

The Principal is responsible of the effective structuring and delivery of the timetable and is therefore responsible for ensuring the allocation of class time to SPHE. The Principal is also responsible for ensuring that visiting speakers are delivering a programme that is suitable, relevant and in line with the ethos of the school.

#### 2. Parents/Guardians

Rockwell College welcomes collaboration between the school and parents/guardians in all matters pertaining to the academic, social and pastoral development of the pupils. Parents/guardians are asked to recognise that they are in partnership with the school in educating their young people and to facilitate and assist within the home environment in this education.

#### 3. Staff

Staff members have the responsibility for the coordination and delivery of an effective SPHE programme that acts to help and develop the individual child. To this end, teaching methods should be of an experimental nature with an emphasis on discussion reflection and classroom participation. These teaching methods are child centred and must be appropriate to the age and stage of development of the pupil. The class atmosphere needs to be one of respect for the privacy of each individual and hallmarked by sensitivity and care. Confidentiality for students must be respected unless there is clear and immediate danger to the student or to others

Visitors to SPHE classes will deal with discussions in line with the aims of the programme and the ethos of the school. It is the responsibility of the staff member who organises the visit to ensure the suitability of the visit to the programme and the school. Teachers will remain with the class for the duration of the visit unless specifically requested not to be present by the organiser and only then with the consent of the Principal. The Principal must be informed in advanced of all visiting speakers and the content of their presentation.

#### 4. Board of Management

The Board of Management is responsible for the ratification and implementation of this policy and for its review on a regular basis.

The Board will ensure that the Principal will adhere to her responsibilities as devolved by the Board and that the policy will be applied fairly and consistently.

### **Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education**

RSE 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.

### **The aims of our Relationships and Sexuality Education programme:**

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

- a) To help pupils understand and develop friendships and relationships
- b) To promote an understanding of sexuality
- c) To promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's relationship with others
- d) To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction
- e) To enable pupils to develop attitudes and values toward their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework
- f) To provide opportunities for pupils to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that 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.

Elements of RSE are being approached in subjects such as Science, Biology, Home Economics, Religious Education, Guidance and Counselling. The programme is fully supported by the Religion Department in the context of Catholic teaching. The RSE curriculum is covered in senior cycle Religion within the rotational groups.

A minimum of 6 classes per year of RSE is to be provided to pupils regardless of their subject options. These can be delivered across any relevant subject or by guest speakers.

Below are other aspects of RSE that may be covered in a particular class or program:

- Consent, what it means and its importance
- Developments in contraception
- Safe use of the internet
- Social media and its effects on relationships and self-esteem
- LGBTI matters
- Sexually Transmitted Infections

### **Guidelines for the management and organisation of Relationships and Sexuality Education in our school**

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

#### Involving and informing 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. We recognise the right of any parent who so wishes to request that his/ her son/ daughter not participate in the programme. The school must be informed of such a decision.

#### Explicit Questions:

It may not be appropriate to deal with some explicit questions in class. Teachers may choose to say that it is not appropriate to deal with that question at this time. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised he/she should seek advice from the SPHE co-ordinator or the Principal. When deciding whether or not to answer questions the teacher should consider the age and readiness of the students, the RSE programme content, the ethos of the school and the RSE policy.

#### Confidentiality:

It is school policy that in circumstances where a pupil is considered at some risk of any type of abuse or in breach of the law, the teacher must refer this immediately to the DLP. The DLP will decide whether to inform the parents and/or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling.

With reference to the Child Protection Policy, the following is also school policy:

- a) Teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality;
- b) Pupils must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the Principal/DLP and possibly to parents if the Principal decides that it is in the best interests of the pupil to notify parents;
- c) Teachers must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard the information;
- d) 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.

The Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary schools state in 4.1.1. and 4.2.1.

4.1.1. If a member of staff receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse he/she should, without delay, report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person in that school. A written record of the report should be made and placed in a secure location by the Designated Liaison Person. The relevant services may be contacted. The need for confidentiality at all times should be borne in mind. The supports of the school should continue to be made available to the child.

4.2.1 If the Designated Liaison Person is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation he/she should report the matter to the relevant health service immediately.

### LGBTI

Teachers do not promote any one life-style as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that LGBTI will be discussed during a programme of sex education. One of the advantages of exploring issues concerning LGBTI is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions and address prejudice. Discussion of LGBTI is appropriate for all year groups but the level of depth and details should be appropriate to the age of the pupils.

### **Provision for training and staff development**

The Board of Management will endeavour to provide the necessary personnel and material resources to support the programme on an on-going basis. The role of the SPHE and RSE co-ordinator is seen as vital to a meaningful programs. School management will encourage and facilitate teachers to attend relevant in-service training for the continued development of the SPHE and RSE in Rockwell College

### **Ratification & Review**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Rockwell College on \_\_\_\_\_ following a period of consultation. The Board of Management will review this policy and all related procedures on an on-going basis to ensure legal compliance, adherence to Department of Education & Skills procedures and the maintenance of best practise.

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Chairperson, Board of Management

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Date