



**Kilkenny College, Kilkenny**

**Relationships and Sexuality Education  
Policy**

**Ratified 4<sup>th</sup> November 2014**

# **Kilkenny College, Kilkenny**

## **RSE Policy**

### **1 Title: Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy**

#### **2. Introductory Statement**

##### **2.1 Ethos and Mission Statement**

Kilkenny College, a Church of Ireland College, endeavours to offer an education of the highest standard and broadest range within the context of the development of its Christian, cultural and sporting heritages.

Each person who studies and works here is a valued member of the College community and is encouraged to make a positive contribution to the life of the school and the well-being of others.

The College seeks to create a friendly family atmosphere amongst pupils, teachers and members of staff. Pupils are encouraged to value honesty, reliability, punctuality and respect for others. The level of discipline is similar to what is expected at home.

In keeping with its Admission Policy, the College serves the members of the Church of Ireland from the united Dioceses of Cashel & Ossory. The College also welcomes members of other churches and religious traditions, and none, as day and boarding pupils.

The College ethos seeks to encourage the Christian and moral development of each pupil. The College has an aspiration to provide that all pupils, having developed their skills and realised their worth and potential, will leave the college equipped to make their contribution within the wider community.

##### **2.2 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.
- (c) To promote an understanding of sexuality.
- (d) To promote a positive attitude among pupils 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.

#### **3. To what will this policy apply?**

This policy will apply to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality. Discussion about relationships and sexuality also takes place in classrooms other than SPHE/RSE; it is therefore important that all teachers are familiar with RSE policy.

#### **4. To whom will this policy apply?**

This policy will apply to school staff, students, Board of Management, parents/guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators and will be freely available to all above personnel.

## **5. Rationale – why is it necessary?**

Why is it necessary to devise a policy on RSE at this time?

- Sexuality is a key element of healthy social and personal development. Young people are exposed to a bewildering variety of messages about sexuality and sexual activity. The College, in consultation with parents/guardians (through a steering committee appointed by the BOM), shall reflect on how to provide for the needs of our students.
- 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 Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).
- 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.
- The DES Child Protection Procedures also highlight the compulsory nature of RSE in Schools throughout the six year cycle.

## **6. Policy 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 develop respect for differences 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 decision making 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.

## **7. Main Content**

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

Kilkenny College has appointed an SPHE Coordinator. The College makes use of the SPHE Support Service 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 informs 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 also advertises these courses for the attention of all staff on the main staff room notice board. There is an SPHE/RSE Notice Board with relevant contacts, addresses and phone numbers and/or email addresses outside the staff room available for the attention of all the partners in education.

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

It is school policy to consult with staff prior to being timetabled for SPHE/RSE. The college is committed to the consideration of gender balance in the teaching of SPHE/RSE within the

constraints of timetabling and the willingness of staff members to teach SPHE/RSE. Each year the SPHE Coordinator requests that staff with an interest in teaching SPHE submit this request in writing.

The SPHE Coordinator and the School Counsellor work together to gather material coming into the College for SPHE, Guidance and Counselling. All staff, including those teaching SPHE/RSE, have access to all these materials as the College is keen that cross curricular links are encouraged.

- There is a press in the staff prep room with all the SPHE/RSE teaching resources.
- The SPHE Coordinator has a written list of all materials available in the press.
- This list is clearly available on the press door and all staff teaching SPHE/RSE also have their own copy of this list.
- This press includes RE materials, as resources are complementary to both subject areas.

It is the College'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**

The SPHE Coordinator and the Principal will send out to parents/guardians of Form 1 pupils a letter regarding the SPHE Programme, including information on a "Sticks and Stones" workshop on bullying, and the RSE content in Form 1 SPHE. Information to parents/guardians is made both through the College's website and through general letters sent home to parents/guardians periodically. The syllabus and follow up information for the school year will be available on the school website.

The RSE policy development included parents/guardians in the policy formulation through a steering committee appointed by the Board of Management.

The RSE policy is available in the School Plan and on 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.

School Counsellor may attend Speaker Events held by the Parents/guardians Association in an official school capacity.

#### **(c) Ethical/Moral Considerations**

##### *(i) 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 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.**

##### *(ii) 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. **Students should be 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 College's Substance Use Policy. The teacher may**

**if he/she wishes offer support to the student in the disclosure to the parents/guardians/ relevant school personnel/principal.**

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. A child is age 17 and under. Therefore it is important that students are made aware of the limits of confidentiality and that teachers do not give unconditional guarantees of confidentiality.

*(iii) 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. Parents/guardians, students and teachers can experience a sense of confusion in relation to sexual mores. It is advisable 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.

*(iv) Contraception*

The post primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines state that the subject of Family Planning should be covered within the Senior Cycle 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.

*(v) 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.

*(vi) Sexually Transmitted Infections*

Creating awareness of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) is undertaken in second level schools. Information on STIs is mainly addressed in the Senior Cycle. 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**

*(i) Junior Cycle timetabling for SPHE and RSE*

The principal instructs the school timetabler as to which staff member will be teaching SPHE in each year.

SPHE/RSE is timetabled in Form 1 and Form 2 and Form 3 for one class per week with the same teacher for the year.

Please refer to the SPHE folder for the course content for Junior Cycle Programme

(ii) *Senior Cycle RSE*

The principal instructs the school timetabler as to which staff member will be teaching SPHE in each year.

Form 4 SPHE/RSE is taught through a Modular Programme in rotation with RE, Computers and PE, with SPHE/RSE for 4 to 5 class periods. Due to the vocational nature of the TY programme RSE issues arise in many curricular areas. In addition, there may be Speaker Sessions/Workshops dedicated to RSE.

Form 5 and Form 6 SPHE/RSE is taught through a Modular Programme in rotation with PE and Career Guidance and RE with SPHE/RSE having a module of a minimum 6 classes. In addition, this may be supplemented with visitor Speaker Session/Workshop dedicated to RSE.

Please refer to the SPHE folder for the course content for Senior Cycle Programme.

(iii) *Class Sizes*

Class sizes are usually about 24 pupils. However there may be times when whole year groups gather together for a class, while also smaller groups may work together, at the College's discretion.

(iv) *Class make up for SPHE/RSE*

Where possible it is the College's policy that all classes are mixed ability and mixed gender. The College however reserves the right to organise some classes in separate gender groups.

(v) *Outside Speakers*

Outside speakers are invited to speak at Kilkenny College and will be directed to the College's website for the College'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.

(vi) *Special Needs*

All teachers are furnished with a list of pupils with special needs (which is up-dated throughout the school year) by the Head of the Resource Department.

The Nursing Department liaises with staff regarding students with medical needs; either individually with teachers or via the nursing notice board, whichever the nursing staff deem appropriate.

Students with special needs may be given a photocopy of class worksheet at the commencement of each SPHE class. Where necessary, accessible and appropriate material is provided for students, in consultation with Special Needs Assistants and the Resource Department.

(vii) *Parental Requests for withdrawal from RSE*

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

(viii) *Resources*

In addition to and distinct from the text books on the College's book list, Kilkenny College uses many resources which have been recommended by approved agencies for RSE. Examples of these include:

*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*

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

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

School policies being examined or reviewed, should be considered with reference to the College's 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
- College's Guidance Plan
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Substance Use Policy.
- ICT Policy.

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

Simon Thompson, Principal has responsibility for the day-to-day running of Kilkenny College, including implementation of College policies. Sarah Rice is SPHE Coordinator, Claver Ryan is School Counsellor and Coordinator of Day Pupils, Sandra Arnopp, is Form 1 Coordinator, Richard Willis is Transition Year Coordinator, and Canon Susan Green is the School Chaplain. Staff teaching SPHE/RSE may change on a yearly basis.

## **10. 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 BOM.

## **11. Reviewing and Evaluating.**

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

## **12. Ratification and Communication.**

- Following consultation, The Board of Management ratified the RSE Policy Document on November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014
- Following this ratification the RSE Policy was circulated within the school community, via a letter from the Principal. The entire teaching staff (Teaching, Nursing and Boarding Staff) are aware of any changes implied in the curriculum delivery.
- Parent/Guardians should be informed of the RSE policy from the time of enrolment of the student.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the  
Kilkenny College Child Protection Policy.