



Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy. St. Mogue's College.

A. The School

St. Mogue's College,
Bawnboy,
Co. Cavan.
Telephone: 9523112

DEIS Band 2 school with an enrolment of approximately 300 pupils. Mixed school, non-denominational under the trustee of CMETB.

B. Policy Context and Rationale

This policy is informed by:

- The mission statement and core values of St. Mogue's College
- The Education Act (1998)
- Children First Act (2015)
- Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023)
- Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2024)
- The Department of Education Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice
- Circulars relating to SPHE, Wellbeing and Relationships and Sexuality Education
- NCCA SPHE and RSE curriculum developments
- The school's:
 - SPHE Policy
 - Child Safeguarding Statement
 - Code of Behaviour
 - Anti-Bullying Policy
 - Internet Acceptable Use Policy
 - Critical Incident Policy
 - SEN Policy

- Guidance Plan
- This policy reflects recent developments in SPHE and RSE, including updated approaches to consent, respectful relationships, online safety, inclusion, gender equality, mental health awareness and student wellbeing. (curriculumonline.ie)

C. CMETB Ethos

As a CMETB school, St. Mogue's College is committed to:

- Respect for the dignity and uniqueness of every person
- Equality, diversity and inclusion
- Student voice and participation
- Learner-centred education
- Care, respect and positive relationships
- Democratic values and social responsibility
- Supporting students to become informed, responsible and compassionate citizens

The delivery of RSE in St. Mogue's College reflects these values and seeks to foster respectful, healthy and inclusive relationships within the school community.

D. Mission Statement

St. Mogue's College seeks to provide a safe, respectful and inclusive learning and working environment where all members of the school community can achieve their potential in partnership with parents, guardians and relevant agencies. With this in mind, and in accordance with the Department of Education and Science, the following RSE Policy has been devised in consultation with staff and parents.

The school is committed to delivering a comprehensive, age-appropriate and inclusive Relationships and Sexuality Education programme that supports the holistic development and wellbeing of students.

E. Definition of RSE

Relationships and Sexuality Education is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity and intimacy. Parents have the primary responsibility for RSE, but there is a broad agreement in Irish society that schools need to be involved in the process.

F. Why RSE in School?

The Education Act, 1998, requires that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.

Circular 0037/2010 emphasises that all schools, regardless of ethos, must teach RSE, including topics such as family planning, STIs and sexual orientation.

Circular 0023/2010 provides best practice guidelines for post primary schools focusing on active teaching methods and avoiding the normalisation of risky behaviours.

Circulars M4/95, M20/96, M22/00, M11/03 request schools commence a process of RSE policy development for students from First year to Sixth year.

Circular 15/2017 'Arrangements for the Implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle with particular reference to school years 2017/18 and 2018/19.

The school adopts and adheres to the DES Child Protection Procedures, Children First Legislation (2017) and has a Child Protection Policy/Safe-Guarding Statement, with the Principal as Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and the Deputy Principal as DDLP.

The RSE policy is cognisant of all aspects of our current Child Protection Policy/Safe-Guarding Statement. Where a child protection concern is raised the procedures outlined in the school's Child Protection Policy/Safe-Guarding Statement are followed.

Sexuality is a key element of healthy social and personal development. Young people are exposed to a wide variety of messages about sexuality and sexual activity. Schools, in consultation with parents, need to reflect on how to provide for the needs of the students.

The effectiveness of an RSE programme is dependent on a collaborative policy process involving teachers, parents, members of the Board of Management and students.

Many children get information and misinformation about relationships and sexuality from television 'soaps', in the playground, from older friends- in many settings and in many ways which parents cannot control.

There is a need to help children and young people to listen, to distinguish between differing points of view and to express themselves in an appropriate way.

An advisory Group established by the Minister for Education and Skills in 1994, to advise on the introduction of RSE into schools quoted the following examples from research and common observation:

- Children receive inadequate and often inappropriate information about RSE.
- Young people are already exposed to a variety of sexual practices and attitudes through the media, particularly television, film and magazines.
- Children are maturing physically at an earlier age.
- Many young people are becoming sexually active at earlier ages than in the past.
- There is health issues associated with sexual practice.
- The nature of family life is changing and this can put pressures on young people.

For these reasons and because education is about developing skills for life as well as skills for learning, there is a need for a soundly based programme in schools.

St. Mogue's College wants to build on the primary school programme and provide structured opportunities for its pupils to acquire a knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality in ways that will help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible manner.

It aims to provide its students with information and skills to critically evaluate the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values offered today. Then they will be able to make positive responsible choices about themselves and the way they live their lives.

G. Relationship of RSE to SPHE.

In the school setting, RSE is part of a wider programme of Social personal Health Education (SPHE). The Department of Education and Science has approved and recommended the SPHE syllabus at Junior Cycle. This syllabus is a life skills programme and includes a wide range of topics such as healthy eating, alcohol, drugs, safety and social responsibility, as well as RSE. RSE is one of ten modules in S.P.H.E.

S.P.H.E. aims

- To enable students to develop personal and social skills.
- To promote self-esteem and self-confidence.
- To enable students to develop a framework for responsible decision making.
- To promote physical, mental and emotional health and well being.
- To provide students with opportunities for reflection and discussion.

H. What The School Currently Provides.

RSE is currently being delivered in S.P.H.E. at Junior Cycle, Transition Year and Senior Cycle. RSE is one of ten modules in S.P.H.E each of which is revisited in each of the three years of Junior Cycle.

Some aspects of RSE are approached during subjects such as Biology, CSPE, Guidance and Counselling, Home Economics, PE, RE and Science.

The RSE programme in S.P.H.E 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 relationships 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.

Because of the scope and far reaching parameters associated with RSE, the possibility arises where aspects of the RSE curriculum may be discussed within other subject areas or settings e.g.: Science, Home Economics, Pastoral Care and Personal Skills (J.C.S.P.).

Social Education LCA

The personal and social development of the students is the primary focus of this course. It provides opportunities for the students to examine and explore issues and topics related to self-awareness, interpersonal relationships, health care and contemporary social, economic, political and cultural issues. It also aims to prepare students for the transition from dependent to independent living.

G. Consent Education

Consent education forms an important component of the RSE programme.

Students will be supported in developing an understanding of:

- Consent as informed, freely given and ongoing
- Respect for personal boundaries
- Communication within relationships
- Recognising pressure, coercion and manipulation
- Respectful and responsible decision-making

H. Relationship of RSE to SPHE and Wellbeing

RSE forms part of the broader Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Wellbeing programme.

The school follows Department of Education and NCCA guidance in implementing SPHE and RSE programmes using student-centred, inclusive and developmentally appropriate methodologies.

I. Guest Speakers:

Youthwork Ireland - RSE Workshops (Mind Matters and Choice Program). Facilitate workshops to all year groups throughout the year.

J. Links with other policies in the school:

- Bi Cinealta Framework
- The Substance Use Policy
- The Child Protection Guidelines
- The Pastoral Care Policy
- Guidance Plan

K. RSE Aims

Our RSE programme aims

- To help young people 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 young people to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework.

L. Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School.

SPHE incorporating RSE is a Department of Education and Skills approved course. Schools are obliged to follow the Department Guidelines and syllabus while bearing in mind the ethos of the school.

M. Student Voice

Students may contribute to the ongoing development and review of the RSE programme through:

- Student Council consultation
- SPHE and Wellbeing feedback
- Student surveys
- Focus groups where appropriate

Student feedback helps inform the relevance, effectiveness and inclusivity of the RSE programme.

N. Confidentiality

In dealing with issues of confidentiality, teachers follow the Child Protection Guidelines (Children First; Childcare Act 1991). The child's welfare is always of paramount importance.

O. Visiting speakers

Youthwork Ireland currently deliver extensive RSE programs across all years in St. Mogue's. All guest speakers are given a copy of the RSE policy prior to the Visit.

P. Additional Educational Needs Students

Children with additional educational 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. St. Mogue's College will meet the needs of these students as best they can.

Q. Explicit Questions

Teachers should not have to deal with inappropriate or explicit questions if they do not feel comfortable to do so, in front of the class. The teacher will explain that it is not appropriate to deal with such a question. The teacher may exercise his or her own professional judgement in deciding whether to answer the question privately after the class or tell the student to ask their parents. The teacher could also refer the student to the school counsellor.

At all times teachers expect the students to use correct terminology when referring to any body parts or sexual intercourse.

R. Providing ongoing support, development and review

St. Mogue's College recognises the importance of having teachers committed to the implementation of its RSE programme and SPHE syllabus. It will encourage and facilitate participation in in-career development wherever possible. The school will also purchase appropriate RSE teaching materials which have been identified by staff as useful and which have been approved by the principal.

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. St. Mogue's College will seek to support the efforts of parents and also to provide educational opportunities for them, through the St. Mogue's College Parents' Association.

S. Monitoring, Evaluating and reviewing the RSE programme.

Finally, St. Mogue's College will select school representatives committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this RSE programme. This will be done on an annual basis, by noting pupil, staff and parental feedback. Amendments will be made as necessary and will be brought to the attention of parents and staff.

The Pastoral Care Committee in St. Mogue's College will be responsible for ensuring that this policy is reviewed and evaluated and that it is effective.

The policy is ratified by the Board of Management and are committed to ensuring access to CPD opportunities for all teachers involved in RSE, SPHE.

Ratified by Board of Management: _____ (Date)

Signature (Chairperson): _____ (Date)