

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION



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Guidance for
Catholic Post-Primary Schools:
Republic of Ireland

Council for Education of the Irish Episcopal Conference

VERITAS

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Introduction



This document is for leaders and teachers in Catholic Post-Primary schools in their work in the area of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). It seeks to provide guidance in two ways.

- It provides the rationale for RSE in a Catholic school. This includes important guiding principles underpinning a Catholic school's RSE provision, important contextual background for RSE in a Catholic school, and aims and objectives for RSE in a Catholic school.
- It seeks to assist Catholic schools in the area of RSE by providing important information and practical guidance for the school's work on the development of the school's own RSE policy. This document provides schools with key signposts in this important work. Every school is required to have an RSE policy (Circular Letter, 37/2010). The Department of Education and Skills, Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2017) Section 8.4 reminds schools that the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme is a mandatory part of the curriculum for all students in primary schools and in the junior cycle of post-primary schools and must be fully implemented. All post-primary schools are also required to have a Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme at senior cycle. This is in line with Section 9 (e) of the Education Act 1998 which requires all schools to promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and promote health education for them, in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school.

In light of the above two aims, Section A of this document outlines the rationale for RSE in a Catholic school, important guiding principles underpinning a Catholic school's RSE provision and important contextual background for RSE in a Catholic school. Much of what is here can be used for the introduction to your school's RSE policy. Equally importantly, what is here can be used to spark dialogue with parents, students and teachers as part of the school's policy development engagement.

Section B offers practical advice to schools as they begin the process of developing or re-developing a school's RSE policy in light of what is here. This section is a 'how to' for schools as they work on their RSE policy.

In the appendices, school leaders and teachers will also find some additional useful information that will assist them in their work in RSE in Catholic schools. Included is a short piece on the legal and curricular context for RSE in post-primary schools. Also included is a suggested template that schools might find useful as they seek to develop their RSE policy.



Everything that is offered in this document is rooted in an attitude of ‘deep amazement at the human person’s worth and dignity’ (John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, 10). It is offered out of an understanding that every human person is made in the image and likeness of God – that everyone has inalienable dignity and worth, that each person has a value in and of themselves, and that every person is loved unconditionally by God. This dignity invites us to live well, to flourish and to love and respect others as we are loved. Catholic schools are called to share this Good News, in an invitational manner, with all students. Students can then engage out of their own experiences and contexts with the great message of love and concern for all people that Jesus shows us through his own teaching and ministry.

These guidelines are also offered out of a desire to listen to and dialogue with the lived experience of people, to their joys and hopes, grief and anguish (Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 1965). All children and young people in a Catholic school, in all schools, have a right to have their stories heard and their concerns or questions heard. Equally, all parents who send their children to a Catholic school have a right for their voices to be heard in terms of what values and what ideals they wish to have shared with their children in the area of Relationships and Sexuality Education. Dialogue and mutual respect are what shapes all policy work in a Catholic school, most especially in an area as important as RSE.

This dignity invites us to live well, to flourish and to love and respect others as we are loved. Catholic schools are called to share this Good News, in an invitational manner, with all students.

Section A

Relationships and Sexuality
Education in a Catholic School



This first section provides a rationale for RSE in a Catholic school. In addition to material that provides an insight into the Church's teaching in this area, this section also outlines the educational and legal underpinning of RSE in post-primary schools.

This material can serve as content for discussion with parents, teachers, students and others and might help you in formulating an introduction to your own RSE policy and rationale for your RSE programme.

As stated in the introduction, all post-primary schools are required 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), as part of the school's curricular provision for wellbeing. It is the responsibility of the Board of Management to ensure that an RSE programme is made available to all students and that their parents are involved in and informed about the policy and its development.

In January 1995 and May 1996 the Department of Education and Science issued Circulars M4/95 and M20/96 respectively to post-primary schools. The circulars requested schools to begin the process of developing their policies to include RSE and wider aspects of SPHE in their curricula for all students from first year to sixth year. Circulars M22/00 and M11/03 required schools to introduce the SPHE Junior Cycle Curriculum on a phased basis, with full implementation by September 2003.

In 1997 the Department of Education and Science issued Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy Guidelines to assist schools with the process of developing a policy for RSE. The DES provides a template based on these guidelines, with some additional material being included to assist schools in clarifying policy content.

It should also be noted, once again, that updated Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2017) state that:

it is the responsibility of all schools to contribute to the prevention of child abuse and neglect through curricular provision. In that context the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme is a mandatory part of the curriculum for all students in primary schools and in the junior cycle of post-primary schools and must be fully implemented. All post-primary schools are also required to have a Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme at senior cycle.



The school's RSE policy supports the values, ethos, and moral and ethical framework of the school. It attends to the learning needs of all students and is situated within the wider life of the school.

RSE is a complex and vitally important area of a school's curriculum. It sits as part of Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) but it is also understood as having a whole-school dimension.

From the outset it should be said that RSE should be tailored to the age, maturity and understanding of the young people with whom you work. In addition, sensitivity to the students' ethnic and religious backgrounds should be clear in both the programme offered and the policy for RSE developed by the school.

In a Catholic school, RSE should also be set within a clear framework of Christian values. Students are helped to have a deep appreciation for themselves, and the wonder and beauty of their sexual identity. They are invited to appreciate the dignity of others and to have respect for themselves and others. They are invited to recognise their duty of care and responsibility towards others, who are made in God's own image and likeness. In addition, young people are invited to appreciate the value of marriage and family, permanent loving relationships and the responsibilities of parenthood. The importance of loyalty, fidelity and self-restraint is also presented.

Students need to be provided with material and space that helps them to consider the physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and moral implications of their behaviour towards one another, particularly in the area of one's own sexual identity. In addition, teachers responsible for delivering the programme need to acknowledge that many young people come from backgrounds that do not share a Christian perspective on the purpose and place of one's sexual identity and how it might be expressed today. In line with the values of inclusivity at the heart of Catholic education, sensitivity is therefore needed to avoid causing hurt and offence to them and their families. It is vital that such conversations are characterised by a profound respect and care for all participants, where the equal worth of all is recognised and cherished and where the Church's teaching in the area of relationships and sexuality can be shared.

Students will be taught RSE within a framework which models and encourages the following:

- respect for self and others
- respect for God and creation
- acknowledgement of and respect for other people's personal boundaries and the right of an individual to give or refuse consent

- understanding and valuing the concept and qualities of consent in relationships
- self-understanding and self-awareness
- non-exploitation in relationships
- commitment, trust and bonding within relationships
- mutuality in relationships
- honesty towards self and others
- compassion, forgiveness, mercy and care when people do not conform to one's vision of life
- self-discipline
- the ability to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong

A more detailed rationale for a Catholic school's RSE policy might be explored under the seven headings below. Schools can use these broad headings as part of their own policy development work; what is here might provide a springboard for dialogue with parents, in particular, in terms of the school's RSE policy. These seven headings are also broadly in line with DES guidelines in the area of RSE and curricular guidance provided by the NCCA for RSE. They are:

1. RSE and the characteristic spirit of the school
2. RSE as a whole-school enterprise
3. RSE and a holistic vision of education
4. RSE and a moral and ethical framework
5. RSE has pedagogical approaches appropriate to the subject, to the students and to the school
6. RSE and the central role of parents
7. RSE teaching that is age and stage appropriate

RSE and the Characteristic Spirit of a Catholic School

In 1996, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) provided Interim Curriculum Guidelines for RSE as an aspect of SPHE for both primary and post-primary schools. In this document, emphasis was placed on the need for the values inherent in the school's RSE programme to be consistent with the core values and ethos of the school.

In a Catholic school, RSE provision can only be fully understood in the context of the wider ethos of the school. The ethos of a Catholic school is entirely concerned with fostering the development of relationships; with God, with self, with others and with all of creation. The school dedicates itself to the education of the whole human person. In providing for RSE and in developing an RSE policy for a Catholic school, it is important to remember this fundamental role of the Catholic school. In addition,



the Catholic school shares its vision of the human person in relationship with others by how it lives out important values like inclusion, respect, and care.

In line with DES guidelines, it is therefore important to name the ethos of the school (particularly in terms of the school's founding intention and mission and vision) as the context for the school's RSE policy and the programme which flows from the school's policy.

RSE as a Whole-School Enterprise

In line with the Department of Education and Skill's understanding of RSE as a whole school, and cross-curricular enterprise, the DES supplies helpful questions (Policy Development Guidelines, 1997) for schools to explore in terms of an understanding of RSE as something that happens outside of the SPHE classroom as well as in it. In looking at a school's provision for RSE, the DES suggests schools may wish to examine questions like:

- Do people feel valued?
- Is self-esteem fostered?
- Is there evidence of respect, tolerance and fairness?
- Is a sense of responsibility fostered?
- Are high standards and expectations promoted?
- Is there open communication?
- Are uniqueness and difference valued?
- Is conflict handled constructively?
- Are social, moral and civic values promoted?
- Is attention paid to the wellbeing of all members of the school community?

These questions are also echoed in the more recent Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice, 2018–2023 (Government of Ireland, 2018).

A Catholic school emphatically answers 'yes' to each of the questions outlined above because Catholic schools value inclusion, diversity, respect, creativity, open communication, fairness and tolerance. The dignity of each person is at the heart of everything a Catholic school does.

Community is another essential quality that defines Catholic education. A Catholic school is a community inspired by Gospel values that seeks to share these rich values. It is the whole school community, in a myriad of different ways, that educates and forms students for relationships with self, with others, with our created world, and with God. Therefore, community is at the heart of a school's provision of RSE/SPHE.

In a particular way, a Catholic school seeks to inspire empathy for those who are less fortunate, like, for example, those who are homeless or migrants or refugees. The Catholic school will promote care for the earth. The Catholic school will of course have a particular care for those within its own community that are most vulnerable, who are struggling in any area of their lives. In such a school, there is no place for any sort of bullying, harassment, sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia or any form of victimisation. In particular, it is also important that Catholic schools evaluate the support offered to students who are facing new and deep questions relating to their sexual identity as they mature. All students are loved unconditionally by God and therefore should be loved in their schools.

In turn, Catholic schools seek to imbue confidence and respect in all of their students so that these students throughout their lives will have the skills and disposition to relate to others in a way that is respectful and that brings joy to their own lives and to the lives of others. Teachers and principals in Catholic schools get to know their students by listening to them and engaging with their reality. All students have their own stories, hopes and struggles. These have to be attended to, they matter to the student and they matter therefore to the school. Catholic schools strive to accept and care for their students as the gifts they are to the life of the school and in the life of their family and community. Archbishop Eamon Martin (JMB/AMCSS Address, Galway 2018) described how, in this way, a good Catholic school becomes part of the ‘extended family’ for each of the students. He says to the teachers in these schools:

You will journey with these young people through some of their most formative years, as they develop physically, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually; you will help them relate to the world and explore the great questions of today; you will guide them as they begin to form their personal attitudes and values, setting down for themselves principles and foundations for life; you will comfort and encourage them as they learn to cope with the complexity of relationships, and as they discover who they are as a person.

The Catholic school, therefore, is a privileged place of encounter, with RSE a vital space in a Catholic school for that encounter.

A Holistic Vision of Education

In this context, it is clear why RSE is retained as part of SPHE, why SPHE is increasingly understood as part of wellbeing (for example, at junior cycle) and why wellbeing is presented as a cross-curricular and indeed, whole-school endeavour. This is a position clearly echoed by the Department of Education and Skills:



RSE is an integral part of SPHE and SPHE is taught through school atmosphere and culture, integration and discrete teaching time.

[RSE Policy and Education Guide, PDST, 2017]

The specific task of RSE as part of SPHE in a Catholic school is to teach, nurture, advise, guide and enable young people in the school's care to recognise their own sacredness and the sacredness of others within the context of Catholic faith and teaching. Jesus is the model for living an ethical life and the moral teachings of the Church enable us to follow Him, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life [Jn 14:6].

RSE as part of SPHE is part of the curriculum and it is important that when taught within the Catholic school it is done so within the context of the school's Catholic ethos, thus leading to a mature integration of the moral, physical, spiritual, religious and emotional aspects of the person. This holistic vision of education is in line with the Department of Education and Skills' understanding of RSE:

RSE, as part of SPHE, which is in turn part of the wider curriculum helps ensure the holistic development of the young person.

[Interim Guidelines for Relationships and Sexuality Education – Post-Primary, DES, 1996]

Again:

RSE as part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) contributes to developing the work of the school in promoting the health and wellbeing of children and young people. This happens in the context of their emotional, moral, social and spiritual growth, as well as their intellectual, physical, political, religious and creative development.

[Relationships and Sexuality Education – Going Forward Together, NCCA, 1997]

A Moral and Ethical Framework

From the above it is clear that RSE in any school, not just the Catholic school, is not intended to be delivered in a value-free way. It is not philosophically possible to communicate values in a neutral manner. RSE in a Catholic school cannot but reflect a particular understanding of human sexuality and human relationships. RSE in a Catholic school gently but persuasively invites students to engage with a vision of life that is challenging, comforting and inspiring using methodologies and teaching and learning approaches that are age-appropriate and that speak to the hearts and minds of students on their journey.

At the heart of RSE in a Catholic school is an understanding that:

- (a) sexuality is an integral part of the human person and that it affects our capacity to give and receive love
- (b) human life is sacred
- (c) human beings are essentially social
- (d) each person is a unique human being created in the image of God

Pope Francis in his exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate* (2018, 10, 14, 33) encapsulates this. He reminds young people that they are children of God and that we are all called to be ‘holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves’. Because of our identity, made in God’s image and likeness, we are invited to a new way of living; a way of living befitting this identity. In the call to holiness God speaks to each person and says, ‘Be holy, for I am holy’ (Lev 11:44; 1 Pt 1:16). The Catholic school’s RSE programme therefore seeks to help young people to grow in holiness by acting responsibly and generously towards others. Growth in holiness empowers the baptised to be salt and light in the world (Mt 5:13–16) and to share the good news of God’s love by how they live their lives. Holiness, in this context, is the invitation to live lives in relationship with ourselves and others that are free, responsible, caring, joyful and in tune with our identity, and the identity of all, as God’s sons and daughters.

Therefore, a Catholic school’s RSE policy begins by providing clear guidance on the moral and ethical framework within which the programme will be taught. In the same way, RSE programmes and material should give students opportunities to engage with these values and attitudes and to consider how they might enrich their lives and the lives of others.

In *Familiaris Consortio* (On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World, 1981, 37) Pope Saint John Paul II speaks of sexuality as:

an enrichment of the whole person - body, emotions and soul - and manifests its inmost meaning in leading the person to the gift of self in love.

Pope Francis in *Amoris Laetitia* (2016, 280) spoke of the need for sexuality to be ‘seen within the broader framework of an education for love, for mutual self-giving’. In 2018 Archbishop Eamon Martin in his keynote address to the Association of Management of Catholic Schools (AMCSS) stated that:



Relationships and Sexuality Education in Catholic schools is situated within a moral and values framework that is derived ultimately from the life and the teaching of Christ and transmitted through the teaching of the Catholic Church ... Relationships and Sexuality Education ought therefore to be an integral part of the curriculum in a Catholic school.

RSE has Pedagogical Approaches Appropriate to the Subject, to the Students and to the School

In a Catholic school such a values-framework based approach will be marked by four important pedagogical markers or qualities: RSE is invitational; RSE is centred on dialogue; RSE is challenging; and RSE is life giving and affirming.

1. Firstly, in terms of an approach that seeks to be invitational. It is important to say that a values-based approach does not suggest the imposition of any one set of beliefs but rather seeks to invite students to engage deeply with key questions as they relate to their own lives. In a Catholic school this will mean providing space for young people to encounter and engage with a Gospel-rich understanding of the human person and of life. The approach to such an encounter is always invitational.

2. Secondly, presenting in a Catholic school a Gospel-centred understanding of the human person in line with the school's characteristic spirit, means engaging in a real way with the lived experience of the students in the school. RSE is a space for dialogue, for reflection, and for learning that will hopefully be for life. In any given classroom in Ireland there are young people asking questions and needing answers about their lives and about the lives of others. But not all young people ask the same questions at exactly the same moment in their lives; this also has to be remembered. For every young person there is a different reality; a different set of life experiences and interpretative frameworks. There are different hopes and dreams. The local school, with its own particular characteristic spirit and its own local reality, supported by Trustees, is therefore the place where the working out of a school's RSE policy and the implementation of the RSE policy through a programme can and should take place in partnership with parents. This working out of the school's RSE policy requires dialogue with all education partners.

3. Thirdly, as well as acceptance and respect, in a Catholic school, there will also of necessity be voices that challenge young people to perhaps think and behave differently in order to show greater love and respect to others. Young people will be encouraged in an age and stage appropriate fashion, around the correct use of their freedom. They will be asked to be respectful of the boundaries of others. They will be informed about and learn the importance of consent. They will be taught

tolerance, compassion and empathy. In addition, as in all schools, young people's assumptions and attitudes which may reflect wider societal biases and stereotypes will be challenged (Keating, Morgan, Collins, 2018, p. 34). The role of education is also, at times, to seek to change behaviour, to challenge, to invite children and young people into ways of behaving worthy of their own dignity and the dignity of all others.

4. Fourthly, RSE is life giving and affirming. Everything that the Church teaches about human sexuality and relationships, it teaches out of a sincere desire to share something beautiful about the nature of the human person. For example, it is precisely because of our inherent dignity that the Church teaches the value of human life from conception to natural death. In a Catholic school it is these values that will be proposed to, not imposed on young people. But sharing these and other values will only make sense in partnership with parents, in the context of the school's lived ethos and in encounters that are respectful and that listen and attend to the lived experiences of children and young people who come to our schools.

RSE and the Central Role of Parents

The use of the term parent(s) in this document includes the role of legal guardians. An understanding of the parent as the first educator of his/her own child or children is entirely in line with the Department of Education and Skills understanding of the role of the parent. In the Department of Education and Skills *Going Forward Together: An Introduction to Relationships and Sexuality Education for Parents* (1997), parents are told, 'As a parent, you are the first teacher of your child. You hand on values and attitudes to each new generation of children.' Parents are reminded, 'Informal education for RSE begins from the moment your child is born. Everything you do as you interact with your children gives messages about human relationships in the broadest sense.'

Since the introduction of RSE, as part of SPHE, in the mid-nineteen nineties, the NCCA and the Department for Education and Skills has consistently pointed out that schools and parents should work together to ensure the best outcome for children and young people. The *Interim Guidelines for RSE* (1996) state that the work of RSE in the school is designed to be supportive of the efforts of parents and their concerns for the health, safety, security and wellbeing of their children. In this context, consultation with parents, is therefore key to the effective delivery of the school's RSE programme.

From the Catholic Church's perspective as well, parents are the 'first and foremost educators' of their children (*Gravissimum Educationis*: Declaration on Christian Education, 1965, 3). *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love, 2016, 84) develops this premise further when it says:



the overall education of children is a ‘most serious duty’ and at the same time a ‘primary right’ of parents. This is not just a task or a burden, but an essential and inalienable right that parents are called to defend and of which no one may claim to deprive them.

Having parents involved in the development of the school’s RSE policy, including the monitoring and evaluation of the programme, is therefore essential. Parents’ opinion about RSE may be sought in a variety of ways. For example, in and through classroom-based meetings, engagement through Parent Nominees on the Board of Management, draft policies sent home inviting responses and so on. In addition, home-school liaison teachers and/or RSE Coordinators and Teachers might offer individual parents the opportunity to respond in person, in writing or by means of a questionnaire to the school’s RSE policy and programme. Care must be taken to ensure the widest possible consultation is carried out. In addition, and as part of this consultation, it is vitally important for the school, through the Principal, RSE Coordinator and RSE teachers to share with parents the ethos of the school and the values that this ethos inspires in the area of RSE.

As well as involvement in the development of a school’s policy in support of RSE, parents engage with RSE-related learning with their child or children in their own homes. However, research (Keating, Morgan, Collins, 2018, p. 37–39) suggests that some parents may find it hard to discuss this aspect of growth and development with their children. As educators concerned with the development of the whole person, teachers need to be able to assist parents in this endeavour. Whilst acknowledging that this can sometimes be challenging, it is important that young people are immersed in values, beliefs and attitudes which reflect the richest possible understanding of the nature of human relationships and sexuality. Often the work carried out through the RSE Programme in a school affords parents the opportunity to begin discussions or re-engage in conversations with their children that they might otherwise struggle with. Ways in which the parent can be connected back into his/her child or children’s learning in the area of RSE should therefore be actively sought.

Teaching that is Age-Appropriate

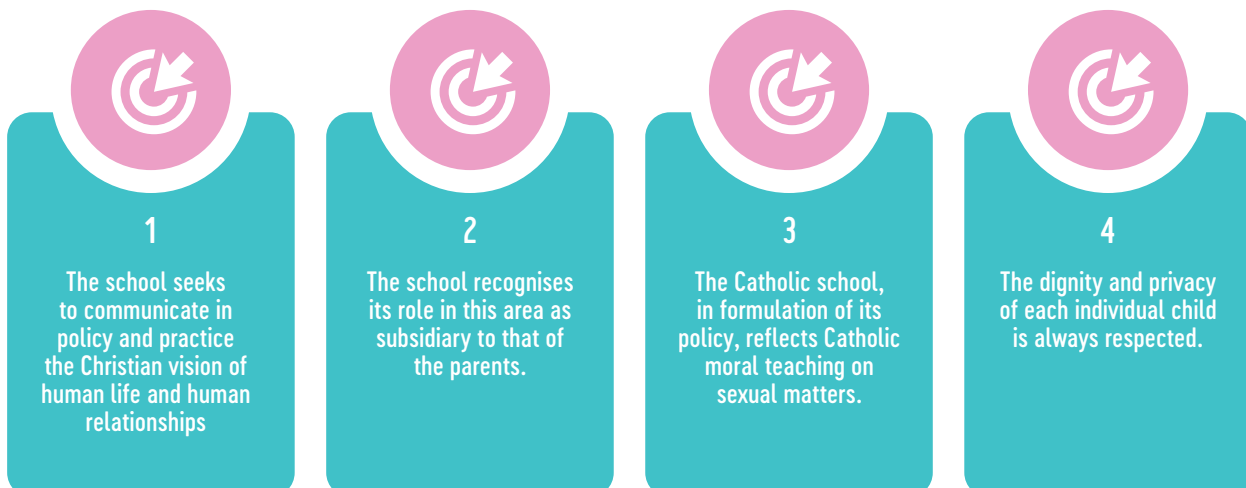
The template that the DES developed in support of RSE Policy Guidelines (1997) states that, ‘schools can use their discretion with regard to the age at which students receive any aspect of the RSE programme’. In line with what is contained in this document, it is important that students and parents are involved in the decision-making process in this regard, and that this decision-making process is captured in the school’s policy. It is also helpful to explore materials developed and approved for use in Catholic schools for guidance in terms of what is ‘age and stage appropriate’ for students in your school.

A good RSE programme, as an integral part of SPHE, in post-primary schools, developed in consultation with parents, will therefore include age-appropriate information, debate and discussion about contraception, sexually transmitted infections, same-sex attraction and the full meaning of consent. (Archbishop Eamon Martin, 2018)

Amoris Laetitia (2016, 281) states that schools can support parents in helping young people develop a ‘critical sense in dealing with the onslaught of new ideas and suggestions, the flood of pornography and the overload of stimuli that can deform sexuality.’ The space to challenge what young people encounter and experience through social media should also, very obviously be provided, particularly in the context of care of self and care of others.

Summary

In summary and with all of the above in mind, it is worth noting the four principles for RSE in a Catholic primary school offered by the Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference Guidelines on Relationships & Sexuality Education (2014). They might usefully be included as key pointers in the development of a post-primary school’s RSE policy. They are:



Section B

Developing your School's Relationships
and Sexuality Education Policy



All schools, as part of their RSE policies, must not only provide a rationale for their RSE provision but must also clearly indicate how RSE is attended to at both junior and senior levels. The DES helpfully provides the document Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy Guidelines [1997], which sets out a suggested approach to the development of a school's RSE policy. The DES instructs schools that this can be adapted by individual schools in response to local realities.

The steps of this policy development are outlined here:

1	Initiate and establish structures	<p>A committee, including representatives of teachers, parents/guardians and the Board of Management, should be established to develop, or to re-develop the policy.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to including senior cycle students on the committee.</p> <p>Once selected, it is important to ensure that all the members of the committee are clear as to their role and function, i.e. to consult with the groups that they represent, as appropriate, and to reflect the views of those groups as accurately as possible.</p> <p>It is also important that all members of the committee understand their role in terms of communicating the school's rich vision for RSE, embedded in the vision, mission and lived reality of the school.</p>
2	Review and Research	<p>Study relevant documents including this document.</p> <p>Identify the issues that need to be addressed.</p> <p>Review current provision. This will include examining SPHE provision, the extent to which RSE is taught as part of SPHE and the extent to which it is taught in a cross-curricular way or through other subjects such as Religious Education, Science, Biology or Home Economics.</p>
3	Preparation of draft policy	<p>Step 3 of the RSE Policy Guidelines will assist in preparing the draft policy.</p>
4	Circulation/ Consultation	<p>With the approval of the Board of Management, circulate the draft policy and consult with school staff, students (e.g. through the student council) and parents/guardians.</p> <p>Amend the draft policy as necessary in light of the consultation process.</p>
5	Ratification and Communication	<p>Present the amended draft policy to Board of Management for ratification.</p> <p>Make provision for the circulation of the policy to staff, parents/guardians, members of Board of Management and arrange to provide it to the parents/guardians of newly enrolled students.</p> <p>Communicate the ratified policy to other members of the school community.</p> <p>Communicate, as agreed, the policy to Trustees.</p>



6	Implementation	Implement the provisions of the policy.
7	Monitoring	Check at regular intervals that the policy is being implemented and identify any issues arising.
8	Review, Evaluation and Revision	Review and evaluate the impact of the policy at a pre-determined time, taking into account feedback from the school community and any developments that may have arisen. Revise as necessary, in light of the review and evaluation process.

What is above can be the basis of your school's policy development work. What is provided here in this document for Catholic schools should further assist schools in developing a RSE policy in line with the overall guidance provided by the Department of Education and Skills while attending to the school's characteristic spirit.

In terms of the steps outlined here, obviously the first step is the formation of a RSE committee for your school's policy development or re-development work. This committee then seeks to follow the steps outlined above.

What is provided in this section of the guidelines from the Council for Education of the Irish Episcopal Conference can work as a set of headings for your school's RSE policy and can also act as discussion and dialogue points with parents, students, teachers and others in the process. What needs to be remembered is that the process for the school's policy development is as important as the content of the school's policy. It is the process that will bring all stakeholders on board and ensure good dialogue and communication to these stakeholders. DES guidelines on RSE policy development make it clear that simply producing an RSE policy document is not enough.

The headings provided below are suggestions of what might be included in your school's RSE policy.

CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

The school's policy begins by providing important background information. This includes:

- Name of school, address, phone number
- Date of policy
- School philosophy/mission statement/ethos

RATIONALE: MORALS & VALUES

After providing initial information about the school, a Catholic school's RSE policy and programme goes on to clearly demonstrate, in some detail, how the approach to RSE is connected to the school's Christian vision and understanding of RSE. A Christian anthropology of the person roots a Catholic school's RSE policy. Time should be taken to explore what this means in light of what is provided in Section A of this document.

What is provided in Section A forms the content of the rationale, but this material can also be used to stimulate dialogue and discussion as the policy is being developed with partners; parents, teachers, students and others.

In other words, the school's RSE policy outlines clearly the way in which the school's approach to RSE is connected to the school's vision of the human person and human relationships.

POLICY FORMATION & CONSULTATION PROCESS

The next section of the school's policy should outline how the policy was developed, who was involved in the policy development (see roles and responsibilities below), how it will be shared and how it will be reviewed.

- a) How the policy was drawn up – who was consulted and how. All stakeholders should be consulted. This is in line with the DES RSE Policy Guidelines (steps 1 to 4). Specific dates should be provided in line with these guidelines.
- b) How the policy will be disseminated – who will receive it, where it can be accessed. Parents and students should also be made aware of the school's policy. A contact person should be named in the policy to allow for comments and feedback on the policy. This is in line with Step 5 of the DES RSE Policy Guidelines.



- c) How and when it will be reviewed. It is very important that each school has a policy review schedule and that provision is made for ongoing evaluation. Evaluation allows a school to acknowledge what is working well as well as identify areas for improvement and set targets for the future. This evaluation should involve those who took part in the initial consultation of the development of the policy. This is in line with Step 6 of the DES RSE Policy Guidelines.

Roles and Responsibilities

There are various roles and responsibilities associated with RSE policy development and provision. The list below outlines the particular roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the formulation and implementation of the school's RSE policy. It is helpful to include a list such as this in the school's policy and to show how these entities and individuals were consulted and engaged with as part of the development, dissemination and review of the school's RSE policy. It is also helpful as part of the Catholic school's RSE policy to list the responsibilities of each individual or group in terms of the delivery of RSE; this provides clarity to parents in terms of how and by whom RSE is delivered in the school.

1. Trustees and Boards of Management

The Trustees are responsible for the strategic direction, organisational nature and ethos of their respective schools. They can and often do offer advice and assistance to their schools when required and requested in this and other areas of policy development work within the school. The Diocesan Advisor may also offer assistance in the development of the school's RSE policy. It might also be noted that the Bishop is responsible for Catholic schools in his diocese as evidenced by Canon Law 806§ which states that:

the diocesan bishop has the right of supervision, visitation and inspection of Catholic schools in his diocese, even those established or directed by members of religious orders. He also has the right to issue directives concerning the general regulation of Catholic schools.

The Board of Management fosters and supports the development of a RSE policy and programme by collaborating with teachers and parents. The Board also facilitates the consultative process whereby the school community can respond and contribute. The Board of Management should examine and approve the completed policy and programme prior to their implementation in the school and review the policy at regular intervals.

At all times the Board of Management seek to accommodate and be sensitive to the religious and cultural beliefs of both teachers and parents while fulfilling their

responsibility to ensure the availability of appropriate and educationally excellent RSE for all young people.

2. Principal and Senior Management Team

As with all subject areas, it is the role of the Principal to make possible a coherent and coordinated approach to RSE in keeping with the ethos of the school. Communicating the vision of the human person and human relationships at the heart of a Catholic school's provision for RSE is a key responsibility of the Principal and his/her senior management team. It is the role of the Deputy Principal to support the work of the Principal. The Principal and Senior Management Team coordinate the school's approach to RSE and consult the Board of Management, staff, parents and health professionals as appropriate.

3. RSE Coordinator

Some schools have a coordinator for RSE in their school. The RSE coordinator is a member of staff appointed to be responsible for coordinating all issues related to the RSE policy, the curriculum, and the programme designed for the students. It is essential that the coordinator is respectful and committed to the school's ethos and the aims and direction of RSE within the school. The RSE coordinator's role may include:

- ensuring that the programme is taught effectively and is appropriate to the age and maturity of the students;
- liaising with the Board of Management as requested and with the Principal, the Deputy Principal, the Pastoral Care Team, all staff, parents and, educational visitors and students on RSE matters;
- establishing a cross-curricular team to include the Special Needs Coordinator, members of the Pastoral Care Team, all teachers teaching RSE and other teachers delivering relevant RSE-related material/content in other subject areas;
- attending in-service training and disseminating appropriate information to other staff members;
- seeking opportunities to involve students, as appropriate in terms of the policy development, programme delivery and policy and programme review. This may include the student council or school prefects and initiating age-appropriate classroom discussion;
- upholding and ensuring that the programme is taught in accordance with the school's Catholic ethos;

4. RSE Committee (or working group)

To ensure that this is a whole-school process, the RSE policy should be developed, and implemented by a working group representing parents, teachers and students. [See Step 1 of the DES RSE Policy Guidelines.]



5. Pastoral Team/Designated Teacher/Special Needs Coordinator

The Pastoral Care Team and Special Needs Coordinator might also form part of the working group and provide relevant information which will ensure that the needs of all students are met.

The Pastoral Care Team ensures that the RSE topics delivered through Pastoral Programmes are in line with the Catholic ethos of the school. The Pastoral Team will liaise with the Special Needs Coordinator where necessary.

6. Teaching Staff

The staff provide an obvious link in terms of communicating the content of RSE and the relevant programme, possibly through curriculum planning meetings and by other means. Teachers are of central importance in terms of any review of RSE provision. They are also key to identifying their own needs around ongoing professional development in their RSE work.

7. Chaplain

If the school has a Chaplain, his/her role is to:

- support the teaching of RSE where possible
- meet with the coordinator to discuss the RSE programme and its delivery in school
- witness to Gospel values

8. Students

DES guidelines suggest that senior cycle students in particular should be consulted in terms of the development of the school's RSE policy. This includes seeking opportunities to involve students, as appropriate in terms of the policy development, programme development and policy and programme review. This may include the student council or school prefects and initiating age-appropriate classroom discussion across the whole school. Careful consideration needs to be given to how this engagement can be most effectively managed. However, the student voice in terms of identifying their own needs in the area of RSE is of vital importance.

9. Parents

There are a number of ways to consult with parents, to introduce the RSE policy and programme to parents and to provide support to parents in terms of their own engagement with RSE-related issues in the home.

It is important that a school actively promotes the implementation of RSE and that parents are fully informed of the content, timing and the delivery of the programme in order to enable them to support the work of the school and to enable parents to discuss the topics and issues raised by the programme with their children. This could be achieved by sending an outline of the programme home at the beginning of the school year.

Parents in Catholic schools are also consulted in terms of the monitoring and review of the RSE policy and programme. The ways in which parents can be involved in planning for RSE in terms of policy development are suggested in the DES RSE Policy Guidelines. Questionnaires, focus group meetings and one-to-one meetings are some of the ways parents can be involved. Meetings with parent representatives should also take place in terms of policy development.

Some of the ways in which all parents might be invited into the conversation in terms of sharing the school's policy and programme include:

Face-to-Face Meetings

Meeting parents either at the beginning of the school year or prior to the commencement of the programme to inform them of their rights and responsibilities. (Realistically, such meetings would probably need to take place in groups although where necessary, one-to-one meetings can also be arranged.) These meetings will allow parents to learn about and discuss the school's RSE policy and the programme content, the teaching methods and the timing of the programme, and to voice any concerns they might have regarding the programme and its delivery. Parents of children with special educational needs can have concerns or questions they might have addressed at such meetings or separately in one-to-one meetings.

Induction Literature

An induction pack for incoming first year students can contain the school's RSE policy and information on the specific content for each year group and very importantly on the timing of the RSE module. This will give parents an opportunity to engage with the programme alongside their children and in so doing build positive relationships.

School Website

Publishing the RSE policy in its entirety on the school website, alongside other school policies, is another important way to communicate the school's vision for RSE with parents and students. Information on the school's RSE programme might also be included.

Letters/Email Communication

In schools where it is policy for the RSE programme to be delivered in the second or third term, a letter/email could be sent to parents just prior to the commencement of the programme; for example, a letter is included with the Christmas report reminding parents of the commencement of the RSE programme. Similar communication can take place at different times of the year.



AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND SKILLS

Following initial information about the school, an outline of the school's rationale for RSE, particularly in the context of the school's characteristic spirit, a description of the school's policy development process (including a full description of how the school engages with all partners in terms of policy development, programme delivery, and policy and programme review), a school's RSE policy then seeks to provide specific information under the following headings:

- Broad aims of RSE
- Associated objectives
- Skills promoted

What is below relates to the entirety of the programme to be offered. Specific aims and objectives can be developed for each year of the RSE programme from first year to sixth year. Material will be covered at an agreed and appropriate age and stage. These aims, objectives and key skills should also be understood in the context of the school's wider provision for wellbeing in terms of cross-curricular and whole-school engagement and support.

Broad Aims of RSE

A Catholic school's RSE policy might include some or all of the following aims, centred on the development of skills, attitudes and values, as agreed through the consultation process suggested by the DES RSE Policy Guidelines and outlined above in the context of RSE policy development and the Catholic school.

In line with the school's ethos, within a moral, social and spiritual framework, the Catholic school aims to:

- help students understand that God is mysteriously present in the life of every person
- help students appreciate their worth and dignity and uniqueness as children of God
- enable young people to appreciate sexuality as a gift from God
- help students understand and develop friendships and relationships that are based on self and mutual respect, non-exploitation, self-restraint, honesty, trust and commitment
- help students recognise that compassion, forgiveness, mercy and tolerance are essential dispositions to develop within relationships
- promote respect for all individuals regardless of sexual orientation, race, gender or creed
- foster the growth of values which impact on moral behaviour personally and socially

- promote responsible behaviour and the ability to make informed decisions
- help students recognise the myriad positive benefits of an exclusive, permanent and committed relationship, and for Catholics and for people of other faiths and beliefs, the value of marriage
- help students understand the importance of friendship and to begin to consider love in the context of relationships that are deeply respectful
- provide age-appropriate teaching on social media, pornography and the dangers related to a culture which reflects the pursuit of individualism and instant gratification
- foster and develop mutual respect and understanding and a respect for diversity and inclusion
- promote a vision of human sexuality that reflects selfless love, respect and commitment
- enable students to develop attitudes and values towards their own sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework
- help students understand the value of family relationships that are permanent and marked by mutual respect
- help students value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood
- foster in the young person the value of family life and the gift of marriage
- help students understand the value of sexual abstinence before marriage and monogamy in marriage
- promote an appreciation of the value and sanctity of human life and the wonder of life from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death
- help young people to become aware of the pervasive prevalence of pornography on the internet which can destroy and degrade human sexuality and relationships and reduce people to objects for gratification
- enable young people to understand that they have been called to holiness
- enable young people to grow in holiness by acting responsibly and generously towards others
- encourage them to see holiness in those around them who reflect God's presence
- encourage young people to be alert and open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit in terms of self-care and care of others
- encourage young people to understand the power and potential of the internet to work for the Common Good
- explore the rights, duties and responsibilities involved in relationships

Objectives of RSE

A school's RSE policy might include some or all of the following specific objectives, again centred on the development of skills, attitudes and values, and as agreed with partners through the consultation process. In line with the school's characteristic spirit, the Relationships and Sexuality programmes seeks to enable students to:



- understand the Catholic vision for relationships, marriage and the family
- understand and value the concept and qualities of consent in relationships
- understand and appreciate the moral and legal consequences of failing to respect others' right not to give consent or to withdraw consent
- acquire the understanding and skills necessary to form healthy friendships and relationships
- understand about the law in relation to consent (including the legal age of consent for sexual activity, the legal definition of consent and the responsibility in law for the seeker of consent to ensure that consent has been given)
- appreciate the roles and responsibilities of parents, carers and children in families
- consider the impact of domestic abuse (including sources of help and support)
- become aware of both the benefits and dangers of social media, especially in relation to cyberbullying, data protection, sexting, and sextortion, pornography, and the addictive nature of many popular apps
- recognise the need for 'digital breaks' and the age-appropriateness of various digital activities
- manage online safety in all its forms; protect privacy; protect 'online presence' and maintain a positive personal reputation
- keep themselves safe in terms of the responsible use of the internet
- witness to human dignity at all times online; to seek, as Pope Emeritus Benedict said, 'to give a soul to the internet', to ensure all encounters are marked by respect and care for oneself and others
- see the new media as another tool to reach people with the message that sexuality is a gift from God, not to be squandered and abused
- recognise bullying and abuse in all its forms (including prejudice-based bullying both in person and online/via text, abuse, exploitation and trafficking)
- safely access sources of support for themselves or others should they feel vulnerable
- recognise common mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, disordered eating, self-harm and compulsive behaviours in themselves and learn how to seek help when faced with these issues
- understand marriage, in the light of its fulfilment in the Sacrament of Matrimony
- value the gifts of marriage and the family, and perseverance in a love strengthened by the virtues of generosity, commitment, fidelity and patience
- understand the ideal of marriage, marked by characteristics of a exclusivity, indissolubility, stability and openness to life
- see marriage as the sacramental sign of God's love for his Church
- see marriage as a commitment, entered into freely, never forced through threat or coercion
- understand human physiology with particular reference to the reproductive cycle, human fertility and sexually transmitted infections and diseases



SECTION B

- understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and in wider contexts
- understand different family structures, and the diversity of family life
- recognise peer pressure and have strategies to manage it
- recognise groupthink (where the cohesion of the group becomes more important than the choices or actions of the group) and to develop strategies for managing it
- understand the influence that messages from their peers and media can have on their own values
- develop coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of exploitation and abuse and for coping with peer pressure, social media, conflicts and threats to personal safety
- recognise the impact of drugs and alcohol on choices and sexual behaviour
- be aware that the media portrayal of relationships may not reflect real life and understand the possible impact of this on people's expectations of relationships
- explore the range of positive qualities people bring to relationships
- realise that relationships can cause strong feelings and emotions, including in romantic relationships, feelings of sexual attraction
- know the features of positive and stable relationships (including trust, mutual respect, honesty, equality) and those of unhealthy relationships (including imbalance of power, coercion, control, exploitation, abuse of any kind)
- manage the breakdown of a relationship and the effect of change, including loss, separation, divorce and bereavement
- understand that they have the right to full consent in a relationship
- 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 and understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity
- acquire and develop an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality and development
- understand sexual development and identity and cultural influences on sexuality
- cope with the social, physical and emotional challenges of growing up
- step forward into holiness by not speaking badly of anyone and by recognising the dignity of each human being
- give a witness to holiness through patience and constancy in doing good
- recognise the need for self-control and the value of abstaining from sexual activity before marriage and the value of sexual monogamy within marriage



- recognise the portrayal and impact of sex in the media and social media (which might include music videos, advertising, sexual images shared between young people, and the unrealistic portrayal of relationships and sex in pornography)
- be aware that with the help of the internet, a message has the potential to reach the ends of the earth in seconds

In addition to the above, the following specific skills will be promoted and encouraged through the Catholic school's RSE programme.

Students will be helped, in cooperation with their parents, to develop the skills to:

- form and maintain healthy, positive relationships which are a reflection of the dignity of the human person
- make sound judgements and good choices which have integrity and which are respectful of the individual's commitments
- manage emotions within relationships and the breakdown of relationships with confidence, sensitivity and dignity
- manage conflict positively, recognising the value of difference
- critically evaluate a wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values
- develop the communication skills of active listening, negotiation, offering and receiving constructive feedback and assertiveness
- communicate effectively by listening to others' points of view, presenting one's own view and dealing with conflict constructively
- make good choices and wise moral judgements and then put them into practice by behaving responsibly as an individual or as a member of a group
- develop interpersonal skills for managing healthy relationships with confidence and with effectiveness
- cultivate humility, mercy and compassion, learning to forgive and be forgiven
- develop skills and strategies to respond appropriately to exploitation, bullying, harassment, and control in relationships (including the unique challenges posed by online abuse and the unacceptability of physical, emotional and sexual abuse)
- recognise when a relationship is unhealthy or abusive (including the unacceptability of both emotional and physical abuse or violence including 'honour' based violence, forced marriage and rape)
- develop strategies to manage the situations mentioned above and be able to access support for self or others at risk
- develop skills and strategies to manage being bullied and/or witnessing others being targeted
- develop the skills to challenge sexist, homophobic, racist and disablist language and behaviour

- evaluate the effect of alcohol and drug use on decision-making and personal safety
- evaluate the impact of alcohol on road safety, work-place safety, legal safety, reputation and career
- build resilience and the ability to resist unwanted pressures, recognising the influence and impact of the media, internet and peer groups and so develop the ability to assess pressures and respond appropriately
- develop the skills and strategies to manage being bullied or targeted or witnessing others being bullied or targeted in any way
- develop coping strategies to overcome mental health issues and to recognise when they need to employ strategies to re-establish positive mental health including managing stress and anxiety and seeking help when it is needed

LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES, METHODOLOGY, PROGRAMME CONTENT, TEACHING & LEARNING APPROACHES AND SUGGESTED MATERIALS

A school's RSE policy should clearly outline how the school's aims and objectives for RSE will be delivered. Specific attention should be paid to inclusive teaching and learning practices. In this section of your school's RSE policy, links to the school's other policies and other subject areas are made.

Teaching methods in RSE are concerned with the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes and skills which have implications for behaviour. An open and facilitative teaching style and participative methodologies are essential in line with the pedagogical guidance provided in Section A. Continuous professional development for those teaching RSE should also be a key consideration in terms of the school's RSE policy.

RSE aims to develop personal and social skills, and clarify attitudes and values within a moral framework. RSE seeks to promote behaviour which will allow students to take increasing responsibility for themselves as they grow and develop. Teaching methods which involve students actively in the process of their own learning are most beneficial. Dialogue is at the very heart of a Catholic school's provision for RSE. Specifically, in terms of organising the learning environment, the teacher will be careful to create an atmosphere which respects the privacy of each individual student and treats all students with due sensitivity and care. Some important considerations might be:

- the degree of trust, respect and positive regard for students
- the relationship between the teacher and the students and among the students themselves
- the need for clear expectations, goals and learning objectives



These parameters are of central importance in a Catholic school because in and through these, the student knows that he/she is respected and cared for by the whole school community. In this context, it is important that ground rules and codes of behaviour should be discussed and agreed with the class.

That learning in RSE is learning for life also needs to be emphasised.

In line with Step 2 of the DES RSE Policy Guidelines, it is essential that a school audit is carried out to ensure consistency of approach and to establish when and where aspects of the RSE programme are being delivered. The subject area SPHE is the home for RSE. Lessons and resources developed should be appropriate to the age and maturity of the students to which they are delivered. It is important that teachers delivering the programmes deliver them with sensitivity and care. They should also take into account students' knowledge, attitudes and beliefs and their capacity to understand issues. Special attention should be paid to young people with additional educational needs where physical development may outstrip emotional maturity to ensure that programmes are delivered effectively.

Programme Content

In line with the Child Protection Procedures and Guidelines for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (DES, 2017) and in line with the agreed NCCA syllabus for junior and senior cycles, specific information should be provided for each year of the school's RSE programme, i.e. first year to sixth year inclusive.

Details for each of the year's provision for RSE should be provided therefore, in terms of content to be covered and the materials to be used. In a Catholic school, programmes are carefully selected, are age and stage appropriate, and are in line with the vision of the human person and human relationships set out above. An outline of the current modules to be covered at both junior and senior cycle is available on curriculumonline.ie. Catholic schools engage with these modules in dialogue with parents and students, and in line with the school's characteristic spirit. Specific details should be provided in terms of how various issues are explored.

The RSE Programme of Study should also include the input of all subjects involved in its implementation and delivery. RSE is provided in a cross-curricular fashion in all schools; it is a whole-school reality.

The programme content should be appropriate to the age and maturity of the students, as agreed through this work of policy development/review.

Links to Other School Policies

To ensure consistency in terms of learning for life and work all school policies should strive to be consistent and cohesive within the framework of the overall school plan. The RSE policy is developed in this context and shares links with the following policies:

- Teaching and Learning
- Child Protection/Safeguarding Children
- Anti-bullying policy. In the school's anti-bullying policy, specific reference should be made to homophobic bullying, transgender bullying, cyberbullying, sexual harassment and bullying for other reasons relating to sex, gender, or relationships (Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, DES, 2013)
- Religious Education
- Behaviour policy
- Drugs
- Internet Safety/E-safety
- Homework
- Use of outside agencies and vetting arrangements

Links to Other School Subjects

A cross-curricular approach on the content and timing of the programme will allow for a holistic experience for the students within the context particularly of the whole-school nature of RSE.

A school's RSE policy shows the way in which teachers of supporting subject areas will be informed of the content and timing of the delivery of RSE, and in so far as possible RSE will be taught in a cross-curricular way. The following subject areas could contribute to a cross-curricular approach:

- Home Economics
- Physical Education
- Religious Education
- Science
- English
- Music
- Art

Each school can determine what other subjects might support or impact RSE. A school audit of subject content may prove a useful tool in determining which and how many subjects to include in the programme.



Different subject areas, as well as RSE itself, may also provide a space for discussion on current moral dilemmas, again in an age and stage appropriate manner, bearing in mind the central role of dialogue in assisting students in their engagement towards meeting the aims and objectives of the school's RSE programme.

SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS (SEN)/ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (AEN)

In a Catholic school that seeks to honour individuals' giftedness and that seeks to be inclusive, it is essential that a school's RSE policy attends to those students with special education needs. The Catholic school's RSE programme should attend to this very carefully.

The Church affirms the right of every individual to be treated equally. All students, male and female, have a right to an education which adequately prepares them for adult life, regardless of their age, gender, culture, sexual orientation, disability status, religion or social class.

As stated in the European Convention on Human Rights, 'No person shall be denied the right to education.' The convention upholds 'the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions'. Archbishop Eamon Martin said, 'A litmus test of Catholic school ethos will be how its most vulnerable members are getting on' [JMB/AMCSS Address, Galway 2018]. Therefore, schools must ensure that young people with special educational needs in mainstream schools have appropriate, accessible and relevant RSE. Schools will need to engage in the careful planning and adapting of resources and teaching activities to ensure that there are no barriers to participation or learning for students with special education needs compared to their peers. Teachers of students with SEN need to make careful and appropriate plans for RSE for the SEN student in their class. Consideration should be given to ensuring students with SEN are provided with a more personalised, individual educational intervention in the area of RSE, when and as appropriate.

It is particularly important that schools communicate with parents of young people with special education needs about the content of the programme and the date activities/themes. This communication will allow parents to reinforce learning at home. School RSE policies should clearly outline when and how this communication will take place.

It is recognised that students with special education needs are more vulnerable to all forms of abuse and exploitation. Teachers must try to ensure that they develop the knowledge, understanding and skills of students to enable them to:

- identify inappropriate and exploitative behaviour
- help develop their own prevention strategies to stay safe
- recognise and build healthy relationships
- know who they can talk to

STUDENTS WHO BELONG TO GROUPS THAT ARE IN THE MINORITY IN IRELAND

As stated above, every child has the right to access good quality RSE and, therefore, it is the responsibility of each school to ensure that students who belong to groups that are in the minority in Ireland are able to access the RSE programme. Schools must take cognisance of the needs of all students within their particular school. Employing a range of appropriate strategies which enable quality teaching to occur is central to inclusive practice and could include:

- differentiation strategies (including in terms of language)
- cooperative learning strategies
- classroom management strategies
- the use of new technology

In addition, care should be taken to ensure that the parents of students who belong to groups that are in the minority in Ireland are engaged with and consulted on the needs of their children in this area.



SENSITIVE ISSUES AND SPECIFIC QUESTIONS THAT MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN A SCHOOL'S RSE POLICY

A school's RSE policy and approach to teaching and learning must, of course, be sensitive to specific issues that arise in the life of students and in the overall life of the school. Language matters, and great care needs to be taken to ensure no child or family feels excluded. The Catholic School's RSE policy clearly demonstrates how these sensitive issues will be explored, when they will be explored and why they should be explored. Some of those sensitive issues are outlined below to provide schools with guidance in terms of the formulation of policy and the delivery of programmes. Each of these issues should be understood as an important opportunity in the life of the school to present to students, in an invitational manner, the Church's rich understanding of life, relationships and human sexuality.

When dealing with any of these sensitive issues, schools are called to be safe spaces for all students. A safe school is one that affirms the value of every individual. Each person is made in God's image and is loved by God and the Church. The school's mission is to support the student through appropriate pastoral care; accompanying students, while affirming the values of the school. It is therefore essential to set parameters for the teaching of sensitive issues. Everyone has the right to pastoral ministry and accompaniment. This is key to ensuring that every individual in the school feels included.

Having an agreed Code of Behaviour will ensure that the right to privacy for both student and teacher is respected at all times. In terms of such a Code of Behaviour, it is important that schools:

1. Teach the fundamental principle of respect for human person
2. Challenge any discriminatory remarks
3. Deal firmly with any acts of bullying, including homophobic, transphobic and cyberbullying
4. Follow school procedures for accessing outside support for any student requiring additional help
5. Support parents. Parents may want to speak to someone at the school about one or more of these issues
6. Arrange a meeting with the parents and relevant support agencies to consider any appropriate measures of support that may be needed to ensure the needs of the student are met
7. Follow school procedures for monitoring the wellbeing of students

8. Provide time and safe spaces for young people, in an age and stage appropriate way, to engage at a deep level with these issues, to dialogue with their peers and their teacher around them and to be invited into a rich understanding of the Church's teaching in these areas

In addition to the specific issues outlined below, how students' questions are to be addressed is worth considering in the school's RSE policy. While it is important to create an environment in which students can discuss issues openly, teachers may not be able to answer all questions about issues and can, therefore, set appropriate limits. Teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, the RSE curriculum and the RSE policy for the school. Parents should, through the communication channels suggested above and any other deemed necessary, be empowered to respond to very sensitive questions rather than the teacher attempting to deal with very sensitive questions in a classroom environment.

In terms of specific issues that may be perceived as sensitive what is below might be noted. In the school's RSE policy, such detail might helpfully be provided. This detail ensures all partners are clear on the specific approach to these issues as part of the school's RSE programme. The Church's teaching in this and all areas is always presented in a respectful and invitational manner, acknowledging the rights of students and others to disagree with the Church's perspective, and their rights to respectfully offer alternative perspectives and to engage in open and productive dialogue. However, the fact that there may be differing perspectives on these issues does not mean that the Catholic school can abdicate its duty to inform students what it is that the Church professes on these issues, again doing so in an invitational manner.

The Status of the Family

In keeping with the duty of Catholic schools to present RSE within its own ethos, the school supports the sacramental vision of marriage and family, while being sensitive to other family situations. The Catholic understanding of marriage will be presented and sexual intimacy will be taught in the context of a God-given gift that enables married men and women to express and deepen their love for each other, a love that should unite the couple as well being open to the gift of new life.

The Virtue of Chastity

The word 'chastity' may seem quite foreign or may appear removed from the reality of modern life. However, in line with the ethos of the school and Christian morals, sexual abstinence before marriage and fidelity within it, will be presented as a positive, desirable and achievable option. Chastity is about care of self and care of others; it is also about respecting marriage as a vocation that seeks to protect the love between spouses and the faithfulness they promise to one another.



The Sanctity of Life

The value and sacredness of life will be actively promoted. From the moment of conception, the embryo is a human being and must be recognised as having the rights of a person. The most fundamental right for every human being is the right to life. This belief is one of the foundation stones on which the RSE programme is built. Life is sacred from conception to the moment of natural death.

Family Planning

The Church's teaching on family planning only makes sense when presented and understood within the context of the Church's rich understanding of marriage. Pope Francis, in *Amoris Laetitia* (2016, 82), states:

the Church's teaching is meant to help couples to experience in a complete, harmonious and conscious way their communion as husband and wife, together with their responsibility for procreating life.

Catholic teaching on family planning will be presented and students will also be provided with accurate information about methods of artificial contraception in an age-appropriate and sensitive manner.

Sexuality Transmitted Infections (STIs)

It is important that students are provided with accurate, comprehensive, factual information about sexually transmitted infections, their transmission, the inherent dangers of risk-taking behaviour and how to obtain appropriate advice if they are concerned about their sexual health. Information on how to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections should emphasise that the best way to prevent infection is to abstain from sexual activity before marriage and to be faithful within marriage. Such information should be provided in an age and stage appropriate manner.

LGBTQ+

In light of much public discussion about LGBT and gender issues, it is important that we, in Catholic schools, also evaluate the support offered to students who are facing new and deep questions relating to their sexual identity as they mature. All young people must be treated with compassion and be helped to understand that they are loved by God and their inherent human dignity is valued and respected. The prevalence of sexual bullying and ostracisation can so easily leave them susceptible to feelings of rejection, distress, self-harm and risk-taking behaviours. This cannot be tolerated in any school, never mind a Catholic school which holds, as a core value, the dignity of every human person.

[Keynote address by Archbishop Eamon Martin to JMB/AMCSS 31st Annual Conference Galway, 3 May 2018]

By promoting, through the Catholic ethos of the school, gospel values, inclusivity, equality and respect for all students and ensuring that students learn in a safe and secure environment and all are treated with respect and dignity, Catholic schools seek to robustly counter any form of discrimination. All students have the right to learn in a safe and secure environment, to be treated with respect and dignity, and not to be treated any less favourably on the grounds of their actual or perceived sexual orientation. This is also the case for a student who identifies as transgender.

It should be noted that the Equal Status Act, 2000 and the Equality Act, 2004 prohibit discrimination across nine grounds. Schools and the Equal Status Act, 2nd Edition (Equality Authority, 2005) is a helpful booklet for schools outlining school obligations under the Equal Status Acts (2000 to 2004).

Given that many Catholic schools have already been sensitively offering support to pupils who are beginning to express same-sex attractions or raising personal questions about gender identity, it is timely to identify, develop and disseminate best practice in this area across all our Catholic schools. While recognising the challenges at the interface between the Church's moral teaching and pastoral practice, it would be helpful for us to share learning about: inclusive school structures and relationships; sensitive pastoral outreach and support for students; age-appropriate pastoral programmes together with curricular methodologies and resources; quality professional development and training for staff.

[Keynote address by Archbishop Eamon Martin to JMB/AMCSS 31st Annual Conference Galway, 3 May 2018]

In keeping with the ethos of the school and Church teaching on respect for others, antagonism/bullying or other forms of abuse against students who reveal they are homosexual or who may be identifying as transgender will not be tolerated by the school and this needs to be clearly stated in the school's RSE policy. Schools must ensure that they take any action deemed necessary to promote respect for all students.

In line with DES guidelines on bullying, the school's anti-bullying policy, specific reference should be made to homophobic bullying, transgender bullying, cyberbullying, sexual harassment and bullying for other reasons relating to sex, gender, or relationships.

At the heart of the Christian life is the Trinity, Father, Son and Spirit in communion, united in loving relationship and embracing all people and all creation. As a



consequence of the Christian belief that we are made in the image and likeness of God, gender and sexuality are seen as God's gift, reflect God's beauty, and share in the divine creativity. We are all essentially social and relational. It is only in this context that the Church's teaching on gender can be shared in any meaningful way with students in a Catholic school. It is in this context that the Church's teaching on sacramental marriage as a permanent, exclusive union between one man and one woman open to the transmission of new life will be presented as the Catholic understanding of the context for sexual intimacy.

If dialogue is at the heart of all good RSE, then dialogue will always involve listening to the stories, challenges and questions that young people and their parents might have. Parents' voices and perspectives are vitally important in terms of helping young people through questions they may have about their identity. A Catholic school's RSE policy should clearly state how it will seek to engage with parents and young people in cases where a young person is identifying as transgender or questioning their sexual orientation. Specific professional advice should, of course, be sought from others with additional expertise in this sensitive area.

The Church's teaching on sexual orientation and gender identity can be sensitively presented in Catholic schools but again always with a view to dialogue, always in an invitational manner and always with the greatest sensitivity and care for all students and their parents.

SAFEGUARDING INFORMATION

This section of a school's RSE policy outlines some important Child Safeguarding information. Such information should also be addressed in a school's RSE policy.

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 child is at risk, in which case the appropriate action should be taken in line with Child Protection Procedures and Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools or the school's substance use policy.

In other words, the student's right to privacy should be respected at all times by both the teacher and the other students in the class but staff cannot give a guarantee of confidentiality to students on issues relating to child protection.

Schools should closely attend to the updated Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2017). This document clearly outlines the Board's statutory obligation in this area and provides a helpful legal framework for the school's work in this area. This document also clearly makes the link between curricular provision and child abuse prevention.

PRACTICAL ISSUES

This section of your school's RSE policy outlines some practical issues that should be addressed in a Catholic school's policy and its programmes for RSE. The section includes some suggested starter questions around current RSE provision, how classes are organised, questions around withdrawal from RSE and making the link between RSE at primary and post-primary levels.

Timetabling

Is RSE timetabled for all classes?

What size will the class groups be for RSE?

In a co-educational school, will boys and girls be together for all aspects of RSE?

How will cross-curricular input be managed?

How will the needs of students who may be pregnant or mothers be addressed?

How will the needs of boys who are fathers or fathers-to-be be met?

Class Organisation

Classroom teaching arrangements such as single gender class or mixed gender class will have to be at the discretion of the individual school. It is important that within the RSE programmes, activities are included to allow young people to talk about their interests, concerns and feelings. If boys/girls have respect for themselves then ultimately they will have respect for others. Arrangements may be made to discuss specific topics of the RSE programme to boys/girls in single gender groups.

Withdrawal from RSE

Going Forward Together: An Introduction to Relationship and Sexuality Education for Parents states that, 'As a parent, you are the first teacher of your child. You hand on values and attitudes to each new generation of children.' It should be noted that in line with the Education Act 1998, section 30, subsection 2 (e) a student may not be required to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parent of the student, or in the case of a student who has reached the age of eighteen years, the student. Therefore, parents have the right to withdraw their child from any aspect of RSE if they so wish.



However, with open communication and systems of dialogue, withdrawal can be avoided. The Catholic school needs to develop effective strategies for dialogue between teachers and parents. In a Catholic school, it is essential that parents and teachers find ways of listening to each other and taking the opinions and concerns of both home and school into account.

Examples of strategies that could be considered in terms of engagements with parents are included above. These can be included, as suggested above, as part of the school's RSE policy.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

A school's RSE policy should outline how staff development and training will be supported. Specific details should be provided in terms of what training SPHE teachers have received or will need.

This will be organised by the RSE coordinator, in consultation with the Principal/Deputy Principal and Senior Management Team. Where it is deemed necessary the Diocesan Education Advisors, Trustees and other outside agencies may be consulted. It is essential that training be provided both for (a) new staff to the programme and (b) new teachers to the school. It is recognised that no teacher should have to undertake delivery of the RSE programme without adequate training.

Additional support, in terms of staff training and development, might be sought from Trustees and/or the local Diocese in terms of the teaching of RSE in the context of the school's Catholic ethos.

RESOURCES & OUTSIDE AGENCIES

The Use of Resources

Schools should review and quality-assure all the resources chosen before the students use them to ensure that they are inclusive and consistent with the school's moral and values framework. Preference should be given to materials approved for use in Catholic post-primary schools.

The RSE coordinator and teachers involved in the delivery of RSE should ensure that resource materials obtained from other agencies and presentations by outside speakers are in harmony with the ethos of the school.

Assistance from the local Bishop, the Diocesan Advisor and your school's Trustee may be sought in terms of sourcing programmes and materials approved for use in the area of RSE in Catholic schools.

The Use of Outside Agencies

Where appropriate, the skills and expertise of outside agencies may be accessed. Where this occurs, the school should be satisfied that contributions from informed outsiders are an integral part of the whole programme and in harmony with the aims and ethos of the school. It is essential that all outside visitors/speakers be approved by the Principal, in consultation with the RSE coordinator. A preliminary visit to the school to discuss ethical/practical considerations is advised. Appropriate follow up in relation to guest speakers is also advised. A school's RSE policy should clearly articulate the school's policy in relation to the use of outside agencies and professionals in the area of RSE.

Guidance provided by the Department of Education and Skills in Circular No. 0043/2018 on best practice guidance for post-primary schools in the use of programmes and/or external facilitators in promoting wellbeing consistent with the Department of Education and Skills' Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice, which supersedes Circular 0023/2010, should be attended to. In particular the following should be noted in terms of this guidance from Circular 0043/2018:

- External facilitators supplement, complement or support an identified component of the school's Wellbeing Promotion Process.
- External facilitators are approved by the principal and Board of Management in consultation with the relevant teaching staff. All materials proposed for use by the external facilitator must also be agreed in advance by the principal and the board.
- All external facilitators are compliant with the school's child protection policy and other relevant school policies and procedures.
- The school authority satisfies itself, having regard to its own legal advice if required, that it has met any vetting obligations that arise under the Vetting Act and in line with Circular 0031/2016, for such external facilitators.
- Programmes used are delivered by facilitators who are qualified to work within the specific area of content and with the students for whom the programmes are designed.
- Relevant school staff liaise with facilitators in advance of the delivery.
- External facilitators always work under the guidance and supervision of the relevant classroom teacher who remains in the classroom with the students at all times and retains a central role in the delivery of the subject matter. Absence of the teacher may undermine the integrity of the curriculum, and the credibility and professionalism of the teacher. It may also compromise the safety of the students.



- Relevant school staff are informed of the details of the programme being provided by external facilitators.
- Parents/carers are consulted and made aware in advance of the content of the programmes provided by external facilitators.
- External facilitators and programmes are evaluated by students and teachers with regard to the subject matter, messages communicated, methodology and proposed learning outcome.

In addition, it is vital that any outside agency/individual delivering a support session in a school:

- receives a copy of the school's RSE policy
- is made aware of and adheres to the school's child protection policy
- receives a copy of the school's policy on the use of outside agencies/visitors
- understands the school's ethos as articulated in the school's RSE policy
- agrees to respect the ethos of the school
- is made aware of issues around confidentiality

Parents should be made aware in advance of the use of outside agencies. Schools should explain the type of activities which will take place to parents to ensure that they have the opportunity to raise any concerns they might have before the visit. Doing this will also have the added benefit of letting parents know what is going on, and strengthen ties between home and school.

As stated above, during the session the teacher should be present at all times. Afterwards the teacher should provide students with the opportunity to discuss their experience and honestly evaluate the session. Schools can use their student feedback to inform future planning and provision along with any evaluation carried out by the outside agency/individual.

MONITORING & EVALUATION

In line with other school policies, the RSE policy will be reviewed and updated on a cycle. A school should always provide a date by which time the policy will be revised. Parental and student involvement is to be welcomed in ensuring that the policy is relevant and inclusive of all stakeholders.

RATIFICATION & COMMUNICATION

Ratification by Board of Management

When the finalised draft policy has been ratified by the Board of Management (Step 4 of the DES RSE Policy Guidelines), it becomes the school's agreed RSE policy. It should then be circulated within the school community (Step 5 of the DES RSE Policy Guidelines). The entire staff should be familiar with the policy and aware of any changes implied in curriculum delivery.

Parents should be informed of the RSE policy from the time of enrolment of the student.

Additional Considerations for inclusion in the policy

State when the Board of Management officially ratified the policy.

State what steps will be taken to communicate the ratified policy to members of the school community and to new applicants on enrolment.

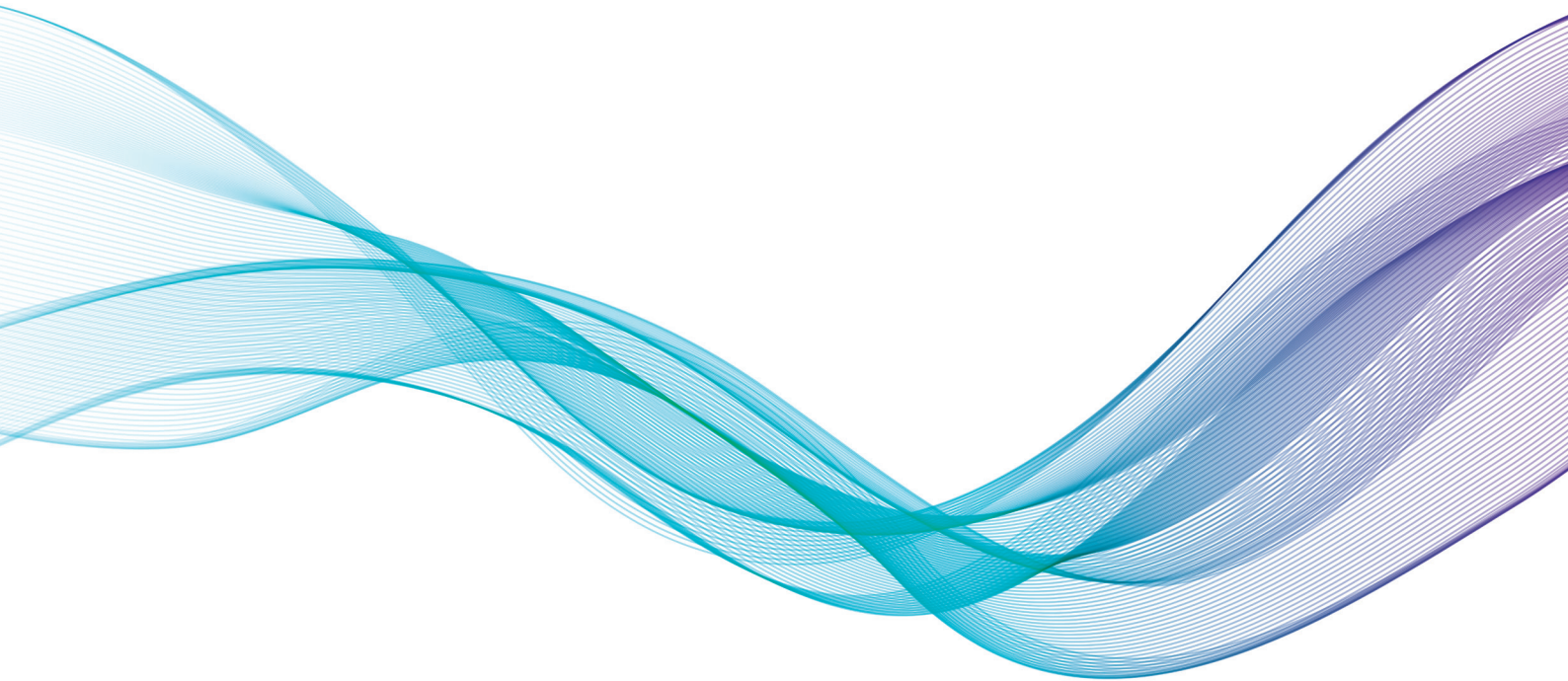
Implementation Date

Decide upon a date from which the policy will apply.

Monitoring the implementation of the policy

The implementation of the policy should be monitored. It is important that the policy states who will do what and when to confirm that the actions/measures set down under the policy are being implemented.

Appendices



APPENDIX 1: TEMPLATE FOR RSE POLICY (CATHOLIC SCHOOL)

Contextual Information

Name of school, address, phone number
Date of policy (This refers to the ratification date)
School philosophy/mission statement/ethos

Rationale for RSE in Your School

A Catholic school's RSE policy and programme goes on to clearly demonstrate how the approach to RSE is connected to the Church's understanding of RSE. A Christian anthropology of the person roots a Catholic school's RSE policy. Significant space within the school's RSE policy should be given to this articulation.

Policy Formation & Consultation Process

The next section of the school's policy should outline how the policy was developed, who was involved in the policy development, how it will be shared and how it will be reviewed.

If this is a process for a redeveloped policy, specific information should be provided here in terms of how the current policy was reviewed and current provision for RSE in the school was audited.

Roles and Responsibilities

There are various roles and responsibilities associated with RSE provision. The individuals and groups/partners listed in this document in Section B outline the particular roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the formulation and implementation of the school's RSE policy. It is helpful to include a list such as this in the school's policy and to show how these entities and individuals were consulted and engaged with as part of the development, dissemination and review of the school's RSE policy. It is also helpful as part of the Catholic School's RSE policy to list the responsibilities of each individual or group in terms of the delivery of RSE.

Aims, Objectives and Skills of School's RSE Programme

A school's RSE policy then seeks to provide specific information under the following headings:

- aims of RSE
- associated objectives
- skills promoted

Each of these relate to the entirety of the programme to be offered. Specific aims and objectives will be relevant for each year of the RSE programme from first year to sixth year.



Methodology, Programme Content, Teaching & Learning Approaches and Suggested Materials

In this section of the school's RSE policy, links to the school's other policies and other subject areas are made. In addition, the specific approach to the Catholic school's RSE programme is outlined including what content is covered at each stage. A school's RSE policy should clearly outline how the school's aims and objectives for RSE will be delivered. Specific attention should be paid to inclusive teaching and learning practices.

RSE and Special Education Needs

Schools must ensure that young people with SEN in mainstream schools have appropriate, accessible and relevant RSE. Your school's RSE policy should reflect this consideration.

Specific/Sensitive Issues

To ensure clarity in this area, the school's RSE policy development should provide an opportunity for the school to work through how it will engage with specific/sensitive issues. The important issue of how student's questions in sensitive areas are to be answered should also be covered in this section.

Child Safeguarding Information

This section outlines some important Child Safeguarding information.

Practical Issues

This section outlines some practical issues that should be addressed in a Catholic school's policy and its programmes for RSE.

Staff Development and Training

A school's RSE policy should outline how staff development and training will be supported.

Resources and Outside Agencies

This section provides details around the school's policies in relation to resources to be used and in relation to the use of outside agencies in support of the school's RSE programme.

Monitoring and Evaluation

In line with other school policies, the RSE policy will be reviewed and updated on a cycle. A school should always provide in its RSE policy a date by which the policy will be reviewed. In addition, the policy should outline how programme content and other components of the RSE programme will be monitored and evaluated and by whom.

Ratification and Communication

When the finalised draft policy has been ratified by the Board of Management (Step 4 of the DES RSE Policy Guidelines), it becomes the school's agreed RSE policy. It should then be circulated within the school community. Your policy should state when the Board of Management officially ratified the policy. It should also state what steps will be taken to communicate the ratified policy to members of the school community and to new applicants on enrolment.

APPENDIX 2: WIDER LEGAL AND CURRICULAR CONTEXT

A child's right to Social, Personal and Health Education was enshrined in law in the Education Act, 1998. Section 9 requires that every school shall use its available resources to promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and to provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents and having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school.

In 1996, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) provided an Interim Curriculum and Guidelines for RSE as an aspect of Social, Personal and Health Education for both primary and post-primary schools. This key document emphasises, in particular, the importance of engagement with parents, a whole-school approach to RSE and the importance of situating RSE within the context of a school's overall SPHE programme.

RSE is understood as one part of SPHE. The aims for SPHE are:

1. To enable students to develop skills for self-fulfilment and living in communities
2. To promote self-esteem and self-confidence
3. To enable the students to develop a framework for responsible decision-making
4. To provide opportunities for reflection and discussion
5. To promote physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing (www.pdst.ie)

A school's RSE policy attends to this reality; to the fact that RSE is part of SPHE with the above aims at the core of all the work done.

Following the publication of the Interim Curriculum and Guidelines for RSE (1996) resource materials for primary and post-primary were developed under the guidance of the RSE Training Support Service for School to assist teachers in implementing an RSE programme in schools, in accordance with school policy, ethos and needs within a school.



In 2000, the Junior Cycle SPHE Curriculum Framework was introduced. It sets out the aims and learning outcomes for teaching and learning, structured around ten modules. These can be approached with the flexibility to meet students' needs. They included: belonging and integrating; self-management: a sense of purpose; communication skills; physical health; friendship; relationships and sexuality; emotional health; influences and decisions; substance use; personal safety.

Principals and teachers are aware that since 2003, the provision of seventy hours per annum of SPHE is mandatory for all junior cycle students and it is required that RSE is taught as an integral component of SPHE. More recently, and in line with the Framework of Junior Cycle (2015), a SPHE Short Course (2015) was developed by the NCCA. RSE is integrated across a number of strands and learning outcomes within this course. The SPHE Short Course is built around four key strands: Who am I?; Minding myself and Others; Team up; My Mental Health.

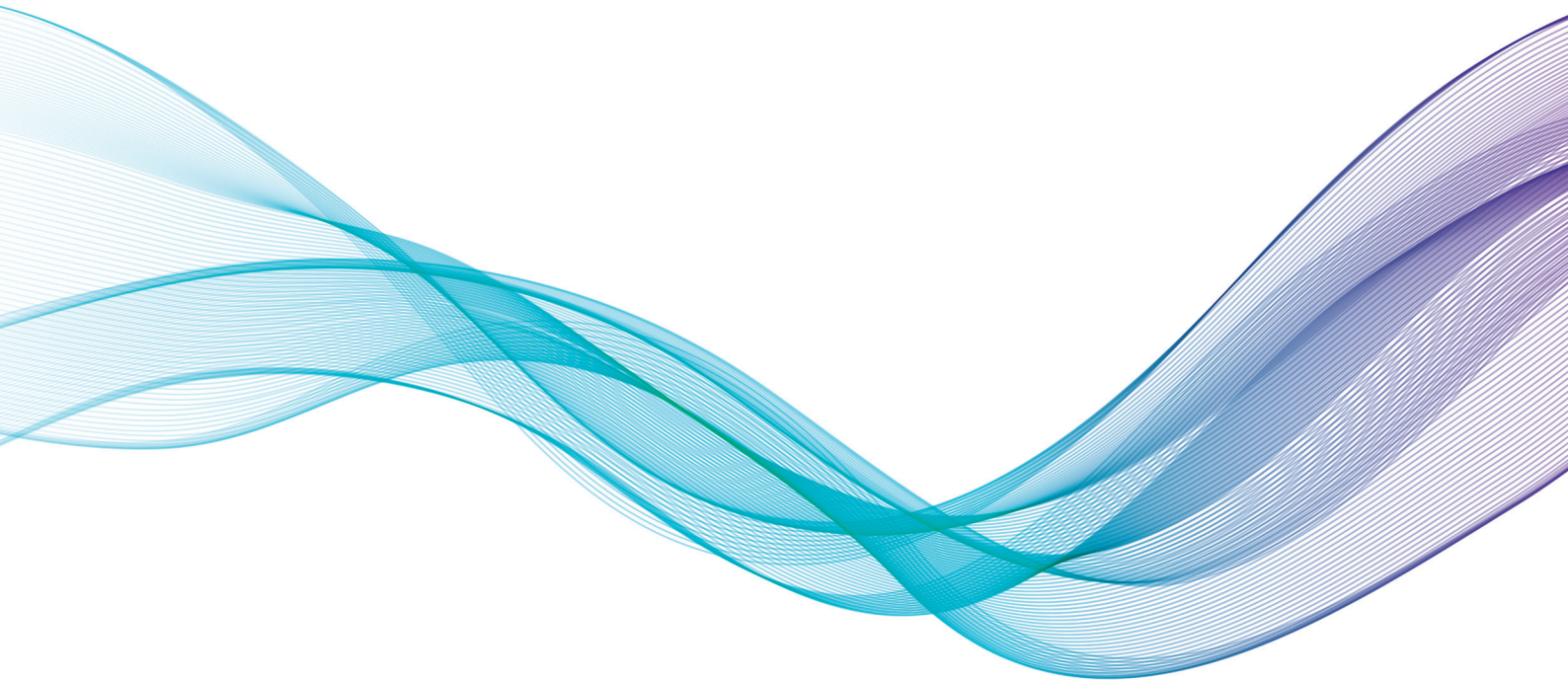
Within the context of developing a junior cycle wellbeing programme, schools now have scope to allocate additional time to SPHE/RSE within the 400-hour programme. In junior cycle, six indicators— Active, Responsible, Connected, Resilient, Respected and Aware — have been identified as central to students' wellbeing. Learning in SPHE, and RSE as part of SPHE provides learning opportunities designed to enhance each of these indicators thereby contributing significantly to the school's wellbeing programme in junior cycle.

In line with Department of Education Circulars outlining teaching, learning and planning requirements for the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle, schools will plan for all aspects of their junior cycle programme, and for the subjects within it, attending to the learning needs and interests of their students, and the characteristic spirit of their school (Circular Letter 0024/2016 and subsequent relevant circular letters). Schools should also note that Circular 76/2020 states that 'in planning their wellbeing programme, schools should note that from September 2021 onwards, the use of the Junior Certificate syllabuses for SPHE and CSPE should be discontinued'. The circular further outlines four options (or a combination of these) that schools can employ in terms of their provision for SPHE as part of wellbeing at junior cycle.

At senior cycle, schools are required to teach RSE even in the absence of a timetabled SPHE class. A Senior Cycle SPHE Curriculum Framework was published by the NCCA (2011) to support planning for SPHE at this level. The five areas of learning for senior cycle in SPHE are: Mental Health; Gender Studies; Substance Use; Relationships and Sexuality; Physical Activity and Nutrition.

Schools will be aware that the NCCA has recently undertaken a review of RSE in primary and post-primary schools. The review began in June 2018. The review included an examination of the RSE curriculum, the approach to teaching and learning, supports needed, and ways to improve the experience of RSE for students. The Council for Education of the Irish Episcopal Conference and, at post-primary level, the AMCSS/JMB have fed into and been involved in this review process as have many other groups and individuals. The work of the NCCA is ongoing in this area.

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