

# **RELATIONSHIP SEXUALITY EDUCATION POLICY**

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## **1. Title of Policy**

Grange Community College Relationship Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy.

## **2. Scope**

This policy applies to all students, teachers and parents. It applies during and after school time and on school trips or within the framework of any activities that may be organised by the school.

## **3. Relationship to schools Mission Statement**

Within the school framework, schools aim to provide structured opportunities whereby students can acquire knowledge and understanding about human relationships and sexuality through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours with a moral, social and spiritual framework. At post primary level this means building on the primary schools programme and providing young people with information and skills to critically evaluate a wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values offered today and so make positive, responsible choices about themselves and the way they live their lives.

Grange Community College is a co-educational school that caters for approximately 150 students, the school promotes principles such as respect, and individuality and encourages pupils to consider and examine different viewpoints regarding morality. In keeping with the white paper on education it promotes the holistic development of the individual. Within Grange a code of behaviour has been published to illustrate how the ethos of the school operates on a daily basis. The school operates successfully when all involved in school life show maximum courtesy and respect to others, people within the school setting must respect the dignity of others and also have the right to have their own dignity respected.

## **4. Rationale**

“Schools have a responsibility under Section 9 (c) of the Education Act 1998 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”.

It is a requirement of all schools to have an RSE policy, given that relationships and sexuality are a vital part of every individual’s life and in a number of subjects throughout the curriculum, these areas are discussed, and reflected upon.

Access to Sexual Health Education is an important right for students under the terms of the European Social Charter (see article 11.2).

## **5. Policy Content**

### **5.1 Definition of RSE**

Relationships sexuality education is a life long process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. Such education is delivered consciously and unconsciously by parents, teachers, peers, the media and other influential adults in an adolescent's life.

### **5.2 Education concerning RSE**

In schools RSE will be taught mainly through the subject of SPHE but elements of it will be covered in other subject areas such as Biology, Home Economics, Religious Education, Guidance and Counselling, Science, CSPE.

Schools are required to teach RSE as an integral component of Junior Cycle SPHE up to third year, as outlined in the Junior Cycle SPHE Curriculum frame work, produced by the national council for curriculum and assessment (NCCA 2000). Schools are also required to teach Senior cycle RSE even in the absence of a timetabled SPHE class.

Parents are the primary educators of their children and their role in supporting the RSE policy within schools is very important. Parents will be made aware of how the RSE programme operates within Grange Community College and will have access to all policies concerning RSE. Parents have a right to withdraw students from RSE Activities at anytime, and a request for withdrawal must be made through the Principal/SPHE co-ordinator (In Line with Section 30 (e) of the Education Act 1998).

The function of Grange Community College is to provide general education about sexual matters and issues concerning relationships. The school does not offer specific or individual support and where appropriate referrals will be made if such support is required. Any advice given by the school will be non-directive and will be age appropriate.

## **6. Aims and Objectives of the RSE Programme**

RSE should enable students to:

- Help young people understand and develop friendships and relationships
- Promote an understanding of sexuality
- Promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's own relationship with others
- Promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction
- Enable young people to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework

- Acquire the understanding and skills necessary to form healthy friendships and relationships
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, and the skills for building and maintaining self esteem
- Become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change especially during adolescence and to develop respect for difference between individuals
- Understand human physiology with particular reference to the reproductive cycle, human fertility and sexually transmitted diseases
- Understand sexual development and identity and explore aspects of sexuality including sex roles, stereotyping, gender issues and cultural influences on sexuality
- Value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood
- Develop strategies for decisions and actions consistent with personal moral integrity and respectful of the rights and dignity of others
- Develop skills for coping with peer pressure, conflict and threats to personal safety

**7. Pupil Access to information regarding relationships and sexuality and procedures regarding issues of concern**

Within Grange Community College we do not promote any 'one particular lifestyle' as the only acceptable way for the community as a whole, be it moral, sexual or spiritual. Therefore it is inevitable that topics will be discussed during the RSE programme that will affect this, e.g. homosexuality, contraception. Exploring these issues can provide opportunities to correct false ideas, and assumptions and address prejudice. Discussion will be age appropriate to pupils and will be discussed in an open manner, looking at all sides of the issues in a non-directive way.

All teachers involved in this work are not required to be 'experts' on the issues concerned. However, they do require a sensitivity to the needs of the group and an ability to deal with questions openly and honestly. The same skills that are used in general teaching also apply to the RSE programme and therefore the school will facilitate teachers to obtain ongoing in-service in this area where possible.

Within certain classes explicit topics are covered in relation to relationships and sexuality and students may ask questions about matters concerning sexuality. It is the responsibility of the teacher at that time to answer such questions in an appropriate way that is in keeping with the school Ethos and Values. At all times the values and opinions of all involved in school life must be valued and respected even if at times they differ from that of the ethos of the school.

When preparing classes and deciding on topics to be discussed in class the teacher will always consider the age and readiness of the students, he/she will consult the RSE

Curriculum guidelines and will also examine the ethos of the school and the RSE policy. Within the science curriculum the biological aspects of sexual reproduction will primarily be dealt with.

In some cases Teachers may choose to say that the question is not appropriate to deal with at that time, if a teacher becomes concerned with a subject matter that has arisen out of a class, then he/she should seek advice from the Principal/SPHE Co-ordinator.

It is school policy that within circumstances where a pupil is considered to be at risk of any type of abuse or in breach of law that this must be referred immediately to the Designated Liaison Person/Principal. The Designated Liaison Person/Principal will then decide on appropriate action, following Child Protection Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools (DES 2004).

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in all cases for students and therefore no one within the school setting should promise absolute confidentiality, pupils must be made aware that any discussions or incidents may be conveyed to the principal and possibly to the parents, if it is felt that the student is at risk and that such action would be in the best interests of the pupil.

Teachers must indicate clearly to the pupil when the content of a conversation cannot be kept confidential and the pupil may then decide whether to proceed or not.

## **8. Outside Speakers and Workshops**

Visitors to the school can enhance the quality of the RSE programme as long as they are used in addition to and not instead of the planned programme of RSE. Visitors will be made aware of the RSE policy and also the ethos of the school as this will affect the manner in which it is delivered to the RSE Programme. Teachers of RSE programme will liaise about the suitability of visitors and will consider the following

- The content of the programme and the level of explicit content for the year group involved
- Whether or not the visitor will be accompanied by a teaching staff member, some speakers request this while others do not
- How the visitor will be prepared for the visit
- What information will he/she require
- How will the visit be built upon and followed up

Parents will be informed when talks and workshops are being held and permission will be sought where necessary. Parents have a right to withdraw students from talks or workshops concerning RSE.

## **9. Pastoral Care/Counselling**

With regard to the RSE programme, the school will promote the other supports that are available i.e. Guidance Counsellors, Chaplain, HSCL. All parties will work together in promoting better health education for young people. All students, staff and parents can avail of this support.

## **10. Staff and Parent Training Resources**

Given the sensitivity of some aspects of RSE, schools are advised to avail of the RSE and SPHE training offered through the SPHE support Service based in Marino Institute. (Circular 0037/2010 DES article 3.4)

Staff will be made aware of any training and in-service days that may be provided in relation to the subject of RSE and where possible will be facilitated to attend these days.

The school will purchase appropriate RSE teaching materials which have been identified as being useful for teaching of RSE and which have been approved by the principal and other national bodies that deal with issues around relationship, sexuality education.

Information will be provided to parents/guardians at parent teacher meetings and where necessary talks and information meetings will be organised at certain times during the school year.

## **11. Resources**

Teaching resources for SPHE for junior and senior cycle were developed in 1998/1999 and are available from the website [www.sphe.ie](http://www.sphe.ie)

A new resource to support the teaching of RSE at senior cycle-TRUST (talking relationships, understanding sexuality teaching) is also available to teachers who attend Senior cycle RSE training.

### **Other resources include**

- Class sets of SPHE books for each year.
- Packs and information provided by the HSE, for schools on the subject of RSE.
- SPHE support programme.
- Agencies such as Pact, Accord, Response, Crisis Pregnancy Agency.
- The local health clinic, nurses and doctors.
- Trinity Youth Services.
- Saint Benedict's family centre.
- Child Protection Guidelines. (Department of Education and Science 2004).

## **12. Monitoring Review and Evaluation**

The RSE programme will be monitored and evaluated on a continuous basis. This will be done through pupil feedback, staff reviews and parental feedback. The responsibility for policy review rests with the Principal and the Board of Management of Grange Community College and will be carried out within the framework of Whole School Planning.

The policy will be updated in the context of changing legislation, developments in education programmes, and feedback from staff, students, and parents/guardians.

## **13. Ratification and Communication**

After ratification, this policy will be made available to all staff. It will be published on the schools website and parents will be informed that they can find the policy on the webpage.

Signed:

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On behalf of Board of Management