

Policy for Relationships and Sexuality (RSE) in SPHE

Introduction

This RSE policy is a written statement of the aims of the RSE programme, the relationship of RSE to SPHE, and the organisation and management of RSE within the school.

Scope

This policy applies to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality. Discussion about relationships and sexuality also takes place in classes other than SPHE/RSE. This policy will apply to school staff, students, Board of Management, parents/guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators.

Rationale

Sexuality is a key element of healthy social and personal development. The Education Act, 1998, requires that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them. Relationships and sexuality education (RSE) is important for young people at this stage of their lives. They are exposed to a lot of information about relationships and sex from informal sources, the media and online. RSE provides the context within which young people can learn about important physical, social, emotional and moral issues around relationships, sexual health, sexuality and gender identity, including where to get reliable information from trusted sources. Section 4 of the Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools requires schools to have an agreed policy for RSE and a suitable RSE programme in place for all students at both junior and senior cycle. At junior cycle, the RSE programme is part of SPHE.

Links to ethos

Newpark aspires to value equally all the students in its care. High among the values it seeks to promote are:

- Respect and tolerance of self and others
- An appreciation of diversity
- A sense of justice
- Social responsibility
- An awareness of wider communities

Aims of RSE

- RSE is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values, about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy
- The RSE programmes are conducted in a spirit of confidentiality, whilst acknowledging the limits of confidentiality and the procedures for handling disclosures as outlined in Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2011
- Sexuality includes all aspects of the human person that relate to being male or female and is subject to change and development through life. Sexuality and gender identity are part of what it means to be human and have biological, psychological, cultural, social and spiritual dimensions. A holistic understanding of sexuality will enhance personal relationships and will have implications for the student, family and ultimately for society
- To help students develop healthy friendships and relationships

Course Guidelines

The curriculum for SPHE/RSE in the junior cycle is laid out in the four strands of SPHE and the related Statements of Learning. The four strands are:

Strand 1: Who Am I

Strand 2: Minding Myself and Others

Strand 3: Team Up

Strand 4: My Mental Health

The six indicators of learning are also central to the schools SPHE/RSE programme.

The first, second and third year subject plans can be viewed in the SPHE department folder, OneDrive or obtained from SPHE teachers.

In senior cycle students do a timetabled RSE module in each year. In 4th year they do an 8-week module and in 5th and 6th year it is done as part of the Lifeskills programme.

Staff training

Staff training is ongoing in the form of PDST training. Teachers assigned to SPHE and RSE must have an understanding of, and a familiarity with, the methodologies associated with education in this area and have PDST training in RSE. RSE should not be assigned to teachers without consultation. Those involved in the RSE programme in a school will need continuing support from their colleagues, from the Principal and from the Board of Management, and from a range of other agencies that are in a position to offer in-career support.

Inclusion of parents/guardians

The SPHE co-ordinator sends a letter out to parents/guardians of first to third year students each academic year informing them of the RSE programme and summarising the topics that will be covered. The letter is sent via email. Parents of senior cycle students can get the RSE programme off the RSE teacher. Parents/guardians may wish to remove their son/daughter from the RSE module; the Education Act, 1998 (section 30, subsection (2) (e)) provides that a student is not required to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parent or, in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student. Hence, parents have a right to opt their child out of the sensitive issues of RSE if they wish to do so.

Review date 2022

Jan 2020

Chairperson, BOM _____ Date _____

Secretary, BOM _____ Date _____