



**St Kieran's College
Secondary School
Kilkenny**

**RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION
(RSE) POLICY**

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION POLICY STATEMENT

St Kieran's College

With a proud tradition as the oldest Catholic all-boys voluntary secondary school in Ireland St Kieran's College is the diocesan school of Ossory and is under the patronage of the Bishop of Ossory. The College was founded in 1782, after the passing of the Relief Act and the college's motto "Hiems Transit" or "Winter Has Passed" is a reference to the repeal of the penal laws of the time.

St Kieran's College Mission Statement

St Kieran's College, as Ireland's oldest all-boys Catholic Secondary School, continues its founding aim of the pursuit of real excellence in education and formation, in the light of the Gospel, so as to allow all our students to realise the fullness of their potential.

Academically, spiritually, physically and emotionally our students are encouraged to strive for all that is possible in the relentless pursuit of perfecting their individual gifts and talents.

In so doing they bring to life the joy intended by our motto, "Hiems Transiit", for themselves, those they love and the community where they will live, serve and lead.

The RSE programme aims to enhance the development of the school's mission through its content and structure.

Our School Philosophy

The school encourages its students to consider and assess different viewpoints in relation to issues of morality. The experience gained through the working out of this policy and through respecting the needs of minority groups and individuals enriches the whole life of the school.

The school gives its students the opportunity to explore the humanities, sciences, arts, business studies and technical subject. In addition it provides religious, moral and physical education in order to meet its founding objectives of supporting students in achieving their full academic potential and preparing them for participation in civic society and working life.

A code of conduct has been published after consultation with parents, staff and students and the following excerpts illustrate how the ethos of the school operates on a daily basis:

Discipline is founded on the principles of respect for people, environment, property and safety. All rules follow from these basic principles which are intended to create and maintain a happy and stable community.

The aims of the Code of Behaviour are:

- *To develop a moral framework within which initiative, responsibility and sound relationships can flourish.*
- *To enable students to develop a sense of self worth and a respect and tolerance for others*
- *To produce an environment in which students feel safe, secure, valued and respected.*

Rationale for a Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

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

- The Education Act 1998 requires that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them, in consultation with them, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school.
- 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. At Senior Cycle (including TY), the RSE programme is incorporated into Religious Education class time. It is taught as a separate and distinct module from Religious Education.

- The Children First Act, 2017 requires schools to have an agreed policy to raise awareness of child abuse and neglect. This is covered in RSE provision.
- Circulars M4/95, M20/96, M11/03, M27/2008 and 0037/2010 require schools to develop a Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) policy and programme, and to implement them for all students from First Year to Sixth Year.
- The effectiveness of an RSE programme is dependent on a collaborative policy process involving teachers, parents / guardians, members of the Board of Management and students.

Scope

The policy will apply 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; it is therefore important that all teachers are familiar with the RSE policy. Furthermore, the policy will apply to school staff, students, board of management, parents / guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators.

Definition of Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE)

RSE is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge, understanding and skills which enable us to develop attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. Sexuality is a key element of healthy social and personal development in all our lives, but particularly important in the life of the adolescent.

As a Catholic school, we wish to support parents/guardians in this important aspect of their child's education and preparation for life. In keeping with our mission, therefore we believe we have a complimentary role in preparing young people for their place in society.

In the school setting it is an integral part of general educational provision, which seeks to promote the overall development of the person which includes the integration of sexuality into personal understanding, growth and development.

The Relationship of RSE to SPHE

Relationships and Sexuality Education is a developmental process through experiential learning in which students are helped to cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others especially in the area of relationships and sexuality. In St Kieran's College we aim to give students information and skills to evaluate the wide range of information, opinion, attitudes and values offered today, in order that they will make positive, responsible choices about themselves and the way they live their lives. The programme provides opportunities to discuss issues relating to relationships and sexuality in ways that help them to think and to act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

It forms part of the SPHE programme and as such it promotes a healthy attitude to sexuality in themselves and in others. The SPHE programme includes a wide range of topics such as self-esteem, self-identity, assertiveness, motivation, effective communication, decision-making skills, bullying, healthy eating, hygiene and safety. All of these contribute to the effectiveness of the RSE programme.

The Aims of our Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme

The RSE programme aims to give students the skills and competencies to learn about themselves and others to make informed decisions about their health and social relationships. Ultimately, St Kieran's College envisions that the RSE programme will enable students to participate in society as responsible adults who make decisions which respect the dignity of others and of themselves.

Relationships and Sexuality Education which is located in the overall framework of SPHE has as its specific aims:

1. To help young people understand and develop friendships and relationships.
2. To promote an understanding of sexuality.
3. To promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's own relationship with others.
4. To educate the students to have a clear understanding of the male and female reproductive systems.

5. To enable the students to develop attitudes and values toward their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework.

It is acknowledged that in a course of limited duration and contact time these aims are aspirational.

What is Provided in the Programme

In the broadest sense RSE is a whole school responsibility and all members of the school community share responsibility for modelling relationships that are characterised by justice and respect. At a more formal level, RSE is dealt with in the context of certain subjects; Science, Biology, Guidance Counselling, P.E., CSPE, Religious Education and population demographic / social studies within the Geography syllabus. However, to ensure an adequate response to the needs of all students, specific provision for RSE is made within the Social, Personal and Health Education programme, to which one class period is apportioned each week for junior cycle students. During Transition Year, six separate class periods are allocated to RSE during the SPHE programme. At Senior cycle, one class period per week for six weeks is timetabled for RSE in both fifth and sixth year. The content of RSE at post primary level is described under three themes:

1. **Human Growth and Development:** This theme consists of an age appropriate understanding of the biology and psychology of the human life cycle. This is accompanied by a rationale for responsible behaviour in relationships and sexuality.
2. **Human Sexuality:** Sexuality is an integral part of the human personality and has biological, psychological, cultural, social and spiritual dimensions. The theme offers opportunities to develop a holistic understanding of sexuality as contributing to the development of personal well being, enhancing personal and family relationships and ultimately contributing to the well being of society.
3. **Human Relationships:** This theme focuses on the importance of relationships for health and well-being. It examines how one relates to self and others, stressing the importance of self-esteem as a basis for worthwhile friendships and relationships. It addresses issues such as communication, influence, intimacy, sexual attraction and sexual expression in relationships consistent with personal and moral integrity. These themes are neither sequential nor discrete; they merge and overlap with each other. Teaching strategies should reflect this relationship.

See Appendix 1 for a full list of the topics covered within each of the three above themes.

Timetable Provision

The RSE programme as taught in our school is the programme laid out by the NCCA. The content is delivered in six class periods per year as follows:

- First, Second and Third year students have RSE as an integral part of the SPHE programme which is timetabled for one class period per week for six weeks.
- Transition Year, Fifth and Sixth Year students have RSE as a separate and distinct module from Religious Education timetabled during the Religious Education class for one class period per week for six weeks.

Whole School Provision of RSE (Holistic Approach)

- The school encourages parents / guardians to ensure that students participate in this programme as a way of supporting parents as the primary educators of their children.
- Religious Education programme which discusses relationships, adolescence, responsibility, values, peer pressure, conflict and decision-making.
- Student centred pastoral care structure supports include Year Heads, Class Tutors, guidance and Counselling, Pastoral Care Team, Learning Support, Student Council, Principal and Deputy Principals.
- The Pastoral Care Team are fully aware of the circumstances which may make children more vulnerable to harm. These include Parent/Carer factors, child factors, community factors, environment factors and poor motivation of parents/guardians to engage.
- Possibility of one-to-one conversations with the school Guidance Counsellors and Chaplain.
- Anti-bullying strategy and programme of prevention emphasising respect for the rights and dignity of others.
- Education of human physiology and human reproduction – Science and Biology classes.
- Visits by speakers on topics such as drugs and alcohol misuse and hygiene and sexual health.

- Awareness of human rights through Social Justice Programmes and fundraising projects for various charities.

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School

All education partners are consulted before ratifying school policy and programmes, i.e. staff, Board of Management, parents / guardians, and students through The Student Council.

Arrangements for the teaching programme and the deployment of staff will be made by the Principal

- 1. Informing and Involving Parents:** Informing and involving parents will take place with the understanding that parents are the primary educators of their children and their role in this is seen by the school as very important. Relevant sections of the RSE policy will be included in the school's communications with the parents of Junior Cycle pupils and with the parents of Leaving Certificate pupils as appropriate with regard to outside speakers. Information will also be shared via the Parents' Association and through the parent representation on the Board of Management. All views expressed by parents will be taken into account when reviewing the policy.

It is our hope that all students will avail of the RSE programme provided by the school. We understand however that at times parents may wish to withdraw their sons from particular aspects of the RSE programme because of perceived conflict with their own values and beliefs; the school respects this parental right but will engage with parents with a view to resolving any perceived difficulties. Parents / guardians are not obliged to give a reason for withdrawal but we respectfully ask for one so that we might help resolve misunderstandings. If students are withdrawn arrangements will be made where possible between parents and management for their care while the programme is in progress.

See Appendix 2 for procedures dealing with requests for withdrawal from RSE.

- 2. 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 will be respected unless a mandated person becomes aware that a child is at risk, in which case the appropriate action will be taken. It is school policy that in circumstances where a student is considered at some risk of any type of abuse or in breach of the law, the mandated person (eg class teacher) must refer this immediately to the Principal as the Designated Liaison Person. The mandated person, in consultation with the DLP should always inform Tusla if they have reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected. Mandated persons must act in accordance with Child Protection Procedures outlined in the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017 which came about arising from the enactment of the Children First Act 2015. The following is also school policy:

- Mandated persons must not promise absolute confidentiality;
- Students must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the Principal and possibly to parents if the Principal and/or the mandated person decides that it is in the best interests of the student to notify parents;
- Mandated persons must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidentiality can be maintained having heard the information;
- Mandated persons must indicate clearly to students when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential – the student can then decide whether to proceed or not.

See Appendix 3 for an extract from the relevant section of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017 P 24.*

- 3. Sexual Abuse:** It should be remembered that sexual activity involving a young person may be sexual abuse even if the young person concerned does not themselves recognise it as abusive. A full list of relevant offences the child which are considered sexual abuse - See Appendix 4.
- 4. Explicit Questions:** It may not be appropriate to deal with some explicit questions in class. Teachers may choose to say that it is not appropriate to deal with that question at this time. If a teacher

becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised he / she should seek advice from the SPHE co-ordinator or the Principal. When deciding whether or not to answer questions the teacher should consider the age and readiness of the students, the RSE programme content, the ethos of the school and the RSE policy.

- 5. Visiting Speakers:** It is school policy that most of the RSE programme is best discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by the students. However visitors can enhance the quality of the provision as long as they are used in addition to, not instead of, a planned programme of RSE.

In keeping with *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*, all visiting speakers and facilitators to the school with unsupervised access to students will have Garda clearance. The SPHE co-ordinator will provide the visitor, well in advance of the visit with a copy of the RSE policy. The organiser makes the visitor aware of the ethos of the school and the manner of delivery of the RSE programme. Visiting speakers will be made aware of the school's ethos and will agree to work within those parameters. Visitors should be given advance notice of the composition of the class and an idea of how their contribution fits into the scheme of work. In order to inform the visitor of the precise requirements of a group and to make better use of the time of the visitor it is advisable for the group to draw up questions in advance and these should be forwarded to the visitor. This will involve the students in the visit and will make the experience more relevant for them – it also facilitates planning.

- 6. Sensitive Issues:** From time to time some issues within the RSE programme may present as particularly sensitive for some students. Every effort will be made by staff to become aware of the profile of the group in advance of the delivery of the programme and out Guidance and Counselling services or external counselling will be offered where necessary.
- 7. LGBTQ+:** Teachers do not promote any one lifestyle as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that LGBTQ+ will be discussed during a programme of sex education. One of the many advantages of exploring issues concerning LGBTQ+ is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions and address prejudice. Discussion of LGBTQ+ should be appropriate to the age of students and the language used by teachers should respect all sexualities.
- 8. Special Needs:** Students with special needs may need more help than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up, they may also need more help in learning what sorts of behaviour are and are not acceptable, and in being warned and prepared against abuse by others.
- 9. The Division between Biological and Non-Biological Aspects of Sex Education:** The school policy is that the Science Department deals primarily with the biological aspects of reproduction but within the teaching of RSE biological terms will be used and there may be a cross-over of content within both areas. This may provide an opportunity for cross-curricular co-operation and team teaching.
- 10. Consult Regularly with Students and the RSE team to ensure that the teaching is relevant to the students RSE needs.** The SPHE and RE co-ordinators have regular conversations to ensure that students have adequate and relevant RSE education incorporated into each school year.

Ongoing Support, Development and Review

Training: All teachers involved in this work do not necessarily have to be 'experts' on the issues concerned. However, they do require sensitivity to the needs of the group, an ability to deal with questions openly / honestly and a preparedness to refer to more expert advice if necessary. The skills acquired in general teaching apply also to health education. Furthermore, many teachers may have training in related areas such as counselling. Some teachers have expert training in the specific areas of health, relationships and sexuality education and will be encouraged to train other teachers.

The school will facilitate teachers to obtain expert training in this field, bearing in mind the overall budgetary framework and the need for the ongoing teaching and learning programme of the school to continue with as little disturbance as possible. It is envisaged that all senior cycle RE teachers will have

completed an RSE Training course. On completion, each teacher receives an individual RSE Trust pack with a wide variety of resources.

Resources: The school will purchase appropriate RSE teaching materials which have been identified by staff as useful and which have been approved by the Principal, within the normal budgetary framework and as general school resources allow.

Monitoring, Evaluating and Reviewing the RSE programme

The policy will be reviewed and evaluated at certain pre-determined times under the direction of the Board of Management. Ongoing review and evaluation will take cognisance of changing information, guidelines, legislation and feedback from parents / guardians, students, teachers and others. The SPHE and RE co-ordinators will have the role of monitoring aspects of the policy. The policy will be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation and within the framework of school planning.

To review and evaluate the policy, it will be necessary to gauge the impact and effectiveness of the policy by examining the extent to which:

- RSE is being successfully taught through SPHE for all students and Senior Cycle RE;
- Where SPHE may not be timetabled, e.g. at Senior Cycle, that these students are receiving RSE distinctly during Religious Education times;
- Resource materials are available to teachers;
- Appropriate in-service for teachers is available and relevant teachers are availing of it;
- Staff are aware of the policy;
- Students are aware of the policy;
- Parents / guardians are aware of the policy;
- Feedback is received from teachers, other school staff, students, parents / guardians, members of Board of Management and Trustees.

Targets for RSE in St Kieran's (as recommended in NCCA Review Process).

- All teachers to be RSE trained.
- All teachers to receive SPHE training.
- Reduced class numbers at senior cycle where possible.

Ratified by the Board of Management on:

Date: _____

Chairperson: _____ **Principal:** _____

Appendix 1

RSE Topics for Junior Cycle

MODULE	YEAR ONE – TOPIC	YEAR TWO –TOPIC	YEAR THREE - TOPIC
Relationships and Sexuality	Week One Me as unique and different - LO 3.1	Week One From conception to birth Stages of Pregnancy - LO 3.6	Week One Body Image - LO 1.2
Relationships and Sexuality	Week Two Puberty - LO 1.3	Week Two Recognising and expressing feelings and emotions - LO 4.1	Week Two Sexual Health - LO 3.7
Relationships and Sexuality	Week Three Changes at Adolescence - LO 1.4	Week Three Peer pressure and other influences - LO 3.2	Week Three Relationships –what’s important - LO 3.3
Relationships and Sexuality	Week Four The Reproductive System/ conception - LO 3.6	Week Four Managing Relationships - LO 3.1	Week Four Rights - LO 1.8, 1.9
Relationships and Sexuality	Week Five Gender Identity - LO 1.4, 3.9	Week Five Making responsible decisions - LO 3.8	Week Five Conflict - LO 2.9
Relationships and Sexuality	Week Six Respecting myself and others/ A problem shared - LO 1.9	Week Six Health and Personal Safety - LO 3.8	Week Six Media Influence - LO 3.10, 3.11

Appendix 1

RSE Topics for Senior Cycle

MODULE	YEAR FOUR – TOPIC	YEAR FIVE –TOPIC	YEAR SIX - TOPIC
Relationships and Sexuality	Week One Communication / Assertive Communication	Week One Contraception	Week One Sexual Harassment
Relationships and Sexuality	Week Two Dealing with Feelings / Keeping Your Cool	Week Two More than you bargained for	Week Two Sexual Harassment
Relationships and Sexuality	Week Three Living with Loss	Week Three Implications of sexual activity	Week Three When Sexual Harassment becomes a Reality
Relationships and Sexuality	Week Four Human Reproduction	Week Four Implications of sexual activity	Week Four When Sexual Harassment becomes a Reality
Relationships and Sexuality	Week Five Human Sexuality	Week Five HIV Awareness	Week Five Without Consent
Relationships and Sexuality	Week Six Planning for the Future	Week Six Accepting Sexual Orientations	Week Six Sexual Abuse

APPENDIX 2

If a request for withdrawal from the RSE programme is made by a parent:

- 1.** We discuss the nature of the concerns with the student's parent and if appropriate attempts to reassure them (initially such discussion take place at a meeting with the Year Head and RSE Co-ordinator, the Principal may become involved if necessary).
- 2.** We consider whether the programme can be amended or improved in a way that will reassure parents – care is taken not to undermine the integrity of the RSE programme and the entitlement of the other students.
- 3.** We attempt to ensure that where a pupil is withdrawn there is no disruption to other parts of their education.
- 4.** We point out that students who have been withdrawn are vulnerable to teasing – we therefore attempt to cause minimal embarrassment to the student and minimal disruption to the programme.
- 5.** We also point out that students may receive inaccurate information from their peers.
- 6.** We offer the parents access to appropriate information and resources.

APPENDIX 3

Chapter 4: Statutory obligations on Registered Teachers 4.1 Purpose

4.1.1 The Children First Act, 2015 has placed a statutory obligation on specific people to report child protection concerns that are at or above a threshold of harm (as defined in that Act) to Tusla. Such persons are referred to as “mandated persons” under the Act. All teachers who are registered with the Teaching Council are mandated persons under the Children First Act, 2015.

4.1.2 This chapter applies to all registered teachers working in schools, including the DLP and the deputy DLP. It outlines the statutory obligations that now apply to all registered teachers under the Children First Act, 2015.

4.2 Specific responsibilities of registered teachers

4.2.1 In accordance with the best practice (non-statutory) requirement of the Children First National Guidance 2017, these procedures continue the previous requirement that any member of school personnel including a registered teacher who receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected, is still required to report the matter, without delay, to the DLP in the school.

Every registered teacher, as a mandated person, now also has a statutory obligation to make his or her own mandated report to Tusla where the concern about the child is at or above a threshold of harm as defined in the Act. Therefore in addition to reporting his or her concern to the DLP, a registered teacher must also consider whether or not the concern is at or above the defined threshold of harm at which the registered teacher has his or her own statutory obligation under the Children First Act, 2015 to submit a mandated report to Tusla.

Chapter 5 of these procedures requires that the registered teacher shall liaise with the DLP in relation to determining if the concern in question is at or above the defined threshold of harm at which the registered teacher must submit a mandated report. Chapter 5 also requires that the registered teacher shall follow the relevant reporting procedures set out in section 5.2, including, where applicable, those requiring the registered teacher to submit a mandated report jointly with the DLP.
CHILDREN FIRST: NATIONAL GUIDANCE FOR THE PROTECTION AND WELFARE OF CHILDREN (2015-P.30/31) (Published in 2017)

APPENDIX 4

SEXUAL OFFENCES AS SET OUT IN THE CHILDREN'S FIRST ACT 2015

(AMENDED BY SECTION 55 OF THE CRIMINAL LAW ACT 2017)

Schedule 3 of the Children First Act 2015 sets out offences for the purposes of paragraph (a) of the definition of 'sexual abuse' in section 2 as:

1. Rape.
2. Rape under section 4 of the Criminal Law (Rape) (Amendment) Act 1990.
3. Sexual assault.
4. Aggravated sexual assault within the meaning of section 3 of the Criminal Law (Rape) (Amendment) Act 1990.
5. An offence under section 1 of the Punishment of Incest Act 1908 (incest by males).
6. An offence under section 2 of the Punishment of Incest Act 1908 (incest by females of or over 17 years of age).
7. An offence under section 6(1) of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 1993 (soliciting or importuning for purposes of commission of sexual offence).
8. An offence under section 2 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006 (development of child under 15 years of age).
9. An offence under section 3 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006 (development of child under 17 years).
- 9A. An offence under section 3A of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006 (offence by person in authority).
10. An offence under either of the following provisions of the Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998:
 - . (a) section 3 (child trafficking and taking, etc., child for sexual exploitation);
 - . (b) section 4 (allowing child to be used for child pornography);
 - . (c) section 4A (organising etc. child prostitution or production of child pornography);

- . (d) section 5A (participation of child in pornographic performance).
11. An offence under section 5 of the Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008 in so far as it relates to a child who has been trafficked for the purpose of his or her exploitation (soliciting or importuning for purposes of prostitution of trafficked person).
 12. An offence under section 176 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006 (reckless endangerment of children).
 13. An offence under section 249 of the Children Act 2001 (causing or encouraging sexual offence upon a child).
 14. An offence under any of the following provisions of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017:
 - . (a) section 4 (invitation etc. to sexual touching);
 - . (b) section 5 (sexual activity in the presence of child);
 - . (c) section 6 (causing child to watch sexual activity);
 - . (d) section 8 (use of information and communication technology to facilitate sexual exploitation of child).