****

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy** | Ratified by BOM 1st Dec.2015 |
|  Ramsgrange Community School is a welcoming, open and inclusive school. Our aim is to develop each of our students as a whole person by promoting an atmosphere of respect, honesty, and fairness in which all in the school community can achieve their full potential. | **Ramsgrange Community School** |

**Mission Statement**

Ramsgrange Community School is a welcoming, open and inclusive school. Our aim is to develop each of our students as a whole person by promoting an atmosphere of respect, honesty and fairness in which all of the school community can achieve their full potential.

RCS Vision: Respect, Community, Success

**Definition of RSE**

RSE is a developmental process through experiential learning in which pupils participate to help cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships.

**Relationship of RSE to SPHE**

The draft guidelines for RSE (NCCA June 1995, 1.2) state that Social Personal and Health education is “spiral, developmental in nature and age appropriate in content and methodology”. The RSE programme is designed to follow this principle and pattern. Apart from the specific lessons of RSE, SPHE covers other areas which would be pertinent to the development of a healthy attitude to sexuality in oneself and ones relationship with others. SPHE deals with many issues such as self-esteem, assertiveness, communication and decision making skills – all of which can contribute to the effectiveness of the RSE programme.

**The Aims of our Relationship and Sexuality Education Programme**

1. To help pupils 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 relationship with others.
4. To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction
5. To enable pupils to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework in keeping with the mission statement of the school.
6. To provide opportunities for pupils to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.
7. To value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood.
8. To develop skills for coping with peer pressure, conflict and threats to personal safety.

**Integration across the curriculum**

These objectives will be supported by the other elements of the Health Education Programme at Junior and Senior Level, by the broader curriculum, for example, Home Economics, Religious Education and Science and also by the whole school climate. Topics and issues dealt with in the RSE programme are supported by relevant and up to date materials, resources and external speakers.

**Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our school.**

1. Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff will be made by the Principal.
2. **Informing and involving parents.**

Parents are the primary educators of their children and their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality is seen by the school as very important. This policy has been designed in consultation with Parents Association representatives and the views expressed by parents will be taken into account when reviewing the policy. A copy of this policy will be forwarded to all parents/guardians upon ratification. At the beginning of each school year parents of incoming first year students will receive a copy of this policy, and it will also be available on the school website and from the school office.

1. **Offering advice**

The schools function is to provide a general education about sexual matters and issues and not to offer individual advice, information or counselling on aspects of sexual behaviour and contraception – however sources of professional information and advice will be identified when appropriate by the school guidance counsellor. Students who seek confidential advice from individual teachers will be directed to the guidance counsellor in all cases.

1. **Explicit Questions**

Teachers will exercise their professional judgement in deciding whether to answer an explicit question in front of the whole class or privately after the class has finished e.g. questions on oral sex. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised he/she should seek advice from the guidance counsellor or the Principal.

1. **Procedures for referral and Confidentiality**

In accordance with The Child Protection Policy, 2015:

Every member of staff in Ramsgrange Community School, New Ross, Co. Wexford must be alert to the possibility that students with whom they are in contact may be being abused. The school will do everything possible to protect students from abuse or risk of abuse. Because they are in regular and frequent contact with students, members of school staff are particularly well placed to observe outward signs of abuse or to be aware of unexplained changes in behaviour or performance which may indicate abuse. All members of staff are asked to exercise vigilance in their observations of students so that important signs are not overlooked.

1. Teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality.
2. Pupils must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the DLP or DDLP.
3. Teachers must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard the information
4. Teachers must indicate clearly to pupils when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential – the pupil can then decide whether to proceed or not.

Any staff member with concerns about the safety of any student in his/her care should keep a written record of same and report them without delay to the Designated Liaison Person, Ms. Rachel O’Connor, (Principal). In her absence, the Deputy Principal, Ms. Tracey Edwards (Deputy Designated Liaison Person), should be contacted – in the absence of both DLP and DDLP the Person ‘Acting Up’ should be informed.

Students or parents should not be interviewed in detail about the suspected abuse. Under no circumstances should a student’s clothing be removed. Confidentially must never be promised to a person making a disclosure and the requirement to report to the Health Service Executive (HSE) must be explained in a supportive manner.

The Designated Liaison Person shall then decide whether or not reasonable grounds exist to report the case to the HSE.

The following examples would indicate reasonable grounds for concern:

* Specific indication from the student that she was abused.
* An account by a person who saw the student being abused.
* Evidence, such as injury or behaviour, which is consistent with abuse and which is unlikely to be caused another way.

A suspicion that is not supported by any objective indication of abuse or neglect would not constitute a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern.

If a decision is made to report a case of suspected abuse, the Designated Liaison Person shall make personal contact with the Duty Social Worker in Ely House (053-9147718/9147719) to whom the Standard Reporting Form will be submitted. In the event of an emergency, or the non-availability of health board staff, the report will be made to An Garda Síochána. The student’s parents will be informed by the Designated Liaison Person if a report is to be made to the HSE unless doing so is likely to endanger the student.

As soon as possible thereafter, the Designated Liaison Person will inform the BOM of such a report.

The school will keep detailed written records of all suspected cases of child abuse.

1. **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.

1. **Withdrawing pupils from the RSE Programme**

What we do if a request for withdrawal from the RSE Programme is made by a parent:

1. Issues such as overpopulation, birth control and other sexual matters are met in a minor way in subjects such as Geography and RE. However as any discussion is limited and set within the context of the other subject concerned, it does not constitute part of the RSE programme.
2. Parents do not have to give reasons for the withdrawal, but we respectfully invite them to do so – sometimes we can then resolve misunderstandings. Once a parents request to withdraw is made, that request must be complied with until revoked by the parent.
3. **Using visiting speakers and others.**
4. It is school policy that most of the RSE programme is best discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by the pupils. 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.
5. The RSE Co-Ordinator will provide the visitor, well in advance of the visit, with a copy of this RSE policy. After gaining approval from the Principal for the visit the organiser makes the visitor aware of the ethos of the school and the manner of delivery of the RSE programme. Issues to consider are:
6. The degree of explicitness of the content and presentation
7. Will the visitor be accompanied by teaching staff?
8. Will the staff take an active role in the visitor’s activities?
9. How will the visitor be prepared for the visit?
10. How will the visit be built upon and followed up?
11. **Sexual orientation**

Sexual Orientation refers to an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions to men, women, or both sexes. Sexual orientation also refers to a person's sense of identity based on those attractions, related behaviours, and membership in a community of others who share those attractions. Three sexual orientations are commonly recognised - heterosexual, homosexual (gay and lesbian) and bisexual.

**Transgender:** Refers to a person whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex assigned to them at birth. This term can include diverse gender identities.

Not all individuals with identities that are considered part of the transgender umbrella will refer to themselves as transgender. For some, this may be because they identify with a particular term (such as transsexual or genderqueer) which they feel more precisely describes their identity. Others may feel that their experience is a medical or temporary condition and not an identity (for example they feel they have gender identity disorder but are not transgender).

***Transgender Equality Network Ireland advocates the use of transgender or trans as an umbrella term as it is currently the most inclusive and respectful term to describe diverse identities.***

**Transition:**A process through which some transgender people begin to live as the gender with which they identify, rather than the one assigned at birth. Transition might include social, physical or legal changes such as coming out to family, friends, co-workers and others; changing one's appearance; changing one’s name, pronoun and sex designation on legal documents (e.g. driving licence or passport); and medical intervention (e.g. through hormones or surgery).

Teachers do not promote any one lifestyle as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that sexual orientation will be discussed during a programme of sex education. Teachers take care not to advocate any one type of sexual orientation, or encourage any sexual experimentation by pupils. One of the many advantages of exploring issues concerning sexual orientation is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions and address prejudice. Discussion of sexual orientation should be appropriate to the age of the pupils.

1. **Contraception**

This topic will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issues in a non-directive way.

1. **Abortion**

This topic will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issues in a non-directive way.

1. **Special needs**

Children 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.

**Junior Cycle RSE**

At Junior cycle, students receive a minimum of 5-6 classes of RSE per year. The classes are given by a teacher who has undergone training in the programme.

**The themes at Junior Cycle**

* **Human growth and development**
	+ Awareness of changes in the human life cycle
	+ An understanding of the physical and emotional changes that take place in males and females at puberty and appreciation of variation
	+ Knowledge of sexual organs and their function
	+ An appreciation of hygiene associated with puberty
	+ An awareness of the sometimes conflicting feelings, moods and emotions characteristic of adolescence
	+ Development of a language for the expression of emotions
	+ An understanding of fertility, conception, pregnancy and birth
	+ Awareness of implications of sexual activity
	+ Understanding of sexually transmitted diseases
* **Human sexuality**
	+ An awareness of what it is to be female and male
	+ An awareness of stereotyping and its influence on attitudes and behaviour
	+ An appreciation of equality and difference
	+ Information on and sensitivity to sexual orientation
	+ Awareness of discrimination
	+ Respect for sexuality
	+ Developing skills for personal safety
* **Human relationships**
	+ Developing skills for self awareness
	+ Developing skills for building and maintaining self esteem
	+ Awareness of the qualities valued in friendships and how friendship patterns change
	+ Developing skills for establishing and maintaining relationships
	+ Awareness of roles and responsibilities in relationships and families
	+ Identifying groups students belong to, behaviour in these groups and response to peer pressure

**Senior Cycle RSE**

The Senior students receive 10/12 weeks of RSE. Senior RSE is built into the RE programme. Teachers are trained to deliver the TRUST (The Talking Relationships, Understanding Sexuality teaching resource) programme.

The TRUST programme is broken into 3 sections as follows:

**Relationships**

• What we value in relationships

• Healthy relationships

• Self Esteem

• The influence of self esteem

• When we feel hurt

• Understanding boundaries

• Communicating our boundaries

• Intimacy

**Taking time to thin**k

• Sexuality

• Sexual orientation

• Influences and values

• Decision making

• Responsible relationships

**Human reproduction and fertility**

• Understanding female fertility

• Contraceptive methods I

• Contraceptive methods II

• Unplanned pregnancy

• STIs – What’s what

• STI transmission

**Ongoing support, development and review**

 **Training**

1. 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 and preparedness to refer to more expert advice if necessary. The skills acquired in general teaching apply also to health education. Furthermore, many teachers 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.
2. 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.

**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.

**Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the RSE programme**

We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this programme.

Specifically important to RSE Programme are:

1. Pupil feedback
2. Staff review and feedback
3. Parental feedback
4. Board of management feedback

This policy has been made available to school personnel, the Parents’ Association and the Student Council and is readily accessible to parents on request.

A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management in 2017 or sooner if deemed necessary.

**Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Trustee Nominee)**

**Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Trustee Nominee)**

**Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**