

Moyne College Ballina

Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy

Moyne College, Ballina, is a co-educational, non-denominational, Post-Primary School.

It is committed to the encouragement of self-confidence and self-appreciation as well as nurturing a sense of responsibility for one's behavior and a commitment to the common good of all students.

Definition of RSE:

R.S.E is a developmental process through experimental learning in which students participate to help cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships.

R.S.E within Social, Personal, and Health Education (S.P.H.E):

The Education Act (1998) emphasizes that schools are obliged to promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.

R.S.E will take place as part of the Junior Cycle SPHE Programme to all students' from first year through to third year. This will provide students with a unique opportunity to develop the skills and competencies to learn about themselves, to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and development in the context of the school's ethos.

R.S.E will also be delivered to all senior cycle students during their Wellbeing class, which will be delivered over a 6 week program, totaling 6 class periods.

Students at Senior Cycle will NOT be withdrawn from the RSE Programme to engage in any other school activity.

Aims of our R.S.E Programme:

The aim of the R/S/E Programme is to promote, amongst young people, an awareness, understanding and positive attitude towards one's own sexuality and their relationships with other people. The R.S.E Programme also aims to develop positive attitudes and values towards sexuality in a moral spiritual and social framework.

Objectives:

The R.S.E programme endeavours students to:

- Understand and develop friendships and relationships
- Develop a positive sense of self awareness and the skills for building and maintain self-esteem
- Gain a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's relationship with others
- Understand human physiology with particular reference to the reproductive cycle, human fertility and sexually transmitted diseases.
- Understand sexual roles, stereotyping, gender issues and cultural issues on sexuality

- 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.
- Provide opportunities for students to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.
- Every effort will be made to ensure students understand core concepts, those who struggle will be provided additional support and consultation will take place with parents

It is acknowledged that in a course of limited duration these aims are inspirational.

Management & Organisation of R.S.E in our school

Provision of training and staff development:

All teachers involved in the delivery of R.S.E. 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 honestly and also to be prepared to refer to more expert advice if necessary.

The school will endeavor to maintain a core team of fully trained RSE teachers. These teachers will be supported in accessing CPD on an on-going basis. A coordinator will be appointed in order to support staff and consult with them regarding the delivery of the programme. Furthermore the school will endeavor to have gender balance in the team.

Teachers who have training in the specific areas of health, relationships and sexuality education will be encouraged to train other teachers

Inclusion of Parents/Guardians

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 will be made available to parents on the School website – parents section and on enrolment.

The voice of the parents is highly valued in Moyne College and in that regard a representation of parents will be invited to be part of a review committee for this policy.

Offering Advice:

The school’s 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 behavior and contraception. However, sources of professional information and advice will be signposted if and when appropriate.

Explicit Questions:

It is important that ground rules are set at the start of the delivery of RSE around what is appropriate or not to ask and that it is ok for the teacher to choose not to answer. It is unlikely to be appropriate to deal with a student's explicit questions by dealing with it in front of the whole class. In practice this means that teachers should say it is not appropriate to deal with that question at this time. The teacher may also exercise his/her own professional judgement in deciding whether to answer the question or not. It is not appropriate for the teacher to answer the question 'privately' after class as the response could be misconstrued and both student and teacher are in a vulnerable position. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised then he/she will seek advice from the Guidance Counsellor or the Principal.

Confidentiality:

The R.S.E programme will be taught in an atmosphere of privacy and respect for all students. The importance and limits of confidentiality will be shared by the teacher at the beginning of class. Teachers must not guarantee confidentiality. Students should be encouraged not to disclose personal information in SPHE/RSE class. Students will be informed that if a teacher becomes aware that a student is at risk of abuse, or in breach of law then the teacher will notify the Designated Liaison Person, and the child protection guidelines of 2017 will be invoked. In this event absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

Sexual Activity:

Students will be made aware of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006, that the age of consent for sexual activity for both males and females is 17 years of age in the Republic of Ireland. Furthermore students' will be informed that where a teacher becomes aware that a student is engaging in underage sexual activity, the teacher must refer this immediately to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP), the Principal. The DLP will adhere to the 2017 Child Protection Guidelines thereafter.

Family Planning/Contraception:

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

Abortion:

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

Sexuality:

Teachers do not promote any one lifestyle as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable that sexuality may be discussed during a programme at RSE. Teaching about sexuality is not avoided although teachers take care not to advocate any one sexual behavior over another, present it as the norm or encourage sexuality experimentation by students. One of the main advantages of exploring issues concerning sexuality is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions, and address prejudices. Discussion of sexuality should be appropriate to the age of students.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

Given that the rate of STIs are increasing it is important that the subject is addressed in school. It is proposed that this topic will be covered in 3rd year, at an age appropriate level and again in Senior Cycle RSE. It is important that the correct terminology is used by teachers during the delivery and if any concern arises then the teacher will adhere to the Child Protection procedures of the school and inform the DLP of the concerns raised.

Practical Implementations of the Programme:

RSE will be delivered to Junior Cycle students during SPHE classes and RSE will be delivered to all Senior Cycle students during the scheduled wellbeing class. Students who are accessing the Level 2 Learner Programme will access RSE during SPHE but in addition to this these students will have supplementary support around RSE during the Personal Care Priority Learning Unit.

A scheme of work will be devised and adhered to by the teacher delivering RSE. There will however be a minimum of 6 classes taught.

All teachers involved in the delivery of RSE 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 honestly, also preparedness to refer to more expert advice, if necessary. The school endeavors to maintain a core team of fully trained teachers who will continue to access CPD on an on-going basis. It is hoped that there will be a gender balance within this team. The school have appointed a coordinator to support staff with the delivery of RSE.

Withdrawing pupils from the RSE Programme:

As parents are the primary educators of their son/daughter it is important that a supportive partnership between home and school is developed. Parents will be notified of when the programme will take place via the school texting system. The policy and course content will be made available to parents on-line. Some parents may decide to withdraw their son/daughter from the RSE programme. In the event of this the teacher involved in the delivery of RSE and the Principal will meet with the parents to discuss their reasoning for withdrawal. It is hoped that this will resolve any misunderstandings. However, even after negotiations have taken place parents still wish to withdraw their son/daughter from RSE then the school will request this in writing. Parents will be reminded that should they choose to withdraw then they are fully responsible for the welfare of their child during RSE time.

Students with Additional Needs:

As an inclusive school we are always cognisant of children with additional needs and in that regard students with additional needs will engage in RSE as part of SPHE, however this may be further supplemented by the L2LP personal care for those students accessing Level 2.

Children with additional needs may need more support in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up. They may also need more help in learning what sorts of behavior are and are not acceptable and in being warned and prepared against abuse by others. Where there is an SNA assigned, the SNA will help support the individual child, following direction from the class teacher.

It may also be necessary to consult with other organisations to support the child with additional needs in terms of the delivery of the programme and the understanding the child may have of the topics. The following organisations can support the school and therefore should be accessed:

- National Council for Special Education (NCSE)
- National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- Middletown Centre for Autism (MCA)
- Western Care Association (WCA)
- HSE Disability Services

Using Visiting Speakers and Others:

It is the school policy that most of the RSE Programme is best discussed openly with teachers who are trained, known and trusted by the students. However it is also recognized that visitors can enhance the quality of the provision as long as they are used in addition to and not instead of a planned programme of RSE. In the event of a speaker being invited to talk with students the school will act in accordance with circular 0043/18. In addition the RE policy of the school will be shared with speakers who must adhere to the procedures as laid out in this policy. The teacher will be present throughout the visit.

Resources:

The resources that will be used are sanctioned by the Department and a list of resources available can be found in the appendix of this policy.

Assessment:

There is no formal examination/assessment in RSE, however, it is important that students understanding of RSE is assessed. In that regard teachers will use formative assessments during class to ascertain students' level of understanding.

Links to Other school Policies

When considering this policy due cognisance must be made to the following school policies:

- SPHE Policy
- Child Protection Policy & Procedures
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Substance Misuse Policy
- Intimate Care Policy

Cross Curricular Links:

Links can be made from RSE into the following subject areas:

English, Science, Coding, Geography, Home Economics, Wellbeing, CSPE, PE, Priority Learning Units of L2LP, Social Education (LCA)

Monitoring & Implementation of Policy:

This policy will be monitored by the wellbeing coordinator, in consultation with the RSE team. It is proposed that this will take place every two years. Parents and students will also be consulted as the school values the voice of all stakeholders. Relevant guidelines and circulars will be examined to ensure the policy is in line with same.

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management on: _____

This policy is communicated to stakeholders via the school's website and teachers' online platform – Sharepoint.

This policy will be reviewed in 2022