



**NORTH WICKLOW  
EDUCATE TOGETHER  
SECONDARY SCHOOL**

## **Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy**

## **1. Our School**

North Wicklow Educate Together Secondary School is a voluntary secondary school under the patronage of Educate Together. Our school provides a caring and supportive school community that nurtures each student's personal, social and academic potential throughout their school career.

Our ethos provides a strong moral, ethical and spiritual framework for the whole school community, and informs all policies and practices in the daily life of the school. Students follow Ethical Education which includes learning about different religions and belief systems. The school currently has an enrolment of around 300 students with an ASD class. A Board of management devolves the running of the school to the Principal and the staff.

The four core principles of Educate Together are equality based, co-educational, child-centred and democratically run. An Educate Together school provides an ethical curriculum that focuses on the ethical, moral and social development of young people. It provides the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that young people need to enable them to make informed moral decisions and prepare them for life in a pluralist society which embraces diversity. Ethical Education will be part of SPHE and visible in every lesson and embedded in RSE lessons.

## **2. Our School Mission Statement**

North Wicklow Educate Together Secondary School is dedicated to creating a co-educational, learner-centered, caring, happy and positive environment where equality and democracy are celebrated and nurtured. We are committed to enabling students to become creative, empathetic, life-long learners who are prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century in a sustainable and ethical way.

We embrace collaborative educational practices both in our school and through engagement with the wider community. Through the process of teaching and learning we aim to inspire, support and challenge all students to develop their skills and passions. In doing so, we dedicate ourselves to empowering all students to truly understand themselves and others better so that when they leave school, they are ready to actively engage in society and to lead purposeful, fulfilling and happy lives.

## **3. Definition of Relationship and Sexuality Education**

Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a developmental process through experiential learning which helps students to cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, particularly in the areas of sexuality and relationships.

## **4. Relationship and Sexuality within Social Personal and Health Education**

Access to sexual and health education is an important right for students under the terms of the article 11.2 of the European Social Charter. This article states that "health education be provided throughout the entire period of schooling" and that the sexual and reproductive health education is "objective, based on contemporary scientific evidence and does not involve censoring, withholding or intentionally misrepresenting information for example about contraception or different means for maintaining sexual and reproductive health"

Best Practice Guidelines for RSE Circular 0043/2018 state that the qualified classroom teacher is the best-placed professional to work sensitively and consistently with students and that he/she can have a powerful impact on influencing students' attitudes, values and behaviours in all aspects of Health Education.

The SPHE / RSE programme should be heavily underpinned by the Junior Cycle Key Skills and Wellbeing Indicators and should not be merely information based. Our approach focuses on the learner as central to the process. In RSE, students develop skills in creative and critical thinking, communication, teamwork, research and leadership. While all the key skills and statements of learning of Junior Cycle are covered to some extent in SPHE and RSE, "staying well" is the main key skill which is evident. The Wellbeing Guidelines identify six indicators; active, responsible, connected, resilient, respected and aware. These indicators are central to student wellbeing and are identified in the RSE programme.

In the SPHE classroom, the teacher seeks to use active, relevant, challenging and enjoyable teaching methodologies. SPHE modules aim to assist the student in the development of a healthy attitude to sexuality in oneself and one's development of a healthy attitude to oneself and one's relationship with others. SPHE deals with many issues such as self-esteem, assertiveness, communication and decision-making skills - all of which contribute to an effective RSE programme.

#### **5. The Aims of our Relationship and Sexuality Programme (RSE):**

- a) To help students understand and develop friendships and relationships
- b) To promote an understanding of sexuality
- c) To promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's relationship with others
- d) To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction
- e) To enable students to develop attitudes and values toward their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework in keeping with the policy of the school
- f) To 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

It is acknowledged that in a course of limited duration these aims are aspirational: however, the RSE teacher endeavors to develop these aims over time. The learning is founded on an ongoing relationship based on trust, understanding and mutual respect.

#### **6. To what will this policy apply?**

This policy will apply to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality. Discussions about relationships and sexuality take place in other classes such as Science, Ethical Education, CSPE and our ASD class and other programmes. This policy will be provided to all staff.

#### **7. To whom will this policy apply?**

This policy will apply to all school staff, students, the Board of Management, parents/ guardians, carers, visiting speakers and external facilitators and will be freely available to all relevant personnel. The policy may be provided to external speakers if appropriate.

## **8. Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of Relationships and Sexuality Education in our School**

The Principal will make arrangements regarding the teaching of the RSE programme and the deployment of staff. The SPHE teacher will follow the Guidelines and lesson plans drawn up by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and avail of CPD when required.

- One time-tabled period of sixty minutes per week is allocated to SPHE
- Within the SPHE programme, six timetabled periods will be assigned to RSE
- Circular 0043/2018 states that schools have an obligation to implement RSE at Junior and Senior Cycle even in the absence of a timetabled SPHE class at Senior Cycle
- An in-depth RSE module is to be included in the Transition Year Programme
- Senior Level: RSE will be an integral part of the Senior Cycle Programme and adequate planning will take place for this
- RSE teachers will be aware of all relevant documentation and best practice guidelines, such as “Being LGBT in school” and department circulars

## **9. The Division between biological and non-biological aspects of Sexual Education**

The Science Department deals with the biological aspects of reproduction. The male and female reproduction system is also covered in RSE. It is intended that in first year these topics are taught concurrently in Science and SPHE.

## **10. Management and Organisation of Relationships and Sexuality Education**

### **Informing Parents/Guardians/Carers:**

Parents/Guardians/Carers will be informed about the modules in the SPHE programme and a letter with the details of the Relationships and Sexuality Modules is sent to all parents/guardians and carers.

While all partners in the school community - teaching staff, parents and management are agreed on the programme, we recognise the right of any parent /guardian/ carer wishing to withdraw their son/daughter. The parent must contact the SPHE coordinator in the first instance. Parents do not have to give reasons for withdrawing a student, but we respectfully invite them to do so during a meeting with the Principal and SPHE coordinator. If the parent/guardian still wishes to withdraw their child from RSE, then this request must be made in writing and the student shall be facilitated. See Appendix 1

### **Management of information / classroom confidentiality:**

All personnel have been informed of their legal obligations under the Children First Legislation 2015. All staff have completed up to date e-learning Tusla training and a Child Safe Guarding statement is in place.

Teachers reiterate in every RSE lesson that absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Students are made aware that any information or incident where a student may have been or is at risk of any type of abuse or in breach of the law, the teacher must report this to the Designated Liaison Person (as per the Child Protection Legislation 2015).

If there is any concern that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected, this must be brought without delay to the attention of the DLP. Mandated personnel have a legal obligation to report to

the DLP and Tusla. All registered teachers are mandated persons. All school personnel also have a legal obligation to report a concern to the DLP. Teachers must indicate clearly to pupils when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential. The supports of the school should continue to be made available to the student

In the case that a teacher receives an allegation or has a suspicion of abuse (as defined in Children First: national Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children), the teacher should in the first instance report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP).

A written record of the report should be made and placed in a secure location by the Designated Liaison Person (DLP). The need for confidentiality always (as referred to in Chapter 1 Paragraph 1.2 of the child protection guidelines) should be borne in mind.

If the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation, he/she with the staff member should report the matter to Tusla immediately.

### **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 behaviour and contraception – however, sources of professional information and advice will be identified when appropriate. Teachers may find themselves in a position to provide pupils with information about where they can receive confidential sexual advice and treatment. Advice offered should be of a referral nature. Not all teachers involved in RSE must be experts on the issues concerned. However, they do require sensitivity to the needs of the group and an ability to deal with questions openly and honestly. The teachers in the school are education professionals and need to be conscious of the boundaries that apply to them and limits of knowledge in specific medical or sexual areas. Advice offered should not be directive and should be age appropriate.

### **Explicit questions:**

It is important to create a safe environment in SPHE/RSE where students are comfortable to contribute and ask questions. Teachers may not be able to answer all questions or issues raised. Appropriate limits should be outlined. In these cases, teachers should use their professional judgement and be guided by the context of the lesson and maturity in the class.

### **Outside speakers:**

The delivery of the RSE programme is the responsibility of the SPHE teacher. It is recommended that visitors be used to support the SPHE teacher and to enhance the quality of the RSE programme.

The teacher should provide the visitor, well in advance of the visit, with a copy of the RSE policy. The class teacher will remain in the class during the visit.

### **Procedures to be followed in preparation for a visiting speaker:**

- As per circular 0043/2018, the Principal and Board of Management will be informed
- The degree of explicitness of the content of the class should be discussed and agreed before the visit
- The visitor will be accompanied by the class teacher
- The teacher must consider how the visit will be prepared for and followed up on
- The visitor should be informed of the level and ability of the students
- Links to the school safety policy - visitors must report to the school office

- Principal must be informed of the date and arrangements of the visit
- The Principal advises parents/guardians/carers of the talk via a school bulletin

### **Sexual Activity:**

While dealing with the topic of sexual activity, teachers should use their professional judgement and be guided by the age and emotional maturity of the students, the RSE Curriculum and RSE policy for the school. It is advisable that teachers give young people information on the age of consent, which, following the passage of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2003 is 17 years for males and females.

### **Contraception:**

This topic shall also be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issue in a non-directive way. The post-primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines state that Family Planning should be covered within the Senior Cycle RSE Programme. The teacher needs to be guided by the emotional maturity and possible necessity if this is to be taught at Junior Cycle Level.

### **LGBT:**

The post primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines includes the subject of sexual orientation. The Equal Status Act 2004 prohibits discrimination across nine grounds, including homosexuality. One of the advantages of exploring the subject of homosexuality is the opportunity to challenge homophobic bullying, misconceptions, assumptions and address prejudices.

Teachers do not promote any one lifestyle and need to be aware and respect all family forms. Acknowledging and respecting the family background of every student is important to their over-all well-being, the language used by a school in relation to sexual diversity is critical to their sense of belonging.

Resources: - Lesbian Gay and Bisexual Students in Post Primary Schools, Guidance for Principals and School Leaders. [www.sphe.ie](http://www.sphe.ie)

### **Sexually Transmitted Diseases:**

Creating awareness of Sexually Transmitted Infections STIs is undertaken in the RSE programme. General hygiene and STIs are addressed at Junior Cycle level but the area of STIs is addressed in further depth at Senior Cycle. While dealing with the topic of STIs, teachers should use their professional judgement and be guided by the age and emotional maturity of the students and the RSE Curriculum and RSE policy for the school.

### **Students with additional needs:**

Students with specific needs may need more support 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. The class teacher may raise this judgement and provision should be provided. If required teachers of RSE will work closely with the ASD class teacher and resource teacher to support the learning of students with specific learning needs.

### **11. Links to other school policies:**

School policies being examined or reviewed, should be considered with reference to the school's RSE policy; while the implications of other school policies for the RSE policy also need to be considered, such as:

SPHE Policy  
Child Protection Policy  
School's Guidance Plan  
Anti-Bullying Policy  
Substance Misuse Policy  
ICT Policy  
Health and Safety Policy  
Critical Incident Management Policy  
Code of Positive Behaviour

### **12. Provision of training and staff development:**

NWETSS has appointed an SPHE coordinator. The PDST offers training and support to all SPHE teachers at Junior and Senior Cycle. RSE training is available and it is best practice that teachers are trained in RSE prior to teaching this module. The school will endeavour to up skill and train the SPHE/RSE teachers in this important area of SPHE.

### **13. Classroom 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 resources allow.

SPHE/RSE schemes of work are located on share point and the RSE plan is shared with management  
These are reviewed during the year and annually.

#### **Junior Cycle resources:**

Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines  
Lockers Resource  
Webwise Resources  
Folens – My Life 1/2/3  
B4UDecide (HSE Website and Workbook)  
Busy Bodies Booklet and DVD  
LGBT- Growing up LGBT

#### **Senior Cycle:**

TRUST –Talking Relationships Understanding Sexuality Teaching Resource  
[www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)  
[www.glen.ie](http://www.glen.ie)

Being LGBT in School – Glen

Classroom teachers will use the B4Udecide website. This website uses information provided by the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Organisation.

## **Appendix 1:**

### **Withdrawals:**

Steps to be followed if a request for withdrawal from the RSE programme is made:

- A letter to be sent by the SPHE coordinator to arrange a meeting with the Principal and parent / guardian/carer
- The nature of the concerns of the child's parent to be discussed
- The content of the RSE programme to be discussed
- Consider whether the programme can be amended or improved in a way to reassure parents of any issues
- Care is taken to not to undermine the integrity of the RSE programme and the entitlement of other pupils
- The school attempts to ensure that, if a student is withdrawn, there is no disruption to other parts of their education
- In this meeting it is advised that students who are withdrawn are vulnerable to misconceptions
- Parents are also informed that students may receive inaccurate information from their peers
- The school offers the parents access to appropriate information and resources

### **LGBT**

Guidance for Principals and Staff

Teachers' Union organisations recognise the role that teachers play in addressing issues like homophobic bullying and actively support members in tackling this issue. The Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland and the Teachers' Union of Ireland have jointly with GLEN produced a resource to support teachers in addressing homophobic bullying.

### **Monitoring of Policy:**

The implementation of the RSE policy will be monitored at SPHE meetings and other meetings deemed necessary by the Principal or Board of Management.

Specifically, important to the RSE policy is:

- Student feedback
- Staff review and feedback
- Parental/ guardian/ carer feedback

Ratified by the Board

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

Chairperson of the BOM: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal: \_\_\_\_\_