

Virginia College

Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy

1. Our School

Virginia College is a co-educational secondary school. It was established in 1962. It is part of the Cavan Monaghan Education and Training Board (CMETB). It currently has an enrolment of circa 700 students.

2. Our Mission Statement

Tús Feasa Fiafraí

Faithful to our motto, Virginia College is committed to providing quality teaching and learning in a safe and positive learning environment. Whilst fostering academic and personal achievement, we aim to nurture an educational community of informed, responsible and caring citizens for an ever-changing world. It recognises that parents/guardians are the primary educators and home is the natural environment in which Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) should also take place.

3. Definition of Relationship and Sexuality Education

Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) at post-primary level seeks to provide opportunities for young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that will enable them to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

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

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 Relationship and Sexuality Education Programme is designed to follow this principle and pattern.

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

To help young people understand and develop friendships and relationships.

To promote an understanding of sexuality.

To promote a positive attitude to one’s own sexuality and in one’s relationship with others.

To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction.

To enable pupils to develop attitudes and values toward their sexuality in a moral and social framework in keeping with the policy of the school.

To provide opportunities for pupils to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that may 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.

6. To what will this policy apply?

This policy will apply to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality. Discussion about relationships and sexuality also takes place in other classrooms other than SPHE/RSE; it is therefore important that all teachers are familiar with RSE policy.

7. To whom will this policy apply?

This policy will apply to school staff, students, Board of Management, parents/guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators and will be freely available to all personnel.

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8. Guidelines for the management and organisation of Relationship and Sexuality Education in our school

Management will make arrangements regarding the teaching of the RSE Programme and the allocation of staff. Teachers will follow the guidelines and lesson plans drawn up by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

The school aims to allow one timetabled period per week to be allocated to SPHE for Junior Cert and Senior Cycle students to undertake RSE during other timetabled classes for example Non Exam Senior Cycle Religion.

9. Classroom Issues

Participation

SPHE is a core curricular subject on the Junior Cycle Curriculum. Relationships and Sexuality (RSE) is one module of the programme. Parents/Guardians should be informed of the RSE Policy from the time of enrolment of the student. While all partners in the school community – teaching staff, parents and management – are agreed on the programme we recognise, nevertheless, the right of any parent/guardian who so wishes to request that his/her son/daughter should not participate in the programme. The school will respect this choice. Where students are withdrawn from RSE the school cannot take responsibility for any versions of class content passed on to them by other students. Parents/Guardians wishing to withdraw their son/daughter must contact management in the first instance.

Answering Questions

While it is important to create an environment in SPHE/RSE in which students can discuss issues openly, teachers may not be able to answer all questions asked and should set appropriate limits. Inappropriate questions will not be answered by a teacher in class. Students may ask questions about issues which are not included on the curriculum. On these and all questions asked, teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, together with the student's emotional maturity, the RSE Curriculum and RSE Policy for the school.

Management of Information

It is school policy that if a teacher receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a pupil is being abused (*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 Principal/Designated Liaison Person (DLP) or to the Deputy Principal (DDL).

Outside Speakers

While visitors to the classroom can be immensely valuable as part of the SPHE programme, the delivery of the programme remains the responsibility of the teacher. In light of this, it is recommended that where visitors/outside agencies are used to support SPHE, the SPHE teacher may remain with the class group during the visit.

Sexual Activity

Teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, together with the student's emotional maturity, the RSE Curriculum and the RSE Policy for the school, while dealing with the topic of Sexual Activity. 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, 2006, is 17 years for both males and females.

Family Planning

The post primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines state that the subject of Family Planning should be covered within the Senior Cycle RSE Programme. The RSE Programme requires that young people are provided with information about methods of contraception. Teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, together with the student's emotional maturity, the RSE Curriculum and RSE Policy for the school, while dealing with the topic of family planning.

Homosexuality

Teachers will provide diversity in their lessons in relation to sexual orientations. The post primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines include the subject of sexual orientation. The Equal Status Act, 2004 prohibit discrimination across nine grounds, including homosexuality. Teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, together with the student's emotional maturity, the RSE Curriculum and RSE Policy for the school, while dealing with the topic of sexual orientation.

Sexually Transmitted Infections

Creating awareness of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) is undertaken in second level schools. Information on STIs is mainly addressed in the Senior Cycle. Teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, together with the student's emotional maturity, the RSE Curriculum and RSE Policy for the school, while dealing with the issue of Sexually Transmitted Infections.

Special Needs

Children with special needs may need more help than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up.

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:

Child Protection Policy.

School's Guidance Plan.

Anti-Bullying Policy.

Substance misuse Policy.

ICT Policy.

12. Provision of Training and Staff Development

SPHE Support Service offers training and support to teachers in both Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle RSE and the school will endeavour to up skill and train the SPHE/RSE teachers in this important area of the SPHE Curriculum on an ongoing basis.

13. 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.

14. Monitoring of Policy

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

15. Evaluating and Reviewing the RSE Programme

The school will review this policy periodically after its ratification by the BOM. The RSE policy may be reviewed and amended, prior to that date, where necessary.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Virginia College Child Protection Policy

Appendix

Rationale – why is it necessary?

The Education Act, 1998 requires that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.

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 Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).

Circular M4/95 and M20/96 and 0037/2010 request schools to commence process of RSE policy development.

Resources

Programmes and schedules of work are to be found in SPHE subject planning folder and are periodically review and updated.

<http://www.sphe.ie/resources.aspx>

(Outline of both courses to be found in SPHE subject planning folder)

Continued Professional Development (CPD)

CPD is encouraged and supported by the school management.