

Pobalscoil Neasáin,
Baldoyle,
Dublin 13.

Relationships & Sexuality Education Policy (RSE)

In this policy document all references to gender are taken to be inclusive and the term “parent” is taken to include “guardian”.

A. School Philosophy

Pobalscoil Neasáin aims to provide for the educational needs of students and their parents within the school community. The Christian ethos of this school, respectful to people of all faiths in a multi-denominational school will be reflected in the Relationships & Sexuality Education policy.

The school’s philosophy flows from the Christian mission of its religious trustees and from the social concerns of its civic trustees. That philosophy is expressed in the school’s values, work ethic and organisational nature. Consequently, the school is committed to treating every individual pupil and staff member with dignity and respect.

B. Mission Statement

The mission statement of Pobalscoil Neasáin is to provide a caring and committed atmosphere in which the partnership of staff, parents and students enables our students to achieve their full potential. This partnership aims to foster the holistic development of all our students in a supportive, safe environment of mutual respect, which develops the uniqueness of each student. We aim to prepare our students for the rich and varied challenges which the journey of life may present in a pluralist society.

C. Ethos

Pobalscoil Neasáin is committed to giving every one of its students a rounded educational experience that facilitates full realisation of potential and a comprehensive enrichment in knowledge, insight, competence and personal autonomy. The intellectual, spiritual, moral and emotional needs of each student are catered for in a Christian and respectful way. Each member of the school community is treated with respect, dignity and consideration for their needs and limitations.

To achieve the enrichment and betterment of each and every student, it is important that our culture is a positive one that values all students and all colleagues. Mutual respect, collegiality and mutual support are desirable attributes in staff. Our behaviour and attitudes are governed by our values and customs, it is important that the culture prevailing in the school, the “corporate culture” disposes us to:

1. Respect every student and always affirm his/her successes and positive efforts. Treat all courteously and respectfully.

2. Respect colleagues and offer advice, insight and support when needed.

D. Definition of Relationships & Sexuality Education

The Draft Guidelines for Relationships & Sexuality Education, (NCCA June 1995, 1.2), state that Social Personal and Health Education is “spiral, developmental in nature and age appropriate in content and methodology”. Relationships and Sexuality education forms a part of Social, Personal & Health Education, 6-7 classes are allocated to Relationships & Sexuality Education in the school year. The aims of Relationships & Sexuality Education set it within a moral, spiritual and social framework. A positive attitude to sexuality will be expressed in responsible and respectful attitudes and behaviour towards oneself and others. It will recognise that sexual behaviour is not just a personal and private matter, but has social and community implications as well. Decisions about such attitude and behaviour are made in the light of the knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes delivered in Relationships & Sexuality Education, inside and outside school. By its nature, Relationships & Sexuality Education explores issues which give rise to differing views and sensitivities, issues such as sexual intercourse, teenage pregnancies, divorce and homosexuality will all enter into the Relationships & Sexuality Education programme. The methodologies used and the approach to teaching the Social, Personal & Health Education/Relationships & Sexuality Education Programme by trained teachers may be quite different from other classroom experiences for the students. The atmosphere will be relaxed and informal with participative and collaborative learning methods.

E. Relationship of Relationships & Sexuality Education to Social, Personal & Health Education

Social, Personal & Health Education contributes towards the development of all aspects of the individual – emotional, moral, social and spiritual as well as their intellectual, physical, political, religious and creative development. Social, Personal & Health Education looks at issues such as relationships at home and in school, building self-esteem and learning skills of communication, decision making and expressing feelings in an appropriate way. Sexuality is a key element of healthy social and personal development in all of our lives but especially in the life of the adolescent. There is greater freedom, responsibility and exposure to a bewildering variety of messages about sexuality, issues of sexual orientation and the place of sexuality in personal and social life. Relationships & Sexuality Education will provide structured opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality through processes that will enable them to form values and establish behaviour within a moral, spiritual and social framework.

F. The school currently provides:

- One Social, Personal & Health Education class per week to Junior Cycle (introduction to 3rd year programme being implemented according to DES guidelines in Sept. 2007).
- At Junior Cycle six to seven classes are allocated to Relationships & Sexuality Education in the school year .
- Guest speakers within context for Social, Personal & Health Education following guidelines for visitors to classroom.
- Religion – social & moral development.
- Core Science – reproduction in Junior Cycle & Senior Cycle Biology.
- Home Economics – Social & Health Studies.
- Tutorials for Senior Cycle.
- RSE module for senior cycle students.

G. Resources

See Lesson Themes for Junior Cycle and DES Planning Guidelines.

H. Aims of the Relationships & Sexuality Education Programme

To help students:

- Understand & develop friendships.
- Promote an understanding of sexuality.
- Promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and one's relationship with others.
- Promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction.
- Help develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral/spiritual and social framework.

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

I. Objectives of the Relationships & Sexuality Education should enable students to:

- Develop an understanding and the skills necessary to form healthy relationships.
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness and self-esteem.
- Be aware of the many ways in which people grow and change and to develop respect for the differences.
- Understand the physiology of reproduction, human fertility and sexually transmitted infections.
- Understand sexual development including sex roles, gender issues, stereotyping and cultural influences on sexuality.
- Value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood.

- Develop skills for coping with peer pressure, conflict and threats to personal safety.
- Develop strategies for decisions and actions consistent with personal moral integrity and respectful of the rights of others.

J. Guidelines for management and organisation of Relationships & Sexuality Education in schools

- The curriculum is being implemented in the school in line with the DES and Relationships & Sexuality Education guidelines.
- 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 made available to any parent on request to the school office and will be available on the schools website. 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.
- In order to ensure the safety of all students, ground rules will guide the activities within the classroom and will be emphasised.
- Teaching of the programme and development of staff is facilitated by the Principal.
- Policy development process allow for issues of concern to each of the participating groups to be raised, discussed and decided upon.
- Students' questions will be answered in response to the programme taught within the school, in an appropriate and sensitive manner.
- Clarity and consensus among all members of the group is a key objective.
- 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 provide pupils with education and information about where and from whom they can receive confidential sexual advice and treatment, e.g. Doctor or other suitable agency. Advice offered should not be directive and should be appropriate to the age of the pupil (e.g. It is not appropriate to give pupils a list of abortion clinics.)
- 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 Principal. When deciding whether or not to answer questions the teacher should consider the age and readiness of the students, the Relationships & Sexuality Education programme content, the ethos of the school and the Relationships & Sexuality Education policy.

- Confidentiality : It is school policy that in circumstances where a pupil is considered at some risk of any type of abuse (e.g. moral or physical) or in breach of the law, the teacher must refer this immediately to the Principal. The Principal who is the designated liaison person will decide whether to inform the parents and/or appropriate authorities (in conjunction with Child Protection Guidelines) and may arrange for counselling.

General guidelines:

- (a) teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality;
 - (b) pupils must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the Principal and possibly to parents if the Principal decides that it is in the best interests of the pupil to notify parents;
 - (c) teachers must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard the information;
 - (d) 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.
 - (e) Teachers may inform a member of the care team (Deputy Principal, Year Head, Chaplain, Resource Co-ordinator, Guidance Counsellor) and may suggest that the student talk to them.
- Withdrawing Pupils from Relationships & Sexuality Education :If a request for withdrawal from the Relationships & Sexuality Education programme is made by a parent:
 - (a) we discuss the nature of the concerns with the child's parent and if appropriate attempts to reassure them (initially such discussion takes place at a meeting with the Year Head and S.P.H.E. Co-ordinator, the Principal may become involved if necessary).
 - (b) 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 Relationships & Sexuality Education programme and the entitlement of the other pupils, e.g. it may be appropriate and desirable to have single sex classes for some sections of the Relationships & Sexuality Education programme.
 - (c) we attempt to ensure that where a pupil is withdrawn there is no disruption to other parts of their education and appropriate supervision provided if necessary.
 - (d) we point out that pupils who have been withdrawn are vulnerable to teasing - we therefore attempt to cause minimal

embarrassment to the pupil and minimal disruption to the programme.

- (e) we also point out that pupils may receive inaccurate information from their peers.
 - (f) we offer the parents access to appropriate information and resources.
- Visitors to the Classroom : It is school policy that most of the Relationships & Sexuality Education 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 Relationships & Sexuality Education.

It is essential that the class be well planned and that the S.P.H.E. class teacher and/or the S.P.H.E. co-ordinator is actively involved and present at all stages. All visits must be sanctioned by the Principal. All relevant subject teachers will be made aware of the visit and areas to be addressed by the visitor.

- Issues such as : Sexual Orientation.
Teachers do not promote any one life-style as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that life choices of abortion and contraception, issues surrounding adoption and fertility and the diverse issues affecting lesbian, gay and bisexual people will be discussed during a programme of sex education. Teaching about sexuality is not avoided. Teachers take care not to advocate sexual behaviour, or encourage sexual experimentation by pupils. One of the many advantages of exploring issues concerning abortion, contraception and sexuality is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions and address prejudice. Difference can be acknowledged, discussed, valued and accommodated through inclusion and awareness of multicultural religious and moral knowledge.
(Ref. : The Equal Status Acts 2000 – 2004)
- 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. Where possible the Social, Personal & Health Education teacher may contact individual parents if deemed necessary.

K. Provision of ongoing support, development and review

Our policy statement includes provision to support all members involved in Relationships & Sexuality Education at policy and programme level by supporting the following steps:

- Access to professional in-career development opportunities.
- Provision of school resources within the normal budgetary framework.

- Providing information regarding Relationships & Sexuality Education as part of Social, Personal & Health Education to the parents of incoming first year students at a general information evening.
- Policy and programme will be monitored, reviewed and evaluated.

Ratified by the Board of Management 26th April 2012