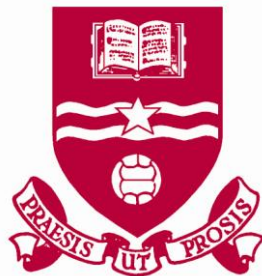


DE LA SALLE COLLEGE, WATERFORD

RSE POLICY

2015-2016



Introduction

The RSE policy is a written statement of the aims of the RSE programme, the relationship of RSE to SPHE, and the organisation and management of RSE within the school. It is hoped to implement this policy after consultation between the SPHE Department Teachers, the Principal, Deputy Principals, Board of Management, school staff and Student Council.

College Profile

De La Salle College is an All Boys' Voluntary Catholic Secondary School, operating under the Trusteeship of the Le Chéile Schools Trust, a Catholic Schools Trust. The College is managed by a Board of Management, is funded by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and operates within the regulations and guidelines set down from time to time by that Department. The school seeks extra funding in the form of a voluntary contribution from parents on an annual basis in order to supplement D.E.S. funding. The College has an active Parents' Council and Students' Council.

School Mission Statement

De La Salle College, Waterford is a Catholic school. It is a learning community where all students are valued and educated in preparation for a meaningful life.

School Ethos

De La Salle College, Waterford was founded in 1891 by the De La Salle Brothers and serves as a Catholic school for boys. The aim of De La Salle College is to develop an atmosphere of friendliness, discipline and co-operation where everyone can experience respect, encouragement and support.

While every school is a community in which adults and young people live and work together, the Lasallian school is inspired by the vision of St. John Baptist De La Salle that Gospel values must permeate the life of a Christian school in such a way that students internalise those values and reflect them in their behaviour.

All who work in the College constantly strive to make De La Salle College a welcoming institution. Our behaviour management strategies and pastoral care structures are built on the principles of justice and fairness. We endeavour to fulfil our mission in partnership with parents/guardians, staff, students, trustees and the community.

Definition of RSE

“Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. This education is delivered consciously and unconsciously by parents, teachers, peers, adults and the media” (DES Guidelines for developing an RSE Policy 1997. In addition, 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”.

Relationship of RSE to the Schools Mission Statement

Education flourishes in an environment which can lead to the creation of a Christian community professing and living Gospel values, where the participants relate to each other in an obviously caring and respectful manner, where members of the College community are helped to achieve personal wholeness. SPHE supports the aims of De La Salle College by supporting the personal development, health and well-being of our students and by helping them to create and maintain supportive relationships. This philosophy underpins and informs all the work we do and is central to this policy document.

De La Salle College aims to provide a Christian environment where each person is valued and assisted to reach their full potential. De La Salle College is committed to providing a broadly based curriculum which will embrace the full human development of each student: personal, academic, physical, moral and religious. The SPHE and RSE Programmes are relevant to the Mission Statement in that they aim to help young people to develop healthy attitudes and values in a moral, spiritual and social

framework. The school's characteristic spirit will inform the teaching of the programme.

Relationship of RSE and SPHE

The Education Act (1998) highlights that every school is obliged to promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents and having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school (DES Inspectorate, Looking at SPHE 2013).

In 1996, Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Interim Curriculum and Guidelines (NCCA, 1996) was introduced into post-primary schools with the premise that RSE would be taught within the context of SPHE. A curriculum for SPHE was introduced in 2000 (DES, Junior Cycle SPHE Curriculum Framework 2000) composing of a flexible three-year junior cycle programme which incorporated Relationships & Sexuality education as one of ten modules. Furthermore, the RSE Interim Curriculum & Guidelines outline the RSE programme for the senior cycle under three key themes: Human growth & Development; Human Sexuality; Human Relationships.

The aim of the SPHE programme is to promote physical, mental and emotional health and well-being. It also encourages the development of a healthy attitude to sexuality. Relationships and Sexuality are key elements of healthy social and personal development in all our lives, but particularly in the life of an adolescent.

Scope

The policy will apply to school staff, students, board of management, parents/guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators. The policy will apply to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality. Discussion about relationships and sexuality also takes place in classes other than SPHE/ RSE; it is therefore important that all teachers are familiar with the RSE policy.

Rationale

- Sexuality is a key element of healthy social and personal development. Young people are exposed to a variety of messages about sexuality and sexual activity. Schools, in consultation with parents/guardians, need to reflect on how to provide for the needs of their students. *(taken from DES RSE Template)*
- 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).
- Circulars M4/95 and M20/96 request schools to commence a process of RSE policy development.
- The effectiveness of an RSE Programme is dependent on a collaborative policy process involving teachers, parents/guardians, members of the Board of Management and students.

Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school

The RSE policy acknowledges the importance of SPHE/RSE being taught in the context of a whole school climate that is inclusive and respectful. The RSE policy reflects the educational philosophy of the trustees and the core values and ethos of the school, as outlined in the school's mission statement above.

Spiritual, moral and ethical issues will arise when teaching RSE. Teachers of RSE understand that their role is to express the views of the whole school community on

these sensitive issues and not their own personal views and to use their professional judgement.

Schools are required to deliver all aspects of the RSE curriculum, including those in relation to sexual orientation, contraception, sexually transmitted infections etc; this will be done within a context in which teaching of the programme is informed by the school's ethos.

As teachers, we express our ethos while at the same time facilitating students in discussing a range of views in relation to topics within the RSE Programme, within a moral and spiritual framework.

What the School Currently Provides

- Single class of SPHE each week for each class in each year of the Junior Cycle.
- Development of a senior cycle RSE programme on a modular basis.
- SPHE resource box with documented meeting details & resources. Additional resources are available from the SPHE co-ordinators.
- Facilitation of training for SPHE/ RSE teachers on request

It is recognised that aspects of the SPHE Programme and more specifically RSE are currently formally addressed and supported in other subject areas. Such subject areas include Physical Education, Religious Education, Civic, Social & Political Education, Science at Junior Cycle level and Biology at Senior Level, Social Education. This programme is also supported less formally through the Pastoral Care System – the Class Tutor and Year Master System, the Home-School Liaison / the Lay Chaplain and the Guidance Counsellors.

Aims of the RSE Programme

- The RSE programme aims to build on the primary programme which strives to help young people learn, at home and at school, about their own development and about their friendships and relationships with others.
- De La Salle College aims to provide young people with information and skills to evaluate critically the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values offered today, in order that they will make positive, responsible choices about themselves and the way they live their lives.
- Relationships and sexuality education which is located in the overall framework of Social, Personal and Health Education, has as its specific aims:
 - a) To help pupils 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 pupils 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 pupils 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.

Links with other School Policies

De La Salle College's RSE Policy is an expression of the school's mission statement and is integrated with the following policies:

- Admissions Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- R.E. Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Homework Policy
- SPHE Policy
- Mobile Devices Policy
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Student ICT AUP Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy

Objectives of the RSE Programme

Key Measures

Co-ordinator(s)

The role of co-ordinator is currently a shared role and it is envisaged that the role will be shared and / or rotated among the SPHE teachers with the aim of developing and sharing expertise.

Provision of Training & Staff Development

Insofar as practicable, all resources needed in terms of time, finance and personnel, will be made available in order to develop and support the SPHE programme in this College. The Programme will be supported by the SPHE Support Service and the support team within the Health Promotion Unit of the South Eastern Health Board. The school has two appointed co-ordinators for SPHE. Teachers will have access to SPHE / RSE teaching resources. Teachers are surveyed with regards to their interest in the teaching of SPHE & RSE.

On-going CPD (Continuing Professional Development) is seen as an essential element in delivering the programme. The objectives of such training are to enhance the personal growth of the teacher and to enable the teacher to acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary to facilitate the SPHE programme. Teaching staff will be encouraged to attend in-service in SPHE & RSE. Teachers are released to attend training as needed and requested.

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.

- Copies of the SPHE/RSE Policies are made available to parents/ guardians by request and the policy will be posted on the DLS website.
- An information leaflet summarising the topics which will be taught within the junior cycle SPHE programme (including RSE modules) and the senior cycle RSE programme will be made available to all parents (see attached appendices).
- Parents / Guardians will be encouraged to look at the policy on the school website to familiarise themselves with the curriculum for the relevant year groups.

- Parents / guardians will also be directed to the sphe.ie website for specific details on the RSE programme content and for access to an information leaflet for parents.
- The Draft Policy will be circulated to the Board of Management, staff and Parents' Association prior to finalisation.
- Parents / guardians will be advised that the RSE programme will be taught and they will be offered the opportunity to withdraw their son should they so wish. In accordance with the Education Act 1998 (section 30, subsection 2e), which provides that a student is not required to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parent or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, parents / guardians have a right to withdraw their son from sensitive issues in RSE if they wish to do so. It is the responsibility of the school to make alternative arrangements for the student in this situation. The school may wish to ask the parents to put their request in writing. Parents / guardians do not have to give reasons for withdrawal, but are respectfully invited to do so should they so wish – this process may resolve any potential misunderstandings also. Once a parent's request to withdraw is made, that request must be complied with until revoked by the parent / guardian.

Visiting Speakers(taken from sample policy)

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.

Visitors will be provided, 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.

In accordance with Circular 0023/ 2010 *SPHE / RSE – Best Practice Guidelines for Post Primary Schools*, a member of the teaching staff will be present with the visitor during the talk to safeguard adherence to the RSE policy and the dissemination of information which is age appropriate.

Special Educational Needs

Students with special needs may need more assistance than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up; they may also need help in learning what behaviours are and are not acceptable in some cases. It is important that teachers and parents / guardians are mindful of this and professional judgement is used to guide the teaching of RSE in a way that is appropriate to the ability, understanding of and composition of the student group.

Ethical/Moral Considerations

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 by students and can set appropriate limits. Students may ask questions about issues which are not included in the curriculum; Teachers may choose to say that it is not appropriate to deal with a particular question at this time. On these, and on all questions, teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, the RSE curriculum and the RSE policy for the school. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised he/she should seek advice from the SPHE co-ordinator(s) or the Principal. When deciding whether or not to answer questions the teacher should consider the age and readiness of the students, the RSE programme content, the ethos of the school and the RSE 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 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. their doctor or other suitable agency. Advice offered should not be directive and should be appropriate to the age of the pupil.

Confidentiality

While students should not be encouraged to disclose personal or private information in SPHE/RSE classes, there may be times when they do talk about their own lives. Ground rules regarding group discussion should be outlined and discussed at the beginning of the class. Confidentiality should be respected unless a teacher becomes aware that a child is at risk, at risk of any type of abuse or in breach of the law, the teacher must refer this immediately to the DLP (Designated Liaison Person). The DLP, in accordance with Child Protection Procedures for Primary & Post-primary Schools 2011.

It is important that students are made aware of the limits of confidentiality and that teachers do not give unconditional guarantees of confidentiality. Pupils should be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the DLP and possibly to the parents if the DLP decides that it is in the best interest of the pupil to notify parents. Teachers should use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard information; 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.

In relation to RSE, it is advisable for teachers to give young people information on the age of consent which, following the passage of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act, 2006, is 17 years of age for both males and females. In cases of under-age sexual activity, the Child Protection Guidelines for Primary & Post-Primary

Schools (2011) state: 'In all cases where a school becomes aware of underage sexual intercourse the school shall take appropriate steps to inform the child's parents.'

The Child Protection Guidelines for Primary & Post Primary schools state in 4.1.1. and 4.2.1.

4.1.1. If a member of staff receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse he/she should, without delay, report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person in that school. A written record of the report should be made and placed in a secure location by the Designated Liaison Person. The need for confidentiality at all times, as previously referred to in Chapter 1 Paragraph 1.2 of these guidelines, should be borne in mind. The supports of the school should continue to be made available to the child.

4.2.1 If the Designated Liaison Person is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation he/she should report the matter to the HSE immediately.

Sexual Activity

It is advisable for teachers to give young people information on the age of consent which, following the passage of the [Criminal Law \(Sexual Offences\) Act, 2006](#), is 17 years of age for both males and females. It is acknowledged in this policy that in light of the rapid pace of social change in Ireland over the last number of years the lived experiences of the students with regards to sexual activity may cause both a sense of confusion among parents, teachers and students and a sense of conflict with the religious ethos of a school.

Family Planning

The post-primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines state that the subject of family planning should be covered within the Senior Cycle RSE programme. There is a lesson on family planning in the RSE Senior Cycle Resource Materials on P77.

The RSE programme requires that young people are provided with information about methods of contraception, but consideration needs to be given by the policy committee to the moral and values framework within which it is taught. Schools can use their discretion with regard to the age at which students receive any aspect of the RSE programme e.g. a school might decide to provide some information on contraception to students earlier than Senior Cycle. This topic will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issues in a non-directive way.

Sexual Orientation

The post-primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines include the subject of sexual orientation. There is a lesson on sexual orientation in the RSE Senior Cycle Resource Materials on P151. Teachers do not promote any one life-style as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that homosexuality will be discussed during a programme of sex education. One of the advantages of exploring issues concerning homosexuality is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions and address prejudice. Discussion of homosexuality should be appropriate to the age of the pupils

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

While awareness of STIs is one of the objectives of the Second Year SPHE/RSE syllabus, STIs are mainly addressed in Senior Cycle. There is a lesson on STIs in the RSE Senior Cycle Resource Materials on P103.

Implementation Arrangements, Roles & Responsibilities

Timetable

- SPHE is timetabled as a single 40minute period for each class group throughout the Juniorcycle - i.e. First, Second and Third year.

- Within the SPHE programme, in accordance with DES curricular guidelines, six classes are scheduled for the topic of RSE each year.
- With regards to Senior Cycle (i.e. Transition Year, 5th year and 6th year), while SPHE is not a timetabled subject, it is envisaged that the RSE module will be delivered on a modular basis of six classes (in single or double periods) for each year group. Consultation between staff and management will inform the timetabled structure of the senior cycle programme.

Training

Several members of staff have attended training specific to RSE and it is envisaged that an RSE teaching team will be developed through additional training where necessary.

Practical Issues

- It is advisable that the topic of RSE, particular in Junior Cycle, would be introduced post-Christmas so that class teachers will have a good understanding of the class group / know their students.
- Students should be informed prior to the lesson when possible of the next lessons content in case of sensitive issues; as outlined earlier students may be withdrawn by request.

Monitoring, Review and Evaluation of RSE Policy

Monitoring, review and evaluation of the RSE Policy is essential to the effectiveness of the programme. Specifically important to the RSE Programme are:

- a) Student Feedback
- b) Staff Review & Feedback
- c) Parental Feedback

Monitoring

Monitoring this RSE Policy is an ongoing process, which will take place on a regular basis.

The main areas are:

- Programme content and teaching method
- Management and organisation of RSE
- Staff and Parent/Guardian training, development and resources.

The results of the monitoring will be recorded and made available in the College office.

Review

The policy should be reviewed annually, or in the light of changing information. Review will take place in consultation with the wider College Community.

Evaluation

Three main areas of the policy to be evaluated are:

- Programme content and teaching method
- Management and organisation of SPHE
- Staff and Parent/Guardian training, development and resources.

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 23rd November 2015

Signed: _____
Fergus Dunne
Chair, Board of Management

Date: _____

Signed: _____
Margaret Betts
Principal

Date: _____