



Bush Post Primary Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy

This RSE policy was developed in accordance with:

- a. Bush Post Primary School's mission statement
- b. Guidelines as set out in Circular M4/95, M20/96, C23/10 *Social and Personal Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education-Best Practice Guidelines for Post Primary Schools* and C37/2010
- c. Guidance from SPHE and Career Guidance Departments
- d. Consultation with the Care Team
- e. Consultation with all members of the school community including students, staff and parents.
- f. The policy will be posted on the school's website.

1. Our School

Bush Post Primary is a co-educational secondary school. It was established in 1934 by County Louth VEC and is under the patronage of Louth Meath Education & Training Board. It currently has an enrolment of circa 567 students.

2. Our Mission Statement

We acknowledge the uniqueness of students in our care: each with individual needs and potentialities. The realisation of each student's potential is our mission. We recognise the importance of self-esteem. It is our mission to engender, foster and protect a positive self-image for each person in our care. Our mission is to create an effective educational environment, where our School community will thrive. This environment, managed with fairness and firmness, will allow each person in our care to develop personally, educationally, socially and spiritually. Our School Motto "Ar Thrial Na Tuiscine" translates "in Search of Understanding"

3. Definition of Relationship and Sexuality Education

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

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, spiritual 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.

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

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

- One timetabled period per week will be allocated to SPHE and out of the SPHE Programme in the year; **six timetabled periods will be assigned to RSE.**
- RSE is included in the Transition Year programme.
- Fifth and Sixth Year: RSE will be an integral part of the Religious Education Programme (minimum of six lessons per year).

9. The division between biological and non-biological aspects of sex education

The school policy is that the Science/Home Economics and SPHE Departments deal with the biological aspects of reproduction.

10. 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 wished 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 be responsible for any versions of class content passed on to them by other students. Parents/guardians wishing to withdraw their son/daughter must contact the Deputy Principal in first instance. After discussion with the Deputy Principal, if the Parent/Guardian still wishes to withdraw their child from RSE, then this request should be made in writing to the Deputy Principal in September of each year; otherwise the student will take part in the RSE classes.

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. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised they should inform/seek advice from the Deputy Principal, (Deputy Designated Liaison Person for Child Protection for Child protection), or the Principal, (Designated Liaison Person for Child Protection) as per *Child Protection Procedures and Guidelines for Post Primary Schools*.

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 Guidelines 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 in exceptional circumstance to the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

The Principal/CLP will decide whether to inform the parents/guardians and /or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling. Although there is no legal duty on a teacher, or a Principal/DLP, to inform the parents/guardians of matters which a child had confided to them:

- Teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality
- Students must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the Principal and possibly to parents/guardians if the Principal decides that it is in the best interests of the student to notify parents;
- Teachers must indicate clearly to students when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential - the student can then decide whether to proceed or not.

Where the matter is reported to the principal/ (DLP) and he or she is satisfied on advice that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation, a report should be made to HSE as per the school's Child Protection Policy, in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education and Skills' **Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary**.

The Principal will report to the Board of Management as per section 4.3 of the **Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary**.

It is essential that all times the matter be treated in strictest confidence and not discussed except among the parties mentioned above.

Outside Speakers

Outside speakers are invited to speak at Bush Post Primary and 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.

(Appendix: Details of outside speakers and agencies.)

Sexual Activity

Teachers should use their professional judgment, 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. The topic of consent is covered in RSE classes in both Junior and Senior Cycle.

Family Planning

The post primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines state the subject of the Family Planning should be covered within the Senior Cycle RSE Programme. The RSE Programme requires that young people are provided with the information about the 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 the RSE Policy for the school, while dealing with the topic of family planning.

Gender and 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 homosexuality will be discussed during a programme of sex education. The post primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines include the subject orientation which will be taught in an open and age appropriate manner in conjunction with our school's mission statement and ethos. *The Equal Status Act, 2000*, and the *Equality 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 the RSE Policy for the school, while dealing with the topic of sexual orientation. It is important that any student who is coming to terms with their sexual identity should not experience any harassment, embarrassment or isolation which may impact on their mental and emotional health and they should be offered the help of the Care Team.

Sexually Transmitted Infections

Creating awareness of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) is undertaken in second level schools. Information on STIs is mainly addressed in 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 the RSE Policy for the school, while dealing with the topic 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

Bush Post Primary School has appointed an SPHE Co-ordinator. SPHE Support Service offers training and support to teachers in both Junior and Senior Cycle RSE/RE and the school will endeavour to up skill and train the SPHE/ RE 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. Current resources include:

Junior Cycle:

RSE Resource Materials, 'B4 you decide' resources and website, Lockers, Growing Up LGBT

Senior Cycle:

NCCA Senior Cycle SPHE Curriculum, 'Trust' Resource, Growing Up LGBT

14. Monitoring of Policy

The implementation of the RSE policy will be monitored at SPHE/RSE department meetings and others 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.

- Ratified by BOM 22nd September 2016
- Reviewed December 2017
- Consultation with students, staff parent and guardians January- March 2018
- Consultation with Care Team March 8th 2018
- Consultation with Board of Management March 14th 2018
- To be re- ratified by the Board of Management final meeting Term 3 2018

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Bush Post Primary 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 00372010 request schools to commence process of RSE policy development.
- The RSE policy will guide teachers in the treatment of such issues in accordance with the mission statement and ethos of Bush Post Primary School. It is important that 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.

Programme 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>

Signed: _____
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____
(Principal)

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date of next review: _____