



Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

To be enacted after consultation with staff, parent representatives, Student Council, School management and the Board of Management.

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

A. East Glendalough School Ethos

East Glendalough School is a Church of Ireland managed co-educational Comprehensive day school under the patronage of the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin and Bishop of Glendalough. The school was established to serve the Protestant community of an area approximating to the eastern half of the diocese of Glendalough.

East Glendalough School seeks to provide a broad Christian education and to develop spiritual and moral values, personal and social skills and the highest standards of excellence in all areas of school activity. At all times, emphasis is placed on politeness, courtesy, co-operation and respect for others and their property.ⁱ

B. Our Mission

East Glendalough School aims to encourage each student to develop to his or her full potential, to mature as an individual and to become a constructive and caring member of society.

The school endeavours to equip each student with an academic education and a range of skills to enable further learning and active participation in the wider community.

The School pursues excellence through a broad Christian education and endeavours to foster a co-operative spirit. High standards of work, behaviour and respect for others are expected from all in the school. ⁱⁱ

C. *Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education*

RSE is a developmental process through experiential learning in which students participate to help cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships.ⁱⁱⁱ

D. *Relationships 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 RSE programme, as outlined in *RSE: Interim Guidelines* (1996), is designed to follow this principle and pattern. Apart from the specific lessons of RSE which look at the three themes for Post-Primary (human growth and development; human sexuality; human relationships), SPHE at Junior Cycle covers other areas which would be pertinent to the development of a healthy attitude to sexuality in 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 can contribute to the effectiveness of the RSE programme. At Senior Cycle, RSE is taught as a stand-alone module.

E. *The aims of our Relationships and Sexuality Education programme*

Relationships and sexuality education, which is located within the overall framework of Social, Personal and Health Education, has as its specific aims:

- 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.

F. *Guidelines for the management and organisation of Relationships and Sexuality Education in our school*

1. Teaching:

Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff will be made by the Principal.

2. Informing and Involving Parents:

Parents are the primary educators of their children and their role in Relationships and Sexuality Education is recognized by the School. A copy of this policy will be made available to any parent on request to the school Office and is available on-line from the School website. The School also makes available various resources for parents, including information evenings for different year groups, along with guest speakers throughout the school year to address specific issues as and when they arrive. The Parents Association Committee is a vehicle for bringing particular concerns and issues to the attention of School management.

3. Offering Advice:

The school's function is to provide a general education about RSE and not to offer individual advice, information or counselling on such issues. However, sources of professional information and advice will be identified when appropriate. Teachers may provide students 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 student (see confidentiality note in Section 5 below).

4. 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 such a question at that time. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised he/she should seek advice from the SPHE co-ordinator 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.

5. Confidentiality:

It is East Glendalough School policy that in circumstances where a student is considered at some risk of any type of abuse or in breach of the law, engaging in risky behavior (whether of a sexual or substance-use nature), the teacher must refer this immediately to the Principal. The Principal will decide whether to inform the parents and/or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling.

The following is also school policy:

a) teachers cannot not promise absolute confidentiality;

- b) students must be made aware that any information may if necessary be conveyed to the Principal and possibly to parents if the Principal decides that it is in the best interests of the student to notify parents;
- c) teachers must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard any disclosure of information;
- d) 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.

The Child Protection Guidelines for Post-Primary schools state in 4.1 and 4.2.1.^{iv}

4.1 *If a member of staff receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been abused or neglected, or is being abused or neglected, or is at risk of abuse or neglect he/she shall, without delay, report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person in that school. A written record of the report shall be made and placed in a secure location by the DLP. The need for confidentiality at all times, as previously referred to in section 1.9 of these procedures, shall be borne in mind. The supports of the school shall continue to be made available to the child.*

4.2.1 *If the DLP is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation (section 3.4 of these procedures refers) he/she shall report the matter to the HSE immediately.*

6. **Withdrawing students from the RSE programme:**

The School recognises that a parent/guardian has the right to withdraw their child from an RSE class if they wish to do so. The Principal may wish to ask the parents/guardians to put their request in writing or the parent/guardian may be invited to discuss this with the Principal. We respectfully invite the parent/guardian to give reasons for withdrawal as sometimes this can resolve misunderstandings. Parents may be offered access to appropriate information or resources.

7. **Using visiting speakers and others**

The RSE programme will be delivered openly by teachers who are known and trusted by students. However, visitors may enhance the quality of the provision and may be used in addition to, not instead of, a planned programme of RSE. The visitor should be provided with a copy of the RSE policy prior to the visit. A member of teaching staff should be present with the visitor during the talk to ensure that the RSE policy is strictly adhered to.

8. **LGBT**

The subject of sexual orientation is included in the RSE curriculum at senior cycle. The topic may need to be addressed before senior cycle. Discretion will be used with regard to the age at which students discuss homosexuality and transgender

issues, and they should be discussed in a clear and open manner and in a non-directive way.

9. **Contraception**

This topic will be dealt with in an age-appropriate, open manner, looking at information on the issue in a non-directive way.

10. **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. In some cases, RSE may be best addressed in a Learning Support/Resource context, or in the School's ASD Unit.

11. **Practical considerations**

SPHE is timetabled once a week for Junior Cycle students. RSE is taught as a module within this SPHE programme. In Transition Year RSE is taught within the TY programme as a 9-week block. Senior cycle students receive RSE lessons as part of their 5th and 6th Year Tutorial classes. RSE/SPHE class groups may have as many as 30 students. Boys and girls will be taught together in their class groups though it may on occasion be appropriate to have single-sex classes for some sections of the RSE programme.

G. *Ongoing support, development and review*

Training:

1. Teachers involved in this work do not necessarily have to be 'experts' on the issues concerned. However, they do require sensitivity to the needs of the group, an ability to deal with questions openly/honestly and a preparedness to refer to more expert advice if necessary. The skills acquired in general teaching apply also to health education. Furthermore, many teachers have training in related areas such as counselling. Some teachers have expert training in the specific areas of health, relationships and sexuality education and will be encouraged to train other teachers.
2. The school will facilitate teachers to obtain expert training in this field, bearing in mind the overall budgetary framework and the need for the ongoing teaching and learning programme of the school to continue with as little disturbance as possible.

Resources:

The school will purchase and access 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.

Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the RSE programme:

We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this programme.

Specifically important to the RSE Programme are:

- a) student feedback;
- b) staff review and feedback;
- c) parental feedback

Reviewed and approved by the

Parents' Association Committee:

March 2015

Student Council:

March 2015

Teaching Staff:

March 2015

Board of Management:

March 2015

ⁱ See *East Glendalough School Ethos*

ⁱⁱ See *East Glendalough School Mission Statement*

ⁱⁱⁱ DES Central Policy Unit, 2007

^{iv} See *East Glendalough School Child Protection Policy*