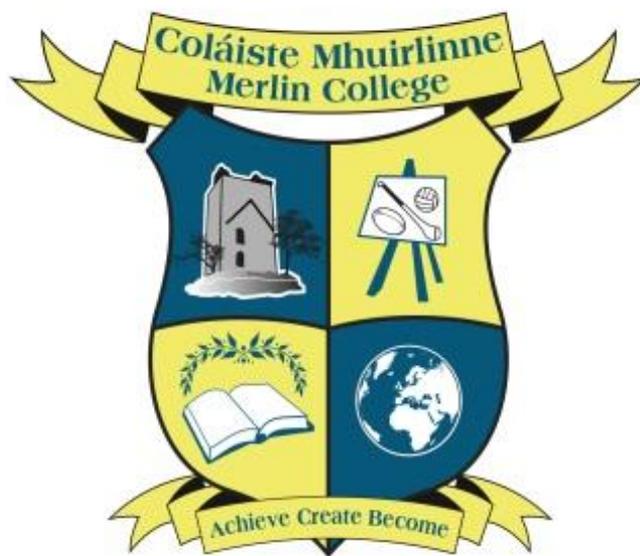


RSE Policy.

Coláiste Mhuirlinne/ Merlin College

Doughiska,

Galway City.



**Ratified by the Board of
Management on 29th
January, 2015.**



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Our School Philosophy

Coláiste Mhuirlinne/Merlin College

Mission Statement:

Our aim is to foster an environment of respect, integrity and positive learning in a safe and enjoyable setting.

The school sets out to create a happy, caring and secure environment in which the individual student is able to develop his or her full potential. An awareness of the needs of others in our community is recognised and respected. Within a supportive atmosphere every student is expected to behave responsibly and through enjoyment, enthusiasm and self-discipline becomes a better person. We recognise the need for mutual respect, trust and support, and every possible encouragement is given to develop good patterns of behaviour. The role of the parents in education is respected and the on-going liaison with and the involvement of parents is encouraged. As regards RSE the involvement of parents is also encouraged.

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.

In schools, RSE will provide structured opportunities for pupils to acquire a knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral and social framework

This approach gives opportunities to young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible manner

Relationship of RSE to SPHE

In the school setting, RSE will be taught in the context of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).

The Draft guidelines for RSE (NCCA, June 1995, 1.2) state that SPHE is '*spiral, developmental in nature and age appropriate in content and methodology*'. The RSE programme and lessons will be delivered within the schools existing SPHE programme. In accordance with the curriculum six lessons is delivered to each year group every year. Apart from these specific lessons, SPHE 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 issues such as self-esteem, assertiveness, communication and decision-making skills – all of which contribute to the effectiveness of the RSE programme.



Topics for RSE at Junior Cycle

YEAR 1

- “Me” as unique & different
- Friendship
- Changes at adolescence
- The reproductive system
- Images of male & female
- Respecting myself & others

YEAR 2

- From conception to birth
- Recognising & expressing feelings & emotions
- Peer pressure & other influences
- Managing relationships
- Making responsible decisions
- Health & personal safety

YEAR 3

- Body image
- Where am I now?
- Relationships – what is important?
- The three Rs: Respect, Rights & Responsibilities
- Conflict

Topics for RSE at Senior Cycle

Topics for Relationships and Sexuality Education will build on elements covered in Junior Cycle and will treat issues in ways suitable for the young adult. Topics will include:

Human growth & development:

- Fertility & family planning
- A deeper understanding of pregnancy & the developing foetus

Human sexuality:

- Treating women & men with equal respect
- Sexual harassment
- Sexual abuse, rape, legal rights: voluntary & statutory agencies
- Making moral & healthy choices regarding sexual activity

Human relationships:

- An awareness of what constitutes a loving relationship

The long term commitment involved in marriage

- Parenting & family life



Aims of our RSE Programme

Relationships and Sexuality education (RSE) has specific aims:

- to promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction
- to promote an understanding of sexuality
- to promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's relationship with others
- to help young people understand and develop friendships and relationships
- to enable young people to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral and social framework

The Management and Organisation of RSE

1. Teaching the programme:

Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff will be made by the Principal. All classes are of mixed gender and mixed ability and no special arrangements are made for this.

2. Informing and Involving Parents:

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. A copy of this policy will be made available to any parent on request to the School Office. A letter is sent to parents informing them of when the RSE programme will be taught (See also Appendix 1)

3. 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 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 (further information is available from the Guidance Counsellor). Advice offered should not be directive and should be appropriate to the age of the student.

4. Explicit Questions:

It is unlikely to be appropriate to deal with a student's explicit questions by dealing with it in front of the whole class, e.g. questions on oral sex. In practice this means that teachers should say that it is not appropriate to deal with that question at this time. The teacher may also exercise his or her own professional judgement in deciding whether to answer the question privately after the class has finished. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised he/she should seek advice from the Guidance Counsellor or the Designated Liaison Person, in this case the Principal, or the Deputy Designated Liaison Person.

5. Confidentiality:

It is school policy that in circumstances where a student 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 Designated Liaison Person, in this case the Principal, or the Guidance Counsellor. The Principal will



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

- a) Teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality
- b) Students 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 student 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 students when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential - the student can then decide whether to proceed or not.

The pamphlet “Procedures for Dealing with Allegations or Suspicions of Child Abuse” issued by the Department of Education contains the following in paragraph 4.1:

If a teacher receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a pupil is being abused, the teacher should, in the first instance, report the matter to the principal or in exceptional circumstances directly to the Chairperson of the Board. Where the matter is reported to the principal and he or she is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation the Chairperson or Manager should be advised. The Chairperson or Manager, together with the teacher, should report the matter to the local Director of Community Care/Medical Officer of Health. It is essential that at all times the matter be treated in the strictest confidence and not discussed except among the parties mentioned above.

(Note: In the case of this school, the Principal as Designated Liaison Person acts also as Manager in this respect.)

6. Withdrawing pupils from the RSE programme:

1. Relevant sections of this policy are made available to parents in the school publication of Information for Parents in First year together with details about the parent’s right to withdraw their child from many aspects of RSE – parents will always be provided with a full copy of this policy following a request to do so. Parents will be sent a letter informing them of when the RSE programme is being taught in class (See also Appendix 1)
2. Parents do not have to give reasons for withdrawal, but we respectfully invite them to do so - sometimes we can then resolve misunderstandings. Once a parent’s request to withdraw is made, that request must be complied with until revoked by the parent. (See also appendix 2).

7. Using visiting speakers and others

- a) It is school policy that most of the RSE programme is best discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by the students. 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
- b) The SPHE Co-ordinator will provide the visitor, 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. Issues to consider are:



- i) The degree of explicitness of the content and presentation
 - ii) Will the visitor be accompanied by teaching staff?
 - iii) Will the staff take an active role in the visitor's activities?
 - iv) How will the visitor be prepared for the visit?
 - v) How will the visit be built upon and followed up?
- c) Visitors should be given advance notice of the composition of the class and an idea of how their contribution fits into the scheme of work.
- d) In order to inform the visitor of the precise requirements of a group and to make better use of the time of the visitor it is advisable for the group to draw up questions in advance and these should be forwarded to the visitor. This will involve the students in the visit and will make the experience more relevant for them - it also facilitates planning.
- e) The Office should be informed of the date and name of the visitor.
- f) Where applicable, refreshments should be arranged with the school catering staff.
- g) The visitor should be welcomed at the main door.
- h) At the end of the session a vote of thanks should be given by a student and the visitor escorted to the main door after refreshments.
- i) Written acknowledgement of their contribution should be sent to the visitor.

Support, Development and Review of RSE

All involved in the delivery and development of a programme of RSE will require the support of a range of training and in-career development opportunities. Support and training will be needed in areas such as: programme content, student/teacher relationship and methodologies.

On-going parent education programmes will be encouraged through the P.T.A.

The evaluation of RSE will be ongoing and will involve all those involved in the SPHE Department and in the planning process. Regular meeting will facilitate such ongoing evaluation. Evaluation will be under the following headings:

- Whole School Evaluation: This will address the impact of the RSE programme on the whole school environment. It may include a range of issues from how students relate to each other inside and outside the RSE classroom, to the resource requirements for the effective running of the programme.
- Programme Evaluation: This will examine the programme itself, the relationship between the different stages of the programme, the building in of cross-curricular links, student and parent perception of the programme and resources and strategies useful in the delivery of the programme.