



Sligo Grammar School, The Mall, Sligo, Ireland

## RSE POLICY

### **1. Sligo Grammar School**

It is a co-educational boarding and day school. The school mainly serves students from Church of Ireland families but also serves students from other denomination and faiths.

Sligo Grammar School has approximately 410 students over 6 year groups.

### **2. Sligo Grammar School Philosophy/Mission Statement.**

Sligo Grammar School aims to promote excellence in an inclusive and supportive community that reflects Christian values, where every member is entitled to achieve his or her full potential.

A Code of Conduct has been published after consultation with parents, staff and pupils

It is underwritten with a belief in the right of each member of the community

- to have the opportunity to learn
- to be happy both in the academic and leisure environments
- to be treated fairly
- to be safe

The code seeks to ensure that pupils are aware of the high standards of behaviour that are expected of them and the way in which inappropriate behaviour will be responded to.

### **Aims of the Code**

1. That each pupil will develop and demonstrate good behaviour appropriate to the circumstances surrounding them.
2. To develop good behaviour enabling pupils to take their place as responsible members of society.
3. That the teaching and learning environment is orderly and conducive to the pupils' right to learn.
4. To ensure fair and equal treatment of each pupil
5. To support the moral and social development of each pupil.
6. To promote respect for the diversity of backgrounds, opinions, cultures and needs of others.
7. That each member of the community respects both personal and school property.

### **3. Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education**

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

### **4. 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 is designed to follow this principle and pattern. Apart from the specific lessons of RSE, 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 many issues such as self-esteem, assertiveness, communication and

decision-making skills - all of which can contribute to the effectiveness of the RSE programme.

## **5. The Aims of our Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme**

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

- To help pupils 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 helps them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way
- To enable pupils to go forward confidently into adult life with a good self-image, an understanding of their own physical and emotional development and as people who respect themselves and others.

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

Staff and students are provided with set texts in accordance with the Department of Education guidelines and the ethos of the school. These are supplemented with other relevant resources as necessary. Arrangements regarding the timetabling and deployment of staff are the responsibility of the Headmaster.

Issues that may arise in the RSE class will be addressed in a manner that takes account of:

- the ethos of the school,

- The Child Protection Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools (Department of Education and Skills).
- other relevant recommendations and circulars published by bodies such as the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and the Department of Education & Skills,

## **7. Informing and Involving Parents**

Sligo Grammar School acknowledges the right and duty of parents to provide for the religious, moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children. The school will play a supportive and complementary role to the home in this task in its provision of SPHE. Sligo Grammar School will involve parents in the formulation of its policy by consulting with the Parents' Association representatives. A copy of this policy will be made available to any parent on request to the school Office.

## **8. 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.

## **9. Withdrawing pupils from the RSE programme.**

Parents who hold conscientious or moral objections to the inclusion of their son/daughter in the RSE programme or certain aspects of the programme have the right to withdraw their child. Written indication will be required by the Headmaster in this regard. Parents do not have to give their reasons but the

school respectfully invites them to do so as sometimes the school can resolve misunderstandings. Once a parents request to withdraw is made, that request must be complied with until revoked by the parents. See also Appendix 1

#### **10. 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, guest speakers 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 School Chaplain/SPHE Co-ordinator will provide the visitor well in advance a copy of Sligo Grammar School RSE policy and make them aware of the ethos of the school Approval from the Headmaster for the visit is a must.

#### Issues to consider

- Degree of explicitness of the content and presentation
- Will teaching staff be present?
- Will staff take an active role in the activities?
- How will the visit be built upon and followed up?

## **11. 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 SPHE Co-ordinator or the Headmaster. When deciding whether or not to answer questions the teacher should use their professional judgement, and should consider the age and readiness of the students, the RSE programme content, the ethos of the school and the RSE policy.

## **12. Confidentiality**

It is school policy that in circumstances where a pupil is considered at some risk of any type of abuse or in breach of the law, the teacher must refer this immediately to the Headmaster. The Headmaster will decide whether to inform the parents and/or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling.

The following is also school policy:

- teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality;
- pupils must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the Headmaster and possibly to parents if the Headmaster decides that it is in the best interests of the pupil to notify parents;
- teachers must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard the 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.

The Child Protection Guidelines for 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 relevant health board immediately.

In cases of under-age sexual activity, p10 of the Child Protection Procedures and Guidelines for Post Primary Schools (2004) 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.

### **13. The division between biological and non-biological aspects of sex education:**

The school policy is that the Science Department deals primarily with the biological aspects of reproduction.

### **14. Homosexuality**

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. The School's ethos is to value unity in diversity. *'The school encourages tolerance and acceptance. It promotes an ethic of care and respect for others'*

### **15. Contraception**

This topic will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issues in a non-directive way.

### **16. 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.

### **17. RSE Programme Content**

Teachers will use materials deemed suitable and appropriate for student needs and in accordance with the school ethos. The content of the RSE Programme is described under three themes.

#### Human Relationships



This theme focuses on the importance of relationships for health and well-being. It examines how one relates to self and others, stressing the importance of self-esteem as a basis for worthwhile friendships and relationships. It addresses issues such as communications, influence, intimacy, sexual attraction and sexual expression in relationships consistent with moral integrity.

The schools ethos expects an acceptance of personal responsibility for decisions and actions.

**Marriage:**

A discussion of marriage and the family unit within the context of modern society and the school ethos.

Human Sexuality

Sexuality is an integral part of the human personality and has biological, psychological, cultural, social and spiritual dimensions. The theme offers opportunities to develop a holistic understanding of sexuality as contributing to the development of personal well-being, enhancing personal and family relationships and ultimately contributing to the well-being of society.

Human Growth and Development

This theme consists of an age appropriate understanding of the biology and psychology of the human life cycle. This is accompanied by a rationale for responsible behaviour in relationships and sexual activity.

## **18. Provision for on-going support, development and review**

### **Training:**

- All 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 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
- The school will facilitate teachers to obtain expert training in this field, bearing in mind the overall budgetary framework and the need for the on-going teaching and learning programme of the school to continue with as little disturbance as possible.

### **Resources:**

- The school will purchase appropriate RSE teaching materials, which have been identified by staff as useful and which have been approved by the Headmaster, 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:

- pupil feedback;
- staff review and feedback;
- Parental feedback.

## **Appendix 1**

What we do if a request for withdrawal from the RSE programme is made by a parent:

- we discuss the nature of the concerns with the child's parent and if appropriate attempt to reassure them (initially such discussion takes place at a meeting with the Junior/Senior Co-ordinator and SPHE Co-ordinator, (the Headmaster may become involved if necessary)
- 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 RSE 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 RSE programme;
- we attempt to ensure that where a pupil is withdrawn there is no disruption to other parts of their education,
- 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;
- we also point out that pupils may receive inaccurate information from their peers;
- We offer the parents access to appropriate information and resources.

**Approved: 10<sup>th</sup> September 2013**

**Review: 2015 /16 or as required**