



**St. Clement's College
Social, Personal and Health
Education (SPHE) &
Relationships and Sexuality
Education (RSE) Policy**

Social, Personal and Health Education Policy

Mission Statement

St. Clement's Redemptorist College facilitates the development of each student to his full academic, personal, spiritual, and social potential in a Catholic, caring, respectful and safe environment.

The policy is developed within the context of the DEIS core values which looks out for students at risk or are experiencing educational disadvantage.

It also aims to foster the full potential of all staff and students and a positive partnership between all members of the school and wider community.

Definition of SPHE

The Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Curriculum supports the personal development, health and wellbeing of young people and helps them create and maintain supportive relationships.

Participation in the SPHE Programme provides the pupil with insight to a wide range of issues through a variety of learning experiences. These issues include physical and mental health, communication, relationships, sexuality, influences and decisions, substance use and safety. The SPHE Programme emphasis is to build a foundation of skills, values, attitudes and understanding relevant to all these issues.

Aims of SPHE at Junior Cycle

- ★ To build students' self-awareness and positive self-worth;
- ★ To develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, dispositions and values that will support them to lead fulfilling and healthy lives;
- ★ Empower them to create, nurture and maintain respectful and loving relationships with self and others; and enhance their capacity to contribute positively to society.

(The Junior Cycle SPHE specification 2023)

Aims of SPHE at Senior Cycle

- ★ Senior cycle SPHE aims to support students in making choices for health and wellbeing
- ★ develop self-awareness through opportunities to reflect on thoughts, values, attitudes and feelings
- ★ enhance students' knowledge and understanding of essential health concepts and the wider influences on health and wellbeing to enable informed decision making

- ★ develop students' self-efficacy; the confidence to think and behave independently especially in the face of social pressure
- ★ strengthen students' capacity to empathise with another person's situation, feelings and motives in order to enhance relationships with other people
- ★ develop coping strategies for adolescence and adult life in support of greater resilience
- ★ develop students' health literacy skills, including the ability to obtain, critically evaluate and act on health information in support of health and wellbeing
- ★ develop a willingness to participate in the creation and maintenance of healthy communities and environments.

School Ethos and SPHE

The SPHE policy embodies the ethos enshrined in the Mission Statement of the school, encompassing the characteristic spirit of St. Clement's which is based on the values of the Redemptorist Educational Philosophy. It is underpinned by a philosophy of education that has at its centre, the unique dignity of the person as a child of God. The interaction of people from different backgrounds is perceived as a gift that will enrich the community of the school and promote the growth and learning of all. The school values each student and his family. It welcomes and is sensitive to each student, seeking to meet their individual needs.

The general aim of the SPHE Programme is to contribute to the development of all aspects of the individual for personal and family life, for living in the community and for leisure. The SPHE education offered to our young people is as important as any other area of the curriculum and is conducted under the umbrella of both our "Wellbeing" and "Religious Education" policies.

Our School Ethos, which strives to ensure personal fulfillment for all in our school community, reflects the support needed and provided for the SPHE Programme. Cross-curricular teaching also highlights the importance of the issues addressed in SPHE. It builds and affirms the various Life Skills, Health Education and Pastoral Care programs in operation in St. Clement's College.

SPHE Policy Context and Rationale

The school acknowledges that the primary responsibility for the personal development of children rests with their parents. However, it also accepts its role in supporting parents in this work, as outlined in the 1998 Education Act.

Section 4 of the Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools requires schools to have an agreed policy for Relationships, Sexuality, Education (RSE) and a suitable RSE Programme in place for all students at both Junior and Senior Cycle.

The school adopts and adheres to the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Revised 2023) with the Principal and Deputy Principal as Designated Liaison Persons (DLP).

The policy is informed by:

- ★ The Mission Statement of the Redemptorists and the DEIS charter
- ★ The Wellbeing Policy
- ★ The Code of Ethics and Behaviour
- ★ The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Revised 2023)
- ★ The Internet Acceptable Use policy
- ★ The AEN policy
- ★ The Whole School Guidance Plan
- ★ The Bí Cineálta Policy

The connection between Wellbeing, SPHE and RSE policies

The school culture provides the context the development and promotion of the core values of SPHE and RSE education. Teachers and extracurricular activities aim to create an environment which supports SPHE and where:

- ★ People feel valued
- ★ Self-esteem is fostered
- ★ Fairness and tolerance are evident
- ★ High expectations are the norm
- ★ Those having difficulty are supported
- ★ Communication is open

- ★ Effort is recognised
- ★ Difference is valued
- ★ Conflict is handled constructively
- ★ Initiative and creativity are stressed
- ★ Social, moral and civic values are promoted.

Parents

Parents have the primary responsibility for the social, personal and health development of their children. Their contribution and involvement is vital to the effective implementation of the SPHE curriculum. Keeping parents informed and involved therefore is hugely important. This can be done primarily through the Parents' Association. Access to the school RSE policy will also be of benefit to all concerned.

Current Practice

Currently SPHE is offered to all classes in junior cycle and senior cycle. Two periods per week has been allocated to all first year groups, two classes a week for second years and one class for third year groups. TY classes also have an SPHE class and the RSE programme is delivered during RE classes for 5th and 6th years students.

There is an SPHE coordinator in the school. The class teacher is the person who delivers the SPHE lesson, and there are in-service and training courses available to teachers. In addition, SPHE resources are available in a resource area in the staffroom.

All SPHE teachers are provided with a copy of the SPHE policy and a copy of the SPHE syllabus and guidelines. Adherence to the school's policies (RSE; Substance Misuse etc.) when teaching this subject is essential. Following school procedures on matters of referral and confidentiality is also crucial for best practice. While visitors to the school are welcomed, it is necessary to prepare both the speaker and the students in advance.

Assessment

While students do not sit an SPHE examination there is an assessment at the end of each module conducted through "personal reflection". Written homework is not usually given but research work, either individually or as a group, may be required.

Use of a folder by each student where all work is filed is a useful way of recording content and development. On an individual basis, teachers of the programme could request feedback from students when an area has been completed to enable them to learn what worked or didn't work, which helps improve the SPHE Programme.

Provision of Support, Training and Staff Development

- ★ A Coordinator of SPHE has been provided
- ★ Teachers are encouraged and facilitated to attend RSE and SPHE training
- ★ Teachers of SPHE and RSE have access to teaching materials and resources
- ★ Teachers who express an interest in SPHE and RSE will be given consideration

Guest speakers

Outside speakers are sometimes invited into the SPHE/RSE class to facilitate learning on specific aspects of the programme. It is school policy that the coordinator will inform the speaker, well in advance of the visit, of the SPHE policy on the website and request they familiarise themselves with its content.

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

The following policy was drafted by the RSE policy committee and the guidance staff, in conjunction with the SPHE teachers, the Parents' Council and the Students' Council. The RSE policy is an accumulation of consultation, collaboration and research, and it is hoped that this document will be comprehensive and informative and will provide guidance and direction to all in the teaching of RSE.

School Mission Statement

Our mission in St. Clement's College is the holistic education of the individual, enabling students to become responsible, caring members of society as well as encouraging them to reach their full potential. In our daily lives we value the principles of justice and mutual respect embracing all denominations and cultures. We endeavour to nurture and maintain a school community which involves the partnership of staff, students, parents, trustees and the local community. In the pursuit of this ideal we provide a broad and balanced range of curricular and extra-curricular experiences for all students.

Relationship to the School Mission Statement

The mission of St. Clement's College is the education of the individual as a whole person. This ideal is realised by building on foundations which have been laid in the home. Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a process which provides structured information and promotes the development of responsible attitudes, values and beliefs about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy.

The RSE programme reflects and contributes to the ethos of St. Clement's College, which is to teach moral values, attitudes and behaviour patterns which engender respect towards oneself and others, promoting self-esteem and an appreciation of one's own dignity. It is developmental in nature and age appropriate in content. It counteracts the information received from peers and the media which may not be accurate and empowers students to make responsible choices.

Rationale

Sexuality is a key element of healthy social and personal development. Young people are exposed to a bewildering 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.

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.

Scope

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 RSE and SPHE. It is therefore important that all teachers are familiar with the RSE policy. Furthermore, the policy will apply to school staff, students, board of management, parents/guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators.

Definition of RSE

RSE is an integral part of Social, Personal and Health Education and must be taught in this context. It provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality and relationships through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework. (p.5 NCCA interim curriculum and guidelines for RSE.)

Aims of our RSE Programme

Relationships and Sexuality education, which is located in the overall framework of SPHE has its own specific aims:

- ★ To help students develop healthy friendships and to promote a positive sense of self-awareness.
- ★ To promote a healthy attitude to sexuality and relationships.
- ★ To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the student.
- ★ To foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- ★ To enable the child to acquire an understanding of, and respect for, human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction.

Aim of RSE at Junior Cycle

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is an integral part of, and connects with, aspects of SPHE. It is of particular importance for young people at this stage of their lives as they reflect on questions such as ‘what kind of person am I?’ and ‘what matters for me in relationships?’ As they continue to form their identity, they are making sense of life experiences, information, images and messages about relationships and sexuality from a range of informal sources such as their peers, family, the media, online world. Having the opportunity to think about and discuss relationships, sexuality and healthy sexual expression within a safe classroom setting and with a skilled teacher is vitally important. (page 4 Junior Cycle SPHE Specification 2023)

Aims of RSE at Senior Cycle

- ★ Explore personal thoughts, values, attitudes and feelings about relationships
- ★ Develop an understanding of the different types of relationships, what is important in them and the skills to enhance relationships
- ★ Promote empathy with others who have different cultural values, attitudes and beliefs about family, relationships, sex and sexuality
- ★ Develop students’ knowledge, understanding and skills in support of sexual and reproductive health
- ★ Develop students’ understanding of sexuality and sexual orientation and the importance of an inclusive environment
- ★ Develop personal and interpersonal skills which support beginning, maintaining and ending relationships
- ★ Develop skills for coping with peer pressure, conflict, and threats to personal safety

Relationships and Sexuality

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is an integral part of Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle SPHE and the Wellbeing curriculum.

Relationships and sexuality education (RSE) is important for young people at this stage of their lives. They are exposed to a lot of information about relationships and sex from informal sources, the media and online. SPHE provides the context within which young people can learn about important physical, social, emotional and moral issues around relationships, sexual health, sexuality and gender identity, including where to get reliable information from trusted sources. (NCCA, Short Course Specification 2016 p4)

The RSE programme forms part of the SPHE programme. The 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. The content of the school’s SPHE programme includes a wide range of topics such as self-esteem, self-identity, assertiveness, motivation, effective communication decision-making skills, bullying, healthy eating, hygiene and safety – all of which can contribute to the effectiveness of the RSE programme.

Management and Organisation of RSE in our School

Content Provision

SPHE/RSE is offered to students through formal and informal activities in the school. Our school recognises a whole school approach to the development of the school programme, which promises the participation of all members of the school community, carries the greatest likelihood of success. The values inherent in the programme should be consistent with the core values of the school ethos.

- ★ To ensure an adequate response to the needs of all students, specific provision for RSE is made within the schools Social, Personal and Health Education programme at both Junior and Senior Level.
- ★ At Junior Cycle, SPHE is allocated two class periods per week for 1st years, 2nd and 3rd years receive one class period per week.
- ★ At Senior Cycle RSE will be covered as part of SPHE for TY’s which is allocated 1 class per week and RE for 5th and 6th years which is allocated two class periods per week.
- ★ All the resource materials for RSE developed by teachers are in line with the NCCA RSE curriculum guidelines.
- ★ Aspects of RSE/SPHE are offered across the curriculum in subjects such as Science, Biology, Civic Social and Personal Education, Guidance and Counselling classes, Physical Education, Religious Education and during school developed programmes in Social Personal and Health Education.
- ★ Counselling and Chaplaincy Services, Guest Speakers, year heads, management and the Student Support Team also deal with support pertaining to SPHE and RSE.

The teaching methods for the Relationships and Sexuality module within SPHE will be based on sound pedagogic principles. These teaching methods will be student centered and appropriate to the age and stage of development of the pupils. Every effort will be made to create a class atmosphere which respects the privacy of each student and treats all students with sensitivity and care.

All programmes will be reviewed and evaluated regularly. The teacher in his/her professional capacity is ideally the person who will deliver the school based programme. Guest Speakers and community resources can be used to supplement, complement and support the already established RSE programme. Parents/Guardians are welcome to view the full teaching resources for SPHE/RSE.

Provision of Training and Staff Development

Inservice training in RSE is one of the key elements in promoting its inclusion. Management is responsible for the relevant expressed and perceived training needs of SPHE teachers and whole staff. SPHE is enhanced when the appointment of teachers to the subject has been negotiated in advance of timetabling.

As part of the RSE programme all teachers will have access to RSE teaching materials.

Inclusion of Parents and Guardians

Our school is committed to working with parent(s)/guardian(s) and acknowledges that parents have, by law, the primary responsibility for the education of their children and that the home is the natural environment in which Relationship and Sexuality Education should take place. Parents shall be fully consulted and informed of the development of the RSE programme. The parents of incoming first years and new students will be provided with a summary of the three year SPHE/RSE programme. Parents will be informed every year about the commencement date of RSE.

Participation

Each parent/guardian has the right to withdraw their child from some or all RSE classes but parents are encouraged to provide alternative RSE at home. The school will respect this choice. It will be necessary for parents of any student opting out of RSE to make suitable arrangements with the school Principal for the welfare of their child at these times. Where students are withdrawn from RSE the school cannot take responsibility for any versions of class content passed on to them by others. **Parents/Guardians wishing to withdraw their son/daughter from RSE must inform the Principal in writing of their decision in September of each year, otherwise the students will take part in the RSE classes.**

Sensitive Issues

Class discussion will be of a general nature, and will be respectful of all individuals in accordance with the class ground rules. Inappropriate questions will not be answered by a teacher in class. The SPHE teacher may exercise his or her own professional judgement in deciding whether to answer the question privately after the class has finished. This must be done in harmony with the ethos of the school. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised he/she should seek advice from the Principal, Deputy Principal, Year head, Student Support Team, Chaplain and/or Guidance Counsellor.

Confidentiality

While students should not be encouraged to disclose personal or private information in SPHE/RSE class there will be times when they do talk about their own lives. Confidentiality should be respected unless the teacher becomes aware that a child is at risk, in which case the following limits of confidentiality must be observed. These limits are:

- ★ Child abuse: i) Physical, ii) Emotional, iii) Sexual, iv) Neglect
- ★ Intention to harm self or others
- ★ Substance misuse
- ★ Underage sexual intercourse

It is important that students are made aware of the limits of confidentiality at the beginning of the year and where possible before making disclosures.

If a disclosure is made by the child, or a teacher ascertains that a child is at risk, the appropriate action will be taken, i.e. follow the Child Protection Procedures and Guidelines for Post Primary Schools.

Sexuality, Gender Identity and Sexual Health

Teachers do not promote any one life-style as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that sexuality, gender identity and sexual health will be discussed during a programme of sex education. One of the advantages of exploring issues concerning, sexuality, gender identity and sexual health is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions and address prejudice. Discussion of sexuality, gender identity and sexual health should be appropriate to the age of the students. Contraception will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issues in a non-directive way.

Sexual Activity

Teachers must inform students of the age of consent, which following the passage of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences Act), is 2017, is 17 years for both males and females, and for homosexual and heterosexual sex. If a teacher becomes aware that a student is sexually active under the age of consent the teacher must inform the schools DLP.

Students with Additional 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.

Referral

While it is acknowledged that teachers have a professional responsibility to impart the SPHE course content, the personal, social and emotional needs of our students are responded to in a caring and supportive manner. Where it is appropriate, the teacher may refer students to other supportive links within the school. As far as possible this should be done in negotiation with the student. The teacher should inform the class of external services relevant to the class material. This should be done within the context of the St. Clement's College ethos.

Guest Speakers

Visiting speakers can play a valuable role in supplementing, complementing and supporting the SPHE/RSE programme. The SPHE coordinator inviting speakers must

- ★ Inform the principal
- ★ Make the speaker aware of the school ethos and relevant school policies.
- ★ Agree the content of the presentation
- ★ Where applicable inform the parents
- ★ Evaluate the presentation in terms of subject matter, messages, structure, methodology, and proposed learning outcomes
- ★ Ensure all classroom teachers remain in the classroom for the duration of the presentation.

Implementation Arrangements, Roles and Responsibilities

How staff will be informed

The policy will be available for all staff in the school to view. It will be included in the policy documents and it will be put up on SharePoint. Copies will be distributed to all individual SPHE teachers.

How Parents and Students will be informed

Present students will be informed of this policy in their SPHE and Religion classes. The policy will be available for parents to view on the school website. The aims of SPHE, the programme outline, along with the RSE policy will be given to parents of incoming students to the school.

Reviewing and Evaluating the Policy

The policy will be reviewed and evaluated every 2 years by the Board of Management. Ongoing review and evaluation will consider changing information guidelines, legislation and feedback from parents, students, teachers, and others.

Note: Submitted to Board of Management on November 19th 2025

Reviewed and ratified on November 19th 2025

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Principal/Secretary to the Board of
Management

Date of next review:
November 2027