

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) POLICY  
DONABATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE



This RSE Policy is to be reviewed by the Board of Management every two years.

This RSE Policy was agreed on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2019

Signature

(Chair Person to the Board of Management)

Principal

Date for Review September 2020

## **Donabate Community College**

Donabate Community College is a post primary college which opened in August 2008 under the Patronage of County Dublin VEC. The college is co-educational and aspires towards excellence in a caring and supportive environment.

As Donabate Community College will be catering in the foreseeable future to an ever-increasing population growth within its catchment area, the Board of Management will review the Enrolment Policy on a yearly basis.

The Board of Management is committed to the successful implementation of recent legislation, in particular the Education Act (1998), the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) and the Equal Status Act (2000). The Board fully subscribes to the principles of partnership, accountability, transparency, inclusion and respect for diversity, parental choice and equality.

### **College Mission**

The Board of Management will promote Excellence. Our aim will be to create, with the assistance of parents/guardians, responsible citizens with pride in their community. The development of the whole person will be based on personal responsibility, inter dependence, respect for people and respect for property. Our college will seek to instil integrity, value discipline and punctuality and facilitate the best in academic and non-academic areas. We will value our culture, our tradition, be inclusive of religious beliefs and will seek to be a caring and compassionate community where justice and truth will be the central elements.

## DEFINITION OF RSE

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. The education is delivered consciously and unconsciously by parents, teachers, peers, adults and the media.

In schools, RSE will provide structured opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality. They can learn this through processes which enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework.

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

## RELATIONSHIP OF RSE TO SPHE:

In our school, 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 are delivered to each year group every year.*

The SPHE Programme promotes the health and well-being of young people and addresses issues such as self-esteem, assertiveness, communication and decision making skills. Sexuality is a key area of development in the life of the adolescent.

## RSE AIMS

- To help students understand and develop friendships and relationships.
- To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction
- To give them an understanding of sexuality.
- To enable students to develop attitudes and values toward their sexuality in a moral and social framework.
- To promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's relationship with others

## Organisation of RSE in our School:

### Teaching the programme:

Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff are made by the Principal. All classes are of mixed gender and mixed ability.

The teacher will follow the Department of Education guidelines and NCCA teacher guidelines on the content covered and depth of treatment in all areas of the SPHE programme, including the delivery of the RSE lessons.

The delivery of the RSE programme will be done so with the schools values, philosophy and ethos at its core. Donabate Community College is committed to promoting respect, tolerance

and understanding while appreciating the diversity of our changing world.

### **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 parents on our school's website and a hard copy is available on request from the School Office. A letter is sent to parents informing them of when the RSE programme will be taught (See also Appendix 1). Parents have the right to withdraw their child from RSE classes.

### **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.

### **Ethical and Moral considerations when answering questions:**

The teacher can respond to questions and to decide which are most appropriate for the class group. The teacher may exercise his or her own professional judgement in deciding whether to answer questions 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 Principal.

### **Confidentiality:**

While an atmosphere of trust is a pre-requisite of RSE class, the following limits of confidentiality must be observed. These limits are:

- Child abuse-physical, emotional, sexual, neglect
- Intention to harm self or others
- Substance misuse
- Underage sexual intercourse

Any disclosure will be reported to the Designated Liaison Person in compliance with the Child Protection Policy.

RSE teachers will inform students of the limits of confidentiality at the beginning of the year, remind them at necessary points throughout the year and where possible

before making a disclosure. 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 Designated Liaison Person (Anthony Creevey). The Principal will decide whether to inform the parents or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling.

*The following is also school policy:*

- a) Teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality.
- b) Pupils 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 pupil to notify parents.
- c) Teachers must also notify the class that it is illegal to engage in sexual activities under the age of 17 and if the teacher is made aware that any student is engaged in such activity, it is their responsibility to report it to the Principal, their parents and the Gardaí.

### **Child Protection**

Child Protection Procedures 2.1.6 state "In all cases where a school becomes aware of underage sexual intercourse the school should take appropriate steps to inform the child's parents". The age for consent is 17 for boys and girls for heterosexual and homosexual sex. All students of RSE are made aware of the limits to confidentiality that should a teacher become aware that a student is at risk they are obliged to pass this information on to the DLP. However, should a student who is not at risk choose to confide in a teacher about something, the teacher should keep this information to him or herself.

### **Withdrawing pupils from the RSE programme:**

Relevant sections of this policy will be available to parents together with details about 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 do not have to give reasons for withdrawal, but we will respectfully invite them to do so in the hope that 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.

### **Using visiting speakers and others:**

It is school policy that most of the RSE programme is best discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by the pupils. 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

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 will make 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.

### **Ongoing support, development and review**

#### Training:

All teachers involved in teaching the RSE programme 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. Some teachers

have expert training in the specific areas of health, relationships and sexuality education and will be encouraged to train other teachers.

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 has RSE teaching materials which have been identified by staff as useful and which have been approved by the Principal. These are stored in the Wellbeing Resource Room. Other materials have been downloaded to a shared Drive folder which can be accessed by staff.

#### 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) Pupil feedback; b) Staff review and feedback; c) Parental feedback.

#### Links to other policies and to curriculum delivery:

Teachers with specialist knowledge in particular subject areas can support the work of RSE at different stages in the programme. At junior cycle, teachers of Home Economics and Science deal primarily with the biological aspect of reproduction.

### **Appendix 1**

#### RSE Information and Permission letter to Parents:

Dear Parent / Guardian,

As part of our school's SPHE policy and in accordance with the Department of Education's guidelines, an RSE programme will be taught in the new year.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. The education is delivered consciously and unconsciously by parents, teachers, peers, adults and the media. RSE provides structured opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality. They can learn this through processes which enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework. Young people are given opportunities to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible manner.



We recognise that parents have the primary responsibility for the personal development of their children, and it is our wish to compliment that role.

The RSE component of the programme will be conducted in Donabate Community College in harmony with the ethos of the school. While we assume that all students will want to participate in the classes, if you have any concern about your son/daughter attending these RSE classes, you have the choice to remove your child from the RSE Programme.

Below is an **opt out consent form**. If you do not wish your child to receive Relationship and Sexuality Education in school, please complete the form below and return it to the SPHE Co-ordinator. Parents who chose to opt out of the programme will be contacted by the Coordinator when possible.

Yours sincerely,

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Principal

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SPHE Co-ordinator

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Teacher

## Appendix 2

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

- a) We will discuss the nature of the concerns with the child's parent and if appropriate attempts to reassure them (initially such discussion can take place at a meeting with the Year Head and RSE Co-ordinator, the Principal may become involved if necessary).
- b) We will consider whether the programme can be amended or improved in a way that will reassure parents - care will be 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.
- c) We attempt to ensure that where a student is withdrawn there is no disruption to other parts of their education.

### Implementation, Ratification and Communication:

This policy will be ratified by the Board of Management and becomes the agreed RSE policy of Donabate Community College. All teaching staff will need to be familiar with the policy and aware of any changes implied in curriculum delivery and will receive a copy of said document promptly after it has been ratified. The Parent's Council will also receive a copy of the policy.

Monitoring the implementation of the policy:



Effective policy requires constant monitoring and evaluation to ensure successful implementation and to review what adjustments may be necessary from time to time.

#### Reviewing and evaluating the policy

The policy will be reviewed and evaluated at certain predetermined times under the direction of the Board of Management. Ongoing review and evaluation will take cognisance of changing information, guidelines, legislation and feedback from parents/guardians, students, teachers and others. The SPHE co-ordinator will have the role of monitoring aspects of the policy. The policy will be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation and within the framework of school planning.

**To review and evaluate the policy, it will be necessary to gauge the impact and effectiveness of the policy by examining the extent to which:**

- RSE is being successfully taught through SPHE and R.E. for all relevant students.
- Where SPHE may not be timetabled, e.g. at Senior Cycle, that these students are receiving RSE.
- Resource materials are available to teachers.
- Appropriate in-service for teachers is available and relevant teachers are availing of it.
- Staff are aware of the policy.
- Students are aware of the policy.
- Parents/guardians are aware of the policy.
- Feedback is received from teachers, other school staff, students, parents/guardians, members of the board of management.

**On-going support and Development** All RSE lessons are prepared in conjunction with the *SPHE co-ordinator who has planned the course as part of the overall SPHE course*. Teachers involved in delivering the programme will do so in the context of these guidelines as set out in the policy. All staff teaching RSE are encouraged to avail of suitable in-career development opportunities, which may arise.

**Review Personnel and Timeframe** There will be a review of the policy periodically. The review team will comprise of the Principal, Deputy Principal and RSE teachers. Parent's comments will be considered. Our Relationships and Sexuality Policy has been written by the College and agreed by staff, Parent's Council and the Board of Management. It will be reviewed periodically.