

**RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE)
COACHFORD COLLEGE, CO. CORK**

UPDATED April 15th 2013

INTRODUCTION

This Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) draft policy is a written statement of the aims, objectives and implementation of the RSE programme within Coachford College. It also examines the relationship of RSE to Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE), and the organisation and management of RSE within Coachford College in general.

This policy has been drafted by a committee of school staff in conjunction with SPHE teachers, the Religious Education (RE) department, the School Board of Management, the Parents Council, and the Students Council and in accordance with the recommendations of Section 9(e) of the Education Act 1998, Article 11.2 of the European Social Charter and Department of Education and Skills Circulars M4/95, M20/96, M22/00, M11/03, M27/2008 and 0037/2010 and with reference to Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy Guidelines – a Partnership Between Home and School, Irish Government, 1997 and the guidelines for the development of an RSE policy at www.education.ie. The foregoing thus sets out to be a collaborative document, and it is hoped that it will prove comprehensive and informative, offering guidance and direction to all involved in the imparting of Relationships and Sexuality Education.

SCOPE

The policy will apply to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality in Coachford College. It always presumes that the primary and indispensable role of formation of students of the school in this intimate area of their lives lies with their parents. It is in the home that children first come to understand the place of right ordered relationships and related matters concerning the nature of sexuality, marriage and the family. Here they will best learn to value a properly integrated use of the beauty and meaning of the gift of human sexuality ordered towards authentic human love and dignity.

More specifically, within the school context, this policy applies to all school staff, students, and members of the board of management, parents/guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators.

Recognising the primacy of the family and the home, the secondary formation offered within the College also has an important part to play, because, from 12 to 18 years of age is a period where rapid growth, change and maturing takes place in our students. It is a time of transition when young people are most vulnerable and at the same time most in need of sound principles and direction with regard to their human, moral and spiritual development.

It is clear then that RSE is not just confined to specific classes of instruction but also takes place in the wider context of home and school life. The scope of this policy document thus presumes that all students and all those in contact with them strive to make themselves familiar with its contents.

RATIONALE

From the point of view of the Department of Education and Skills, the State, under 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, M20/96 and 0037/2010 request schools to commence a process of RSE policy development. The effectiveness of a School based RSE programme in practice is dependent on a collaborative policy process involving teachers and staff, parents/guardians, members of the board of management and students themselves.

ABOUT OUR SCHOOL

Coachford College, Coachford, Co. Cork. Telephone 021 733 4113; Fax: 021-7334393 Email: coachfordcollege@eircom.net Coachford College is a Community College of the Co. Cork Vocational Education Committee. It is a co-educational, academically non-selective day school with an enrolment of over 550 students. The Christian ethos of the school is one which respects every individual in the school community, promotes an environment which enhances self-esteem, and endeavours to develop the talents and aptitudes of every student. It aims to promote responsible citizenship, not just of this world, but the world to come.

OUR SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

At Coachford College we are committed to providing an inclusive environment with high standards. The following school draft mission statement reflects this aim: WE ARE A COMMUNITY. TOGETHER WE SHARE MUTUAL RESPECT IN A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT. WE DEVELOP INDIVIDUAL POTENTIAL IN ALL FIELDS.

ETHOS

The goal of this policy is to align all teaching of Relationships and Sexuality to objective truths and sound moral principles such as will safeguard the children's health and well-being, provide them with a sound basis for personal growth and thereby ensure their own good and the good of society into the future.

Coachford College, while at all times seeking to offer a welcoming and inclusive environment to all cultures and creeds in accordance with DES and VEC directives, consists of an almost entirely Christian Catholic population. It is one of a small number of schools to enjoy a full-time ex-quota priest chaplain on the staff. It is therefore appropriate to offer a human formation based on the teachings of Jesus Christ and his Church to whom the parents and students belong. The Model Agreement for designated community colleges – of which Coachford College is, states that: "The religious worship attended by any pupil at the school/college and the religious instruction given to any pupil shall be in accordance with the rites, practice and teaching of the religious denomination to which the pupil belongs. Religious instruction shall be given to all pupils in the school (except those who are withdrawn from religious instruction in accordance with the provisions of sub-clause (i) of this clause)." The school also acknowledges and respects students of other religious denominations and backgrounds, and/or those of no religious affiliation.

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION

Relationships and Sexuality education is a developmental 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. It is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding as well as beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. The RSE programme also provides opportunities for young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way and to take on in a mature way the life-long task of growth in virtue. Coachford College aims to provide young people with

information and skills to truthfully evaluate the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values offered today, in order that they will make positive, responsible choices about themselves and the way they live their lives.

RELATIONSHIP OF RSE TO SPHE

The Department of Education and Science has approved the recommended syllabus for SPHE at junior cycle. As a life-skills programme, SPHE aims to:

- Enable students to develop personal and social skills
- Promote self esteem and self confidence
- Enable students to develop a framework for responsible decision making
- Provide opportunities for reflection and discussion
- Promote physical, mental and emotional health and well being.

The RSE programme forms part of the SPHE programme. The *Draft Guidelines for RSE* (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (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. RSE is a whole-school responsibility and all members of this community share in that responsibility for modeling relationships that are characterised by justice, honesty, integrity and respect.

TAUGHT PROGRAMME OF RSE / CROSS CURRICULAR

Specifically here in Coachford College, RSE is addressed at two levels, Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle. At Junior Level it is covered over a three year period within the SPHE programme. Of the SPHE programme in the school, five to six class periods in each year group will be assigned to RSE. At Senior level, while there are no specific classes of SPHE assigned, the RSE is usually achieved by setting aside 5-10 class periods per year from the Religious Education Senior Cycle Programme in order to facilitate appropriate delivery of RSE to students. This programme will be reviewed and monitored in each academic year; and will be fully implemented in the Senior Curriculum to fully comply with the current ‘Child First Guidelines and Child Protection Legislation’. RSE is cross-curricular and inter-disciplinary which will involve the SPHE Co-Ordinator,

other SPHE teachers who will also be involved with the delivery of RSE, and also through approved guest-speakers/ organisations to the college with this specific remit who will also comply with the RSE policy. In choosing the topics for RSE classes, consideration will be given to the level of cross-curricular links that are made with other subjects areas in the school (for example in Science, Home Economics, C.S.P.E., Religious Education, and population demographics/social studies within the Geography syllabus.

SOME GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

All schools should help students to grow and develop into healthy, mature adults, capable of realising their full potential as human beings. One aspect of that growth is to the development of the student's capacity to relate to others and to have a positive understanding of their own sexuality. This is not seen as a separate element within RSE programme but is integrated throughout the whole school community reflected in its designation as a community college, ethos, mission statement and curriculum. In this context then, the school would communicate:

- The human body is sacred.
- The human body, since it is sexual, expresses the call of men and women to reciprocal love which is a mutual gift of self: sexuality is an enrichment of the whole person – the body, emotions, and soul – manifests its meaning in leading the person to the gift of self in love.
- Marriage the natural context 'in which this self-giving love in its entirety is possible' – because essentially it is orientated both to the loving unity of the couple and to cooperation with God in bringing new human life into the world.
- Young people thus will be encouraged to value the gift of chastity, and human sexuality which is also gift.

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 (RSE Guidelines,1997). This approach will:

- Help young people to appreciate their uniqueness and dignity as human beings.
- Help young people understand and develop friendships and relationships.
- Promote a Christian vision of sexuality i.e. a vision that promotes unselfish love, respect and commitment.
- Help young people understand that sexuality is a gift from God that encompasses the whole person, body, mind, emotions and soul.

- Promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's relationships with others.
- Promote knowledge and understanding of, and respect for, human reproduction.
- Help young people understand that marriage is a sacrament and that sexual intercourse is an expression of married love.

Definition of Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE): is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding, and developing one's beliefs, attitudes and values, about human sexuality in ways that help them to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way. RSE will provide young people with formal opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality, sexual identity, relationships, intimacy, and help pupils to develop the skills and values they need to initiate and sustain healthy, respectful and mature relationships. Coachford College will at all times be sensitive to the religious and moral ethos of the student's background.

Topics and Main Themes at Junior Cycle include:

- an understanding of physical and emotional changes at puberty
- an understanding and respect of what it is to be male and female
- personal safety
- an awareness of infection (including HIV/AIDS)
- an appreciation of the roles of men and women in society
- an awareness of discrimination
- sexual orientation
- developing skills regarding making and maintain good relationships and friendships
- family roles and responsibilities
- group behaviour and resolving conflict
- an understanding of how peer pressure works

Topics and Main Themes at Senior Cycle:

1. Human growth and development

This consists of an age appropriate understanding of the biology and physiology of the human life cycle. Understanding the structure and functions of sex

organs, awareness of fertility, awareness of the importance and methods of natural family planning, understanding pregnancy and the development of the foetus, awareness of STD's and STI's with particular reference to HIV/AIDS.

2. Human Sexuality

Sexuality is an integral part of the human personality and has biological, emotional, psychological, cultural, social and spiritual dimensions. An understanding of what it means to be male or female, consideration of male and female roles in relationships and in society, exploration of some issues pertaining to equality, understanding the concept of sexual harassment and its different forms.

3. Human Relationships: This theme focuses on the importance of relationships for inter-personal health and well-being. It addresses issues such as communication, influence, intimacy, sexual attraction and sexual expression in relationships consistent with personal and moral integrity. It seeks to help pupils understand the nature of peer pressure, developing skills for resolving conflict, development of awareness of the complex nature of love and loving relationships, understanding of marriage as a loving commitment, deeper awareness of the importance of family life.

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 students understand and develop friendships and relationships within safe and considered boundaries of mutual respect.
- To promote a mature and sound understanding of human sexuality as a gift of oneself to the other.
- To enable students to develop attitudes and values toward their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework, and in keeping with the ethos of the school.

APPENDIX 1

GUIDELINES FOR THE MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATION OF RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION

1. 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 education concerning relationships and sexuality is seen by the school as having primary importance.

Relevant sections of the RSE policy will be included in the school's Information for Parents section on the school website www.coachfordcollege.ie

This draft policy is designed as a vehicle for consultation with the parents' council representatives and the views expressed by parents will be taken into account when reviewing the policy. Coachford College seeks to follow this mandate by informing parents by letter at the beginning of the school year outlining the syllabus for Junior and Senior Cycle.

3. On offering advice:

In general terms, the school's function is to provide a broad education about human relationships and sexuality. While sources of professional information and advice may be identified when appropriate, it is to parents that students should always be first directed.

Any advice offered should be carefully circumscribed with a view to referral to higher and best qualified authority, but always, be directed towards the health and well-being of the student and be age appropriate.

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 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-Coordinator or advice from 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 the school's policy to adhere at all times to the Child Protection Guidelines outlined herewith:

The Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary schools state in paragraph 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 DLP. 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

and in paragraph 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.

The following is also school policy: In All Circumstances where a pupil is considered at risk of any type of abuse or breach of the law, the teacher must refer this immediately to the principal and the appropriate action and procedures will be followed, which follow the Child Protection Guidelines.

6. 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 sexual reproduction. Within the teaching of RSE learned biological terms will be used to facilitate a fuller understanding of the moral content of the material. This may provide an opportunity for cross-curricular co-operation and team teaching.

7. Withdrawing pupils from the RSE programme: Relevant sections of this policy are made available on the school website **coachfordcollege.ie/** 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.

For the purposes of this sub-heading, it is noted that some related RSE issues are met with in other subjects. However, as any discussion is limited and set within the context of the subject concerned, it does not constitute a formal part of the RSE programme. Regard is therefore given to Section 30 (2) (e) of the Education Act 1998 under which a child may not be required to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parent of the student, or in the case of a student who has reached 18, the student. Once a parent's request to withdraw is made, that request must be complied with until revoked by the parent. Parents do not have to give reasons for withdrawal of

their child, but they are respectfully invited to do so – as it may be possible to dispel unease with the material content of the programme in the case of misunderstandings.

8. Using visiting speakers and other non-teacher staff:

DES Circulars 0022 and 0023/2010 on Best Practice guidelines for Post-Primary Schools refers to guidelines concerning visitors to schools.

a) It is school policy that most of the content of the RSE programme is best discussed openly by students with teachers who are known and trusted by them. 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-coordinator 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. Among issues to be considered 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 school office staff should be informed of the date and name of the visitor

f) A written acknowledgement of their contribution should be sent to the visitor.

9. Special Needs:

Children with special needs may need more help than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of the content of RSE: they may also need more help in learning what sorts of behavior are and are not acceptable, and in being warned and prepared against abuse by others. Recourse to Resource and Special Needs School Staff is to be undertaken where considered necessary.

Appendix II

ONGOING SUPPORT, DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW

Training:

All teachers involved in this work are not expected to be “qualified experts” on the issues concerned. However, they do require sensitivity and a mature empathy 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, some teachers have training in related areas such as counseling and pastoral care, while others have expert training in the specific areas of health, relationships and sexuality education and will be encouraged to provide support to their peers.

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. RSE and SPHE training is offered through the SPHE Support Service at the Marino Institute of Education, Griffith Ave., Dublin 9, tel. 01-805 7718.

APPENDIX III

Resources:

Within the ordinary course of budgetary and timetable allocation constraints, all resources needed in terms of time, finance and personnel, will be made available to develop and support the RSE programme in the school. The programme will be supported by the on-line SPHE support service www.sphe.ie.

A SELECTION OF THE RESOURCE MATERIALS BEING USED FOR SPHE/RSE

- Southern Health Board SPHE Programme – sphe.ie.
- On My Own Two Feet - Substance Abuse Prevention Programme. Department of Education and Science, Department of Health and Children, Mater Dei Counselling Service (1994).
- Resource Materials for Relationships and Sexuality Education, Junior Cycle, Department of Education and Science (1998).
- Social, Personal & Health Education – Junior Certificate – Guidelines for Teachers, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), DES, 2001
- Social, Personal & Health Education – Junior Certificate, DES, 2006
- It's Your Life – Social Personal Health Education for Senior Cycle (& Teachers Resource Book), Fiona Chambers & Anita Stackpoole, Mentor Books, 2010
- Minding Me, 1, 2 & 3 – Anne Jones & Anita Stackpoole
- Social, Political and Health Education, 1 and 2, Anne Potts and Nodlaig O'Grady
- Healthy Times – 1st and 2nd Year, HE
- Healthy Choices, Teacher Resource Book, 1, 2 & 3; Pupils Workbook, HE
- Healthy Life Styles, Edel O'Brien, 1st, 2nd, 3rd Year, Teachers Resource Book

□ *On track, direction in your life*, Student Year 1-3, Susan Scanlan, Linda Gorman, Carolyn O'Meara, ON TRACK, Dublin 2008.

□ Busy Bodies DVD (Junior cycle)

□ TRUST DVD & Resource Pack - (Senior Cycle), DSE/HSE/CPA, 2010

□ Just the Facts – School Information Project – Life Before Birth – the first nine months – Video

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□ I don't Believe it! – Stories of Teenage Pregnancy – CURA – Video

□ Sex (still) has a price Tag – Pam Stenzel – Video (3x20mins)

□ Teens and Sex I – Deciding for your Life, Ligouri Publications – Video

□ Sex & Love – What's a teenager to do? (Peer Pressure. The need for Love. Confusion about what's Right and Wrong.), Mary Beth Bonacci, Video 60mins – 1995

□ Reality Check – The truth about sex – Challenge Task Force on Chastity, New Orleans, 1998 – Video 23mins.

□ The truth about AIDS, Family & Youth Concern, Milton Keynes, Video – c.30mins

□ Beyond Depression – Aware – Video

□ Teens and New Life – Tiny Tots, Raphael Martin Communications – Video

□ Somewhere to Call Home – Simon Community – Video

□ 2003 Special Olympics – School Enrichment Programme – Video

□ You're only Goin' nowhere if you can't say no – Warner Brothers Video

□ Donal Kelleher – Teachers Collected Notes c.2005 – Newspaper Clippings, Audio files, Video Clips

□ Various Notes & Handouts from In-service Days

Visiting Nurse – Ms. Margaret Crean – Addresses Junior Cycle Students on ‘Basic Facts’ – Boys and Girls.

Teachers on occasions may use other materials deemed suitable and appropriate for student needs and in accordance with school ethos.

Familiaris Consortio, 1981.

Educational Guidance in Human Love, 1983.

RATIFIED BY BOARD OF MANAGEMENT ON:

DATE:

CHAIRPERSON: _____