



Christian Brothers College Cork

**Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy
2019-20**

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RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION POLICY

1.1: SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

The Christian Brothers College community, firmly rooted in the Christian tradition, strives to allow each individual pupil to grow and develop, and to ensure that the education given is suited to each new generation of boys.

Christian Brothers College is a Voluntary Catholic School under the Trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust, (ERST). The College was founded in 1888 at the invitation of the Bishop of Cork, Most Rev. Dr. O'Callaghan. The College is now recognised as one of Ireland's leading educational establishments.

The educational programme of Christian Brothers College introduces the pupil to the ideals of the Christian values, personal integrity and a disciplined approach to living. Our programme is designed to promote the goals of academic, cultural and sporting excellence in a thoroughly Catholic atmosphere. The quality of the education received at the College has been for generations of pupils, a stepping stone to success in their careers.

This success is evidenced by the outstanding achievements of past pupils in their professional lives. 'Christians' is equally proud of the worldwide contribution made by those who have followed their vocation in the Priesthood and Religious Life. The distinctive Catholic ethos, the pursuit of excellence, and the traditional CBC spirit are all values which brought Christian Brothers College safely into the new Millennium.

In 2008 the Christian Brothers handed over all of their schools, due to the contraction of religious orders worldwide, to the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST). This new body now owns and manages Christian Brothers College. The Edmund Rice Schools Trust Charter provides the vision for our school: that our school promotes the personal and social development of all by a caring Christian community of teaching and learning; that Christians is a place of hope, happiness, courage and honest struggle, where everyone is valued and respected.

1.2: INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

This policy has been devised by the Relationships and Sexuality Education Committee following consultation between staff and parent representatives, the Principal and Board of Management. The policy outlines the aims of the RSE programme, the relationship of RSE to SPHE and Religious Education. (RE), and the organisation and management of RSE within the school.

1.3: RELATIONSHIP TO MISSION STATEMENT

This plan has many links to the Guiding Principles of the College, in particular to the principles referred to below:

“While firmly rooted in its Christian traditions, the CBC community strives to allow each individual student to grow and develop, and to ensure that the education it gives is suited to each generation of boys.”

In CBC we strive to create a community based on trust and respect. Our wish is that such trust and respect develop between all in the school community.

Our aim is to allow our pupils to develop their talents to the maximum. We are aware of the need to emphasise the value of a pupil’s efforts and of the need for constructively challenging him to make further progress. By this learning experience, we hope to foster a sense of self-worth and self-respect.

Central to the Christian message is the uniqueness of each individual student in all respects mindful of the great diversity that exists.

1.4: SCOPE

This policy will apply to all aspects of learning and teaching regarding relationships and sexuality. As discussion about relationships and sexuality takes place in classes other than SPHE and RE, it is therefore important that all teachers are familiar with the RSE policy within the college. The policy will apply to school staff, students, Board of Management, parents / guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators.

1.5: RATIONALE

1. Sexuality is a key element of healthy social and personal development. Young people are exposed to a bewildering variety of messages regarding sexuality and sexual activity, not only from within their peer group, but also from external source including online media. As a result, schools, (in consultation with parents/ guardians), need to reflect on how to provide for the needs of their students in this context.
2. The Education Act (1998) requires that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.
3. 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 forms part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). In Transition Year, (as part of their RE Course), the students undertake a comprehensive one day workshop on RSE. This workshop is facilitated by several fully trained and certified staff members using the 'Talking Relationships Understanding Sexuality Teaching Resource, (TRUST Pack), which deals with such topics as Self Esteem, Boundaries, Sexual Orientation and Contraceptive Methods. Also in Fourth Year, the Health Service Executive, (HSE), facilitates a workshop on the Age of Consent. In Fifth and Sixth Year, (and as part of their RE Programme), each student receives ten classes per year on RSE. This is facilitated through a continuation and expansion of the TRUST Teaching Resource and a broader discussion-based learning in the classroom pertaining to relevant and current social issues, including sexuality.
4. Circulars 0037/2010 and 023/2010 along with M4/95 and M20/96 require schools to commence a process of RSE policy development.

5. 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.

1.6: COLLEGE ETHOS AND PHILOSOPHY IN RELATION TO RSE

Christian Brothers College is a community composed of pupils, parents, teachers, management and other staff. The central purpose of the school community is the religious, moral, intellectual, physical, and social education of the pupil. Thus, Christian Brothers College embarks on a programme of Catholic education that continues to foster and develop a tradition and ethos grounded in the Christian outlook of Blessed Edmund Rice. That outlook also endeavours to embrace all students of other faiths and none represented within the school community. Pupils are taught values that engender responsibility and commitment both to themselves, their faith, their Church, their spirituality and the society to which they belong. The students are further encouraged to become aware of others who struggle within the world, and like Blessed Edmund, to stretch out the hand of friendship, compassion and understanding for all, regardless of difference.

1.7: GOALS OF RSE

The objectives of this RSE Policy enable students to achieve the following outcomes:

1. To ensure clarity and consensus on how RSE is taught in the school. Reflecting the needs of both Junior and Senior Cycle students, RSE is taught through SPHE at Junior Cycle and through RE at Senior Cycle.
2. To articulate the relationship of RSE to SPHE and RE.
3. To articulate the aims of the RSE programme.
4. To clarify the rights, roles and responsibilities of all within the school community in relation to the RSE Programme, with particular reference to school staff, students, parents / guardians, the Board of Management and Trustees.
5. To address personal issues including areas such as peer pressure around sexual activity.
6. To grow in independence and take responsibility for themselves as sexual beings.
7. To make informed choices about their lives and follow through on these choices.
8. To ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
9. To ensure that teachers, parents / guardians and students understand how the teaching of RSE is linked to the school ethos and outlook.
10. To provide information on the practicalities of delivering the programme.
11. To help pupils understand and develop friendships and relationships.
12. To promote an understanding of sexuality and sexual health within the modern world.

- 13.To promote a positive attitude to one’s own sexuality and in one’s relationship with others.
- 14.To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction.
- 15.To enable pupils to develop attitudes and values toward their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework, and in keeping with the policy and ethos of the school.
- 16.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 and to monitor the well-being of all students.
17. To apply best practice in the protection of students and the promotion of their welfare, within the resources available in accordance with DES and School Child Protection Policy
18. To work effectively with statutory authorities and outside agencies such as TUSLA when required
19. In the event of any disclosures being made by a student, any allegations of abuse are dealt with justly and promptly in accordance with the Children First Guidelines 2017

1.8: WELLBEING: RSE is intrinsically linked to Wellbeing, (CBC Wellbeing Policy 2019/20), and in particular Circular 0015/2016 and the *NCCA Wellbeing Guidelines For Post –Primary Schools, (2018)*. Each student’s wellbeing is also linked to SPHE, which is one of the main pillars of Wellbeing. SPHE is delivered as a Short Course in Junior Cycle, is assessed through Classroom Based Assessment and reported in the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement at the end of Third Year.

Wellbeing is linked to the ‘Staying Well’ key skill of the Framework for Junior Cycle. The eight competences can be linked with five of the six indicators of Wellbeing – *Responsible, Connected, Resilient, Respected and Aware*.

1.9: BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

The Board of Management has a responsibility to ensure that the provision and practice of RSE in the school is of the highest possible standard and available to all students. The Board of Management manages the school in accordance with the Education Act (1998).

1.10: SENIOR MANAGEMENT

The Principal controls the internal organisation and management of the school, and exercises supervision over the teaching and non-teaching staff. The Deputy Principals are in charge of the school in the absence of the Principal. In the absence of the Principal and three Deputy Principals, an Assistant Principal is placed in charge of the school.

1.11: CHAPLAIN

The Chaplain, Mr Simon Kelleher, collaborates with all members of the school community and in particular with those who hold designated pastoral responsibilities relating to students, staff and members of the wider community connected with the school. The Chaplain meets regularly with the Guidance Counsellor, Principal and Deputy Principals. The Chaplain actively engages with Year Heads (at Year Head meetings and informally) and all members of the Student Support Team and outside supportive agencies. He is a member of the Student Support and Critical Incident Team. The Chaplain coordinates the Meitheal youth leadership mentoring programme and supports and liaises with other members of the RE department. The Chaplain in conjunction with other RE teachers delivers the RSE programme in Senior Cycle. The Chaplain has a specific mission toward the spiritual, pastoral care and faith development of the entire school community.

1.12: THE STUDENT SUPPORT TEAM

The Student Support Team is made up of Deputy Principal, Chaplain, Guidance Counsellor and other representatives from the teaching staff. The Team meets regularly to review the needs of students and strives to provide a response to students needs by liaising with the SPHE, SEN, RE and general teachers and by inviting outside agencies to advise and present on specific issues. This is a forum for sharing information and concerns in a safe and confidential setting, with the exception of circumstances where reporting is required by law. What is discussed at meetings relating to individual cases is confidential to the team and any follow up required is decided upon and assigned to a member of the team. Aspects of the RSE Policy are discussed with members of the Student Support Team prior to its delivery at both Junior and Senior Cycle.

The team, as at date of ratification, is made up of:

Mr Seamus Bruton, Deputy Principal

Mr Simon Kelleher, Chaplain

Mr Pól O'Seanacháin, Guidance Counsellor

Mrs Rosemary Healy, Year Head, Psychotherapist

Mr Traolach Martin, Teacher.

Changes to the composition of the Team over the duration of this policy will be recorded in the College records, including the College website, student journal and teachers handbook.

1.13: OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

All students are informed of the protocols surrounding confidentiality prior to their RSE facilitation and every effort will be made to avoid undue invasion of the student's privacy.

The School in its duty of care adheres to the procedures as outlined in "Children First" (National Guidelines for the protection and Welfare of Children/ HSE) and "Child Protection Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools" (Department of Education and Science)

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 [Mr David Lordon] in that school. A written record of the report should be made and placed in a secure location by the Principal. The need for confidentiality should be borne in mind at all times. The supports of the school should continue to be made available to the child.*
- *4. 2. 1. If the Principal is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation he/she should report the matter to the relevant health board immediately.*

1.14: POLICY CONTENT

1. Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education

RSE 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.

2. RSE 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 such as Sexual Health, Gender Identity, Media Influences on Relationships and Sexuality etc, 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 personal development, self esteem, assertiveness, communication and decision making skills – all of which can contribute to the effectiveness of the RSE programme.

3. Guidelines for the management and organisation of RSE in our school

- a.** Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff will be made by the Principal.
- b. Informing and Involving Parents:** The Irish Constitution recognises that parents are the primary educators of their children and their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality is seen by the College as central. This policy has been designed in consultation with Parents Council representatives and the views expressed by parents will be taken into account when reviewing the policy. A copy of this policy will be made available to any parent on request to the School Office.

- c. **Offering Advice:** The school's function is to provide a general education about sexual matters and issues. 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 will be sensitive to Catholic teachings on relationships and sexuality and will be appropriate to the age of the pupil.
- d. **Answering Questions:** While it is important to create an environment in SPHE / RSE/RE in which students can discuss issues openly, teachers may not be able to answer all questions asked by students and may set appropriate limits. Students may ask questions about issues which are not included in the curriculum. In all instances, teachers will use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, the RSE curriculum and the RSE policy for the school. It must also be acknowledged that while questions can be answered, (subject to the above guidelines), the ethos and teaching of the Catholic Church will be given in each response, not only to uphold the Catholic values of the college, but also to ensure that the student gains a broad viewpoint in relation to the pertinent issue.
- e. **Confidentiality:** While students will not be encouraged to disclose personal or private information in SPHE / RSE/ RE classes, there may be times when they do talk about their own lives. Confidentiality will be respected unless a teacher becomes aware that a child is at risk, in which case the appropriate action will be taken e.g. the teacher will inform the Designated Liaison Person, (the Principal), or the Deputy Designated Liaison Person, (Deputy Principal) and thereafter, follow the procedures set down in the Child Protection Procedures and Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools or the school's Substance Abuse Policy, notify parents etc. In cases of under-age sexual activity, P10 of the Child Protection Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools (2004) states: *'In all cases where a school becomes aware of underage sexual intercourse the school shall take appropriate steps to inform the child's parents.'* It is important that students are made aware of the limits of confidentiality and that teachers do not give unconditional guarantees of confidentiality. (Please see 1.13 above for Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary Schools).
- f. **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 and meets with members of the RE Department to discuss current classroom issues pertaining to the teaching of Sexual Reproduction in the classroom.

g. Withdrawing pupils from the RSE programme: (Refer also to Appendix 1).

- Parents will be provided with a full copy of this policy on request.
- The Education Act (1998) (Section 30, Subsection (2)(e)) provides that a student is not required to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parent or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years. Hence, parents have a right to opt their child out of the potentially sensitive issues in RSE if they wish to do so. Parents do not have to give reasons for withdrawal, but we respectfully invite them to do so.

h. 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 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.
- (b) The SPHE/RSE Co-ordinator will provide the visitor, well in advance of the visit, with a copy of the RSE policy. After 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. The following issues will be considered:
 - i. details of the content and presentation;
 - ii. attendance by a member of the teaching staff within the classroom during the presentation;
 - iii. the role of the staff visitor's activities;
 - iv. details regarding preparation for the visit;
 - v. development and follow through.
- (c) Visitors will be given advance notice of the composition of the class, (subject to GDPR Guidelines), and an idea of how their contribution fits into the current scheme of work.
- (d) The Management Committee will be informed of the date, name and professional organisation with the facilitator, prior to his/her school visit.

- i. Sexual Activity:** It is advisable for teachers to give young people information on the age of consent which, following the passage of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act, 2006, is 17 years of age for both males and females. A half -day workshop on the Age of Consent is facilitated, (for all Fourth Year students), by the Health Service Executive, (HSE), and examines the importance of knowing the Age of Consent while dealing with such issues as online imagery and the posting of inappropriate photographs from personal devices and the legal consequences, (both in the short and long term), for the student. Each group is invited to examine a Case Study pertaining to the Age of Consent and the law and is given a comprehensive insight into their own personal responsibility pertaining to Consent and its legal consequence.
- j. Family Planning:** The RSE programme requires that young people are provided with information about methods of contraception, but consideration needs to be given to the moral and value framework within which it is taught. At all times, the Catholic ethos is promoted and is explained to the students during the lesson. The College uses its discretion with regard to the age at which students receive any aspect of the RSE programme.
- k. Homosexuality:** The topic of homosexuality is included in the RSE programme at both Junior and Senior Cycle level and will be addressed in a clear and open way, so as to ensure that all students, (irrespective of their sexuality), are valued throughout.
- l. Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs):** STIs are part of the programme for Junior and Senior Cycle and are discussed as deemed appropriate by the relevant teachers.
- m. Abortion:** This topic will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner, which will be sensitive to the teachings of the Catholic Church. The issue will also be discussed as part of a societal and global issue.
- n. Training:** The College recognises that all teachers involved in this sphere should have the appropriate training. It is necessary that those teaching the RSE Programme are willing to do so, are sensitive to the needs of the group, and have an ability to deal with questions openly and honestly. The school has facilitated teachers to obtain training in this field and all RSE Committee teachers are trained in aspects of RSE.
- o. Resources:** The school will purchase appropriate RSE teaching materials which have been identified by staff as useful and which have been approved by the Principal, within the normal budgetary framework and as general school resources allow.

1.15: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Board of Management

1. To ensure that the policy is developed and evaluated throughout.
2. To approve the policy.
3. To consider reports from the Principal on the implementation of the policy.

Principal and Deputy Principal

1. To establish structures and procedures for the implementation of the policy.
2. To monitor the implementation of the policy in both Junior and Senior Cycle.
3. To raise awareness of the policy among members of the school community.
4. To ensure that Parents/Guardians are familiar with the content of the policy

Subject Teachers

1. To work within the guidelines of the policy.
2. To implement the policy

1.16: SUCCESS CRITERIA

1. RSE is being successfully taught through SPHE for Junior Certificate students and through RE for Senior Cycle students.
2. Appropriate in-service for teachers is available and relevant teachers are availing of it throughout.
3. Students are aware of the policy.
4. Parents / guardians are aware of the policy.
5. Positive feedback is received from teachers, other school staff, students, parents / guardians, members of Board of Management and trustees.
6. The goals are being achieved.

1.17: MONITORING, EVALUATING AND REVIEWING RSE

We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this programme. Specifically important to the RSE Programme are:

1. Pupil feedback;
2. Staff review and feedback;
3. Parental feedback through the Parents Council.

1.18: REVIEW PROCEDURES

The policy will be reviewed every three years, (with the next being in 2022). The review team will comprise the Principal, Deputy Principal and the RSE Committee.

Ratified by the Board of Management at their meeting on 22 January
2020.

Appendix 1

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

1. 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 Year Head and SPHE Co-ordinator, the Principal may become involved if necessary).
2. We attempt to ensure that where a pupil is withdrawn there is no disruption to other parts of their education.
3. 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.
4. We also point out that pupils may receive inaccurate information from their peers.
5. We offer the parents access to appropriate information and resources.