



## RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE) Policy June 2019

**School Name:** Synge St CBS

**School Address:** Synge St, Dublin 8

**School Details:** Synge St CBS is a Voluntary Roman Catholic Secondary School under the Trusteeship and the Patronage of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. The School is grant aided by the Department of Education and Skills and is a single sex (boys) school.

**School Management:** The Board of Management of Synge St CBS is a statutory Board appointed pursuant to the provisions of the Education Act 1998.

### **Mission Statement**

Synge Street is an all-boys ERST secondary school. A vibrant community embracing diversity and inclusivity among staff, students and parents.

- All individuals are valued and supported by an energetic and dedicated staff.
- Synge Street School is a community where student, parent and staff voices are heard and listened to.
- We aim to build on academic achievement through the use of informed teaching methodologies and practices, providing students with the opportunity to become leaders of their own learning.

The motto of our school is *Viriliter Age: Act Courageously*. This reflects our school's commitment to being respectful, being responsible and being ready.

### **Ethos**

As an Edmund Rice School, Synge St CBS seeks to promote the five key elements of an Edmund Rice School as espoused by the ERST Charter:

- Nurturing faith, Christian spirituality and Gospel-based values
- Promoting partnership in the school community
- Excelling in teaching and learning
- Creating a caring school community
- Inspiring transformational leadership.

This policy is informed by:

- The mission statement of Synge St CBS
- Synge St CBS Social, Personal and Health (SPHE) Policy
- Synge St CBS Code of Behaviour
- Synge St CBS Child Protection Policy / Child Safeguarding Statement
- Synge St CBS ICT Acceptable Use Policy
- Synge St CBS Special Educational Needs Policy
- Synge St CBS Whole School Support and Guidance Policy
- Synge St CBS Pastoral Care Policy
- Synge St CBS Anti Bullying Policy

1. The Education Act, 1998, requires that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.
2. Section 4 of the Rules and Program for Secondary Schools requires schools to have an agreed policy for RSE and a suitable RSE program in place for all students at both Junior and Senior Cycle. At Junior Cycle the RSE program is part of Social, Personal and Health Education and at Senior Cycle, part of Health Education and Religious Education.
3. Circulars M4/95 and M20/96 request schools to commence a process of RSE policy development.
4. Circular 15/2017 'Arrangements for the Implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle with particular reference to school years 2017/18 and 2018/19', identifies RSE as a key component of the Wellbeing Program.
5. This policy has been developed in accordance with the Synge St CBS Child Safeguarding Statement, in line with the Children First Act 2015 and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post- Primary Schools 2017. The RSE Policy is cognisant of all aspects of our current Child Protection Policy / Child Safeguarding Statement. Where a child protection concern is raised, the procedures outlined in the school's Child Protection Policy / Child Safeguarding Statement are followed.
6. General Data Protection Regulation came into force in May 2018, and this policy has been reviewed in light of this legislation.
7. The effectiveness of a RSE program is dependent on a collaborative policy process involving: teachers, parents, members of the Board of Management and students.

## **Definition of RSE**

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge, understanding and skills which enable us to develop attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy (DES 1996). Sexuality is a key element of healthy social and personal development in all our lives, but it is particularly important in the life of the adolescent.

We wish to support parents/guardians in this important aspect of their child's education and preparation for life. In keeping with our mission statement, we believe we have a complementary role in preparing young people for their place in society. In the school setting RSE is an integral part of general educational provision which seeks to promote the overall development of the person and which includes the integration of sexuality into personal understanding, growth and development.

## **Relationship of RSE to SPHE/Wellbeing**

SPHE / Wellbeing provide opportunities for students to develop personal and social skills which foster integrity, self-confidence and self-esteem while nurturing sensitivity to the feelings and rights of others.

The Guidelines for RSE state that SPHE is 'spiral, developmental in nature and age appropriate in content and methodology'. The RSE program is designed to follow this principle and pattern. Apart from the specific lessons of RSE, SPHE/Wellbeing covers other areas which would be pertinent to the development of a healthy attitude to sexuality in oneself and one's relationship with others. SPHE deals with many issues such as self-esteem, assertiveness, communication and decision making skills – all of which can contribute to the effectiveness of the RSE program.

## **Aims of the RSE Program**

In Synge St CBS the RSE Program will be delivered within the context of our SPHE/Wellbeing program. The specific aims of RSE in Synge St CBS are:

- To provide a program, curricular and extra-curricular, which develops the whole person
- To support a Christian value system encompassing respect, responsibility, co-operation, honesty, fairness, and friendship
- To build on the primary school program which strives to help young people learn at home and at school about their own development and about their friendships and relationships with others
- To help young people to understand and develop friendships and relationships
- To promote an understanding of sexuality
- To promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's own relationship with others

- To educate students to have a clear understanding of the male and female reproductive systems
- To enable students to develop attitudes and values toward their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework
- To provide young people with information and skills to critically evaluate the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values offered today, so that they will make positive, moral, caring and responsible decisions about themselves and the way they live their lives, while also respecting the dignity of others. Synge St CBS recognises that parents/guardians are the primary educators, and home is the natural and primary environment in which RSE should take place.

### **Current Provision in Synge St CBS**

The RSE program as taught in Synge St CBS is the program laid out by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

- The school encourages parents/guardians to ensure that students participate in this program as a way of supporting parents as the primary educators of their children.
- All Junior Cycle students receive RSE classes in line with DES guidelines.
- The Transition Year Health Education program incorporates a RSE module.
- The Wellbeing Program for senior cycle students incorporates the teaching of RSE.
- The RSE program is supported by the pastoral care system and by management and staff of the school.
- In RSE we emphasise respect for the rights and dignity of others.
- Where appropriate, guest speakers support the RSE program.

### **Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our school:**

Education partners are consulted before ratifying school policy and programs, i.e. parents/guardians, staff, Board of Management and, where appropriate, students.

#### **1. Confidentiality**

While students should not be encouraged to disclose personal or private information in SPHE/Wellbeing/RSE classes, there may be times when they do talk about their own lives. It is important that students are made aware of the limits of confidentiality and that teachers do not give unconditional guarantees of confidentiality. Confidentiality will be respected unless a teacher becomes aware that a student is at risk. Where a child protection concern

is raised, the procedures outlined in the school's Child Protection Policy / Child Safeguarding Statement are followed and the concern is referred to the Principal as Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and the Deputy Principal as the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLDP).

## **2. Parent/Guardian rights and responsibilities (including the withdrawal of students)**

It is our hope that all students will avail of the RSE program provided by the school. We understand however that at times parents/guardians may wish to withdraw their sons from particular aspects of the RSE program because of perceived conflict with their own values and beliefs. Synge St CBS respects this right and will engage with parents/guardians with a view to resolving any perceived difficulties. If students are withdrawn, arrangements will be made where possible between parents/guardians and management for their care while the program is in progress.

When a request for withdrawal from the RSE program is made by a parent/guardian:

- We discuss the nature of the concerns with the student's parent/guardian and, if appropriate, attempt to address their concerns
- In keeping with the RSE program, we consider whether the program can be amended or improved in a way that will address concerns. However, care is taken not to undermine the integrity of the RSE program and the entitlement of other students.
- We outline the importance of receiving RSE from trained personnel rather than receiving inaccurate information from their peers.
- If parents/guardians still wish to withdraw their son from RSE class they are requested to make a formal request to the principal
- Senior Cycle students who do not wish to avail of the RSE module will be facilitated in another Religion class
- At Junior Cycle level, parents/guardians may remove their son from the school premises for the duration of RSE class or provide supervision within the school for their son during RSE.

## **3. Visiting speakers**

In keeping with Child Protection Guidelines, all visiting speakers and facilitators to the school with unsupervised access to students will have been Garda vetted. Visiting speakers will be made aware of the school's ethos and will agree to work within those parameters.

## **4. Sensitive issues**

Sensitive topics will be dealt with in an age-appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issues in a non-directive way, within the context of the Synge St CBS ethos and DES-NCCA guidelines. From time to time some issues within the RSE program may present as particularly sensitive for some students. Every effort will be made by staff to become aware of the profile of the group in advance of the delivery of the program. If necessary, our guidance and counselling services (or external counselling) will be offered.

## **5. Class groupings**

All students participate in SPHE and Wellbeing in mixed ability classes.

## **6. Students with Special Needs**

SNAs work in some classes with the teacher to facilitate student learning. Students with special needs may require more support than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up. Language used will be pitched at the student's level of understanding. Teachers will pose key questions to guide students through the different stages/processes and will endeavour to keep tasks short and varied.

## **7. Staffing**

There is a team of SPHE/Wellbeing/RSE teachers led by the SPHE coordinator. We recognize the importance of maintaining a core, committed and trained team.

## **8. Parents**

Parents/Guardians of First Year students are informed at the Information Night for Incoming First Years (which takes place in the last term of 6th Class) of the existence of the SPHE/Wellbeing/RSE program. Transition Year parents/guardians are informed of the RSE program module.

## **9. Cross Curricular**

All staff members are informed of the RSE policy enabling them to refer to RSE issues and to identify for students how they are linked to their subject.

## **10. Assessment**

In Senior Cycle and Transition Year, RSE continuous assessment will be provided through course based quizzes and assignments and will conclude with an overall evaluation sheet. At Junior Cycle, assessment is facilitated through diary entries at the end of each topic. Project work, work done in the copybook and group participation is also integral to the assessment process.

## **Provisions for Ongoing Support, Development and Review**

### **1. Staff training**

Synge St CBS maintains an up to date record of in-service courses attended by staff. All SPHE staff are encouraged to register with the SPHE website ([www.sphe.ie](http://www.sphe.ie)) for in-service. This is facilitated through Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). Whenever possible, staff will be given opportunities to attend further professional development courses. Information received at in-service will be made available to all relevant teachers.

## **2. Planning**

The SPHE/Wellbeing team are given time to meet ~~at~~ during school development planning days. At these meetings, the SPHE/Wellbeing coordinator will update staff in relation to in-service training available.

## **3. Resources**

We have core and supplementary resources available to all SPHE and RSE staff. These are located in the SPHE section in the co-coordinator's room. There is a Guidance and Counselling notice board and an SPHE notice board, both of which display relevant literature and information for students. Staff may also avail of web based resources for class planning; every classroom is now equipped with ICT equipment which aids the use of ICT in classes. The SPHE department will identify necessary resources and present them to the principal as part of its projected budget.

## **Review of Policy**

The school authorities will review this policy on a regular basis in order to stay up to date with current best practice and with relevant legislation in this area.

## **Approval**

This policy has been approved by Synge St CBS Board of Management.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson, Board of Management