



**OUR
LADY'S
SCHOOL**
TERENURE



RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY EDUCATION

Ratified by the Board of Management on:

Date: 2018

Signature: _____
(Chairperson of the Board of Management)

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| <i>Commenced: 2008</i> |
| <i>Date of last Review: 2018</i> |
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RELATIONSHIP & SEXUALITY EDUCATION POLICY **OF OUR LADY'S SCHOOL**

Definition of R.S.E.

Relationships and Sexuality Education is a life-long process of acquiring knowledge and understanding, and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values, about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. In the school setting it is an integral part of general educational provision, which seeks to promote the overall development of the person.

- Sexuality is a key element of healthy social and personal development.
- 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 R.S.E. and a suitable R.S.E. programme in place.

Our students live in a world of many influences. From a young age they are bombarded with conflicting value systems, each claiming to offer fulfilment and happiness. Fundamental values concerning relationships and sexuality in particular, are no longer as clear to our young people as they once were. There are many reasons for this lack of clarity. Research has indicated some possible explanations;

- Children receive informal and unsupervised information about relationships and sexuality. Such information may be inadequate and inappropriate.
- Young people are already exposed to a variety of sexual practices and attitudes through the media, particularly television, film and magazines.
- In magazines in particular, young people find a diet of instant romance and immediate gratification.
- Children are maturing physically at a younger age.
- The roles of women and men in society are changing.
- Young people are becoming sexually active at an earlier age than in the past.
- The nature of family life is changing in a way that places many pressures on children and young people.

In First Year, Second Year and Third Year, R.S.E. will be addressed within the overall framework of Social, Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E.). At senior cycle, R.S.E. will be delivered by the Religion Department as part of a unit of work on Relationships and Sexuality.

Trustees' Mission Statement

Our Lady's School is a community that stands for Christian values. The education it provides is aimed at a search for truth, the formation of the Christian faith and the growth and personal development of each individual. Staff, pupils and parents participate together in the education of the students and the school also reaches out to the wider community.

The R.S.E. programme will be set within a moral, spiritual, and social framework, which is consistent with the core Christian values and Catholic ethos of the school community.

Our School Philosophy

Our Lady's School is a voluntary secondary school for girls, under the trusteeship of The Le Chéile Trust. It has as its aim the goal that each girl, having completed her education, will emerge as a woman who is confident of her own values and self-worth, a woman who is caring and honest with a real sense of justice.

Regardless of academic ability we aim to direct our students to work together confidently because we recognise that, just as in their life outside school, their different talents, strengths and experiences can complement each other.

We would wish our students to understand that success and failure are realities of life and to this end we encourage them to take initiatives and assume responsibilities. As a preparation for this, elected student Councillors share the responsibility for the running of the school.

The Goals of the Policy

- To promote physical, mental and emotional health and well-being of students.
- To provide opportunities for reflection and discussion for students.
- To promote self-esteem and self-confidence among students.
- To encourage students to develop a framework for responsible decision-making.
- To promote an understanding of sexuality and to enable young people to develop values and attitudes to their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- To encourage the students to make informed decisions which reflect and compliment their personal value system.

Specific Aims of R.S.E:

- 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 relationships with others
- to promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction
- to enable young people to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- to promote a safe environment where students can ask questions and have their opinions heard.

To whom will the programme be delivered?

- Every year group in the school.
- The programme will be delivered in class groups to junior cycle students, through the S.P.H.E. programme.
- At senior cycle it will be delivered by the Religion teacher to class groups
- Each year, previous knowledge will be built upon using language and information suitable for the age of the group.

Organisation of R.S.E. Programme

The Principal, in consultation with staff, will make arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff. The programme will be delivered by staff members who are appropriately trained, who are willing to participate in teaching the programme, who are sensitive to the nature of the subject matter and who will match the information being imparted to the level of maturity of the pupils. In-career development and training will be provided for teachers as appropriate.

- A resources folder will be kept from year to year
- Online resources are available
- The Religion Department are available to teach RSE units if the SPHE teacher doesn't feel confident in this area.
- On-going training will be facilitated by management.

Implementation of R.S.E. Programme

The core R.S.E. curriculum in First, Second, Third and Fourth Years will be delivered in the context of a broader personal and social development programme. The personal and social development programme underpins, compliments, supports and extends the content of the R.S.E. module. R.S.E. will be further supported by the broader curriculum, especially in the area of Religious Education, Science and Home Economics and by the whole school climate.

Who should be involved?

- Teachers who are comfortable with delivering the programme.
- Parents/Guardians
- Board of Management
- Student Council
- All staff

Students with special needs

Where identified, students with specific needs may be given an individual session with a parent/guardian/councillor.

How will the programme be monitored?

- Staff meetings
- R.S.E. Committee & Board of Management
- Parents' Council (where appropriate)
- Students' evaluations at end of each module.

Will parents/guardians be allowed to withdraw their daughters from the programme?

As parents/guardians are the primary educators of their children they may write to the Principal to request that their daughter does not participate in the R.S.E. programme if that is their wish.

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, the student. Hence, parents have a right to refuse to have their daughters exposed to the sensitive issues in R.S.E. It is the responsibility of the school to make alternative arrangements for the student in this situation.'*

How will the policy be reviewed or evaluated?

- At the end of RSE units, pupils will be asked to evaluate the content of the lessons. The evaluation will influence future courses.
- Evaluation by students will be sought under the following headings:
 - (a) What did I learn?
 - (b) What do I want to learn more about?
- The Co-ordinator of the R.S.E. Programme will convene meetings, where necessary, to evaluate the needs of the students and teachers. Opportunities for cross-curricular approaches to R.S.E. should be identified by the Co-ordinator e.g. R.E., H.Ec., Science, S.P.H.E., C.S.P.E. and Guidance Counselling.