



DOMINICAN COLLEGE MUCKROSS PARK

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY (RSE) POLICY

(June 2012)

Our Vision

To create a progressive learning environment of the highest quality where our students grow to become independent, respectful and caring women of integrity who live by Christian values and Dominican principles.

Our Mission

To provide our students with an education that in the spirit of St Dominic:

- recognises and responds to the unique needs and abilities of each individual student
- encourages the development of positive, respectful and inclusive relationships
- challenges each student to speak and act with honesty and integrity.

Definition of RSE

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. This education is delivered consciously and unconsciously by parents, teachers, peers, adults and the media. In our school RSE will provide structured opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviors within a moral, spiritual and social framework. Pupils will be provided with information and skills to critically evaluate the wide range of information opinions, attitudes and values offered today. They will be encouraged to make positive, responsible choices about themselves and the way they live their lives.

The Aims of our RSE Programme

To help pupils 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 pupils to develop attitudes and values toward their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework in keeping with the policy of the school

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.

Relationship of R.S.E. to S.P.H.E.

The S.P.H.E. programme promotes the health and well-being of young people by dealing with many issues such as self-esteem, assertiveness, communication and decision making skills. Throughout all the areas of S.P.H.E. pupils are encouraged to act in a moral, caring and responsible way and are provided with clear information so that, in the context of their own lives, they are able to communicate and implement informed decisions. Sexuality is a key area of development in the life of the adolescent and so therefore along with the specific lessons of R.S.E., S.P.H.E. covers areas which would be relevant to the development of a healthy attitude to sexuality in oneself and one's relationship with others.

What the School Currently Provides

The school at present offers RSE through the SPHE programme which is delivered at both Junior and Senior Cycle. Topics covered include:

Human Growth and Development

- Understanding the structure and function of sex organs
- Awareness of fertility
- Awareness of the importance and method of family planning
- Understanding of pregnancy and development of the fetus
- Appreciation of the importance of health care during pregnancy
- Recognizing the range of human emotions and ways to deal with these
- An understanding of the relationship between safe sexual practice and sexually transmitted infections with particular reference to HIV/AIDS

Human Sexuality

- Understanding of what it means to be male or female
- Consideration of male and female roles in relationships and in society
- Exploration of some of the issues pertaining to equality
- Understanding the concept of sexual harassment and its different forms
- Awareness of sexual abuse and rape, including legal issues and the identification of help agencies in these areas
- Skills for making choices about sexual activity
- Exploration of the range of attitudes, values and beliefs regarding sexual behaviour in modern society

Human Relationships

- Understanding the nature of peer pressure
- Developing skills for resolving conflict

- Development of an 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

Delivery of the programme will be age-appropriate as directed by the D.E.S Syllabus.

The Management and Organization of R.S.E. in our school.

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 very important.
A copy of the RSE policy will be posted on the school website: www.muckcrossparkcollege.com
3. **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 pupils with education and information about where and from whom they can receive confidential advice and treatment, e.g. their doctor or other suitable agency. Advice offered will not be directive and will be appropriate to the age of the pupil.
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 will seek advice from the Principal. When deciding whether or not to answer questions the teacher will 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 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 will refer this immediately to the Principal. The Principal will decide whether to inform the parents and/or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling.

The following is also school policy:

Teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality;
Pupils must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the Principal, (who is the Designated Liaison Person), and possibly to parents if the Principal decides that it is in the best interests of the pupil to notify parents;

Teachers must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard the information;
Teachers must indicate clearly to pupils when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential - the pupil can then decide whether to proceed or not.

The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary schools state in 4.1 and 4.2.2.

4.1 If a member of staff receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been abused or neglected, or is being abused or neglected, or is at risk of abuse or neglect he/she shall, without delay, report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person in that school. A written record of the report shall be made and placed in a secure location by the DLP. The need for confidentiality at all times, as previously referred to in Section 1.9 of these procedures, shall be borne in mind. The supports of the school should continue to be made available to the child.

4.2.2 If the DLP is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation (section 3.4 of these procedures refers) he/she should report the matter to the HSE immediately.

6. 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 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 makes 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?

7. Homosexuality

Teachers do not promote any one life-style as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that homosexuality will be discussed during a programme of sex education. The post-primary RSE curriculum Guidelines include the subject of sexual orientation. There is a lesson on sexual orientation in the RSE Senior Cycle Resource Materials on P151. One of the advantages of exploring issues concerning homosexuality is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions and address prejudice. Discussion of homosexuality should be appropriate to the age of the pupils.

8. Contraception

This topic will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issue in a non-directive way.

9. Abortion

This topic will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issue in a non-directive way.

10. Cross Curricular Opportunities

Teachers with specialist knowledge in particular areas can support the work of RSE in different stages in the programme. Contributions can be made by teachers of Science, Biology, Home Economics and Religious Education. However this co-ordination can enhance cross-curricular opportunities and will ensure comprehensive delivery of RSE to all students.

Ongoing Support, Development and Review Training

The school will facilitate teachers in obtaining expert training in this field and continued professional development is both encouraged and supported by the Board of Management.

Resources

The school is committed to resourcing this important area of learning and literature, texts and ICT resources are constantly updated.

Policy Ratified by Board of Management of Dominican College Muckross Park in June 2012

Chairperson

Principal

Date: _____