

DUNDALK GRAMMAR SCHOOL
Policy on Relationships and Sexuality Education
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1. Our school philosophy

Dundalk Grammar school is a co-educational, boarding and day school founded in 1739 with an historic and valued association with the Church of Ireland. All students are seen as children of God with unique and distinct personalities, to be treated with dignity and respect at all times. The school through its pastoral, academic and spiritual undertakings strives to provide for the development and welfare of each of the students in its care.

2. Aims of Relationships and Sexuality Education

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) aims to provide age appropriate opportunities for young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way. The school recognises that parents/guardians are the primary educators and home is the natural environment in which RSE should take place.

Spiritual, moral and ethical issues will arise when teaching RSE. The school's RSE policy guides teachers in the treatment of such issues in accordance with the ethos of the school.

Our RSE programme aims:

- to foster an understanding of and a healthy attitude to human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework;
- to promote knowledge of and respect for sexual intercourse and human reproduction;
- to enable the students to go forward confidently into adult life with a good self-image, an understanding of their own physical and emotional development and as people who respect themselves and others.

3. Relationship of RSE to Social, Personal and Health Education

RSE forms part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum which is undertaken by all Junior Certificates students from First to Third year.

It is important to provide RSE within the realms of SPHE to achieve a common approach to the programme and its delivery. This ensures that each student has an opportunity of participating in it irrespective of subject choice.

The curriculum is delivered in an age appropriate way and by a "spiral" approach which allows for consideration of topics, reflection and attitudes to be deepened as the student matures.

Contemporary topics and issues which may emerge in this class will be dealt with at a level appropriate to the age and stage of the student and within a moral framework.

4. What the school currently provides

Junior Cycle: All Junior Cycle students, first to third year, undertake one class period of SPHE per week, incorporating RSE. It is further supported by elements of subjects such as Guidance and Counselling, Home Economics, Religious Education, Science (contained in the Biology section), Physical Education and Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE). Where there are cross-curricular links with SPHE/RSE the school ethos will be respected at all times and inform what is being taught.

Senior Cycle: Aspects of RSE are included in the Health Education module in Transition Year. A block of 7 classes per academic year is allocated for this module.

Currently, the RSE programme is incorporated into the school's Religious Education (RE) programme in Senior Cycle. In recent years, the school has employed the services of outside agencies to reinforce further aspects of the school's RSE programme, e.g. Love for Life.

5. Guidelines for the management and organisation of RSE

Staff and students are provided with set texts in accordance with the Department of Education guidelines and the ethos of the school. These are supplemented with other relevant resources as necessary.

The school recognises that the parents are the primary educators of the student within the home environment. The school sees its role as supporting and complementing the home in this task. Course guidelines will be available from the Headmaster if required. Provision will be made for the rights of parents who hold conscientious or moral objections to the inclusion of their son/daughter in the programme, or certain aspects of the programme. Written indication will be required by the Headmaster in this regard.

Issues that may arise in the RSE class will be addressed in a manner that takes account of:

- the ethos of the school,
- the Child Protection Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools (Department of Education and Skills).
- other relevant recommendations and circulars published by bodies such as the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and the Department of Education & Skills,

Arrangements regarding the timetabling and deployment of staff are the responsibility of the Headmaster. The school management respects the right of individual teachers to withdraw from teaching aspects of health education. The module will then be taught by an alternative teacher.

6. Using visiting speakers and others

It is school policy that most of the RSE programme is best discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by the students. However, guest speakers can enhance the quality of the provision as long as they are used in addition to, not instead of, a planned programme of RSE.

7. Ethical/Moral Considerations – Guidelines for Teachers

While it is important to create an environment in RSE in which students can discuss issues openly, teachers may not be able to answer all questions asked by students and can set appropriate limits. Teachers should use their professional judgement guided by the age of the students, the RSE curriculum and the RSE policy for the school. Questions may, if necessary be referred to other professionals.

8. Confidentiality

While students should not be encouraged to disclose personal or private information in SPHE/RSE classes there may be times when they talk about their own lives. It is important that students are made aware of the limits of confidentiality. Confidentiality should be respected unless a teacher feels that the student is at risk, or other students are at risk. In such a case the appropriate action should be taken in accordance with the procedures set down in the Child Protection Procedures and Guidelines for Post Primary Schools. In cases of under-age sexual activity, p10 of the Child Protection Procedures and Guidelines for Post Primary Schools (2004) state: In all cases where a school becomes aware of underage sexual intercourse the school shall take appropriate steps to inform the child's parents.

9. Sexual Activity

Teachers should 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.

10. RSE Programme Content

Teachers will use materials deemed suitable and appropriate for student needs and in accordance with the school ethos. The content of the RSE Programme is described under three themes. These themes are neither sequential nor discrete; they merge and overlap with each other.

a. Human Growth and Development

This theme consists of an age appropriate understanding of the biology and psychology of the human life cycle. This is accompanied by a rationale for responsible behaviour in relationships and sexual activity.

b. Human Sexuality

Sexuality is an integral part of the human personality and has biological, psychological, cultural, social and spiritual dimensions. The theme offers opportunities to develop a holistic understanding of sexuality as contributing to the development of personal well-being, enhancing personal and family relationships and ultimately contributing to the well being of society.

c. Human Relationships

This theme focuses on the importance of relationships for health and well-being. It examines how one relates to self and others, stressing the importance of self-esteem as a basis for worthwhile friendships and relationships. It addresses issues such as communications, influence, intimacy, sexual attraction and sexual expression in relationships consistent with moral integrity.

11. Provision for ongoing support, development and review

Staff will be encouraged to, and supported in, taking opportunities for in-service education to augment their skills in these areas. Relevant RSE school resources will be provided.

An SPHE Co-ordinator is appointed to allow for the effective delivery and planning of the programme.

Parents are welcome to view the programme content by appointment. This information is also available on www.sphe.ie/resources

This RSE policy has been developed by relevant school staff and management in conjunction with parents and students. This document will be reviewed every two years and amended as pupil needs change and as staff, management and parents reflect on the delivery.

12. Acronyms used in this document

RSE – Relationships and Sexuality Education

SPHE – Social, Personal and Health Education

CSPE – Civic, Social and Political Education

RE – Religious Education

DES – Department of Education and Skills