

Meánscoil Iognáid Rís,  
Nás na Rí,  
Co. Chill Dara.



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## RSE (RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY EDUCATION) POLICY

**School Name:** Meánscoil Iognáid Rís

**School Address:** Corban's Lane, Naas

**School Details:** Meánscoil Iognáid Rís is an all-boys Catholic voluntary secondary school under the Trusteeship of the *Edmund Rice Schools Trust*, formerly the Irish Christian Brothers. The school is named after the founder of the Order, Edmund Rice.

**School Management:** The Board of Management of **Meánscoil Iognáid Rís** is a statutory Board appointed pursuant to the provisions of the Education Act 1998.

### **Mission Statement:**

Inspired by its founder, **Meánscoil Iognáid Rís** aims to provide Catholic education in the Edmund Rice tradition. The school endeavours to be a caring Christian Community which promotes to the best of its ability the personal, spiritual, physical and intellectual development of its students

### **Ethos:**

As an Edmund Rice School, **Meánscoil Iognáid Rís** 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.

In this policy document all references to gender are taken to be inclusive and the term 'parent' is taken to include 'guardian'.

## **DEFINITION OF RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION**

*“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”.*

(DES Guidelines for developing an RSE Policy 1997)

## **RSE WITHIN SOCIAL PERSONAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (SPHE)**

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, 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 self-esteem, assertiveness, communication and decision-making skills - all of which can contribute to the effectiveness of the RSE programme.

### **The aims of our Relationships and Sexuality Education programme:**

Relationships and sexuality education is located in the overall framework of Social, Personal and Health Education, and has as its specific aims to:

- Help pupils understand and develop friendships and relationships.
- Promote an understanding of sexuality.
- Encourage a positive attitude to one’s own sexuality and in one’s relationship with others.
- Promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction.
- 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.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

## ***GUIDELINES FOR THE MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATION OF RSE IN OUR SCHOOL***

## **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 important. A copy of this policy will be made available to any parent on request to the school office and it can also be accessed on our school website [www.naascbs.ie](http://www.naascbs.ie). Parents will be notified via the school's app before commencing the Junior Cycle RSE programme. This programme will be delivered by all SPHE teachers at the same time, where possible.

## **Offering Advice**

The school's function is to provide a general education about relationships, 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 sexual advice and treatment, e.g. their doctor or other suitable agencies. Advice offered should not be directive and should be appropriate to the age of the pupil.

## **Withdrawing pupils from the RSE programme**

Parents have the right to withdraw their child from aspects of RSE. They do not have to give reasons for withdrawal, but we respectfully invite them to do so - sometimes we can then resolve misunderstandings. Once a parent's request to withdraw is made, that request must be complied with until revoked by the parent. A copy of this policy will be made to the parents upon request.

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

- 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/RSE Coordinator, the Principal may become involved if necessary).
- Consider whether the programme can be amended or improved in a way that will reassure parents - care is taken not to undermine the integrity of the RSE programme and the entitlement of the other pupils.
- Make parents aware that pupils may receive inaccurate information as a result of being withdrawn from an RSE programme.
- Offer the parents access to appropriate information and resources.

## **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. When deciding whether to answer questions, the teacher should consider the age and readiness of the students, the RSE programme content, the ethos of the school and the RSE policy.

If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised, he/she should seek advice from the DLP (Mr. Ben Travers) or the DDLP (Ms. Sharon Power).

### **Sexual Orientation**

Teachers do not promote any one lifestyle as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that sexual orientation will be discussed during a programme of sex education. One of the advantages of exploring issues concerning LGBT+ is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions, and address prejudice. Discussion of sexual orientation should be appropriate to the age of the pupils.

Any incidences of bullying relating to sexual orientation/gender identity will be dealt with in accordance with our Anti-Bullying policy.

### **Contraception**

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

### **Special/Additional Educational Needs**

Children with special educational needs may need more help than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up. They may also need more help in learning what sorts of behaviours are and are not acceptable. Teachers will be aware of the needs of students in their class with additional needs and differentiate their delivery of the RSE programme where necessary. We have the personnel to deliver a tailored RSE programme to any student with additional needs if it has been deemed necessary by the teacher, principal and parents of the student.

### **Staff CPD**

Staff are encouraged and supported to undertake CPD in our school. Teachers of SPHE are encouraged to attend RSE training. A list of teachers who have completed CPD in RSE can be found in the SPHE Department Plan.

### **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 must refer this immediately to the DLP/DDLP who will decide whether to inform the parents and/or appropriate authorities.

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 DLP/DDLP and possibly to parents if the DLP/DDLP 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.

*With regards to the Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary schools, please refer to articles 4.1.1. and 4.2.1. (Appendix I).*

### **Using visiting speakers and others**

It is school policy that the RSE programme is taught by teachers who are trained and have built up a positive relationship with the pupils. However, visitors can enhance the quality of the provision as long as they are used in addition to a planned programme of RSE.

- The organiser will provide the visitor, well in advance of the visit, with a copy of their 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:
  - The degree of explicitness of the content and presentation.
  - Will the visitor be accompanied by teaching staff?
  - Will the staff take an active role in the visitor's activities?
- Visitors should be given advance notice of the composition of the class and an idea of how their contribution fits into the scheme of work.
- The Office should be informed of the date and name of the visitor.
- The visitor should be welcomed at the main door.

### **RSE PROGRAMME IN OUR SCHOOL**

- Our RSE Programme will be structured with specific involvement and links to subjects such as Religious Education and Science.
- The programme will be in line with the NCCA Curriculum and Guidelines. The curriculum and the guidelines, along with the year-by-year programme, are available in the school for parents who wish to see them.
- In delivering the programme teachers will show sensitivity to the needs of the group and the school.
- The school's management will provide a commitment to the programme by facilitating its implementation through teacher recruitment and training, ongoing in-service, timetabling and consultation.

- The RSE committee shall liaise with SPHE teachers. The programme will be delivered by teachers timetabled for SPHE at junior level and by those timetabled for RE at senior level.
- The approach to the teaching of topics within RSE will involve giving students clear information, building up their self-esteem and helping them to learn to communicate, to make decisions and to express feelings in an appropriate way.

### **Resources**

The school will purchase, if necessary, 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 (SPHE) and as general school resources allow.

The following resources are recommended:

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|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ● Trust (RSE) Senior cycle | <a href="http://www.pdst.ie">www.pdst.ie</a>                       |
| ● On Your Own Two Feet     | <a href="http://www.webwise.ie">www.webwise.ie</a>                 |
| ● B4U Decide               | <a href="http://www.sphe.ie">www.sphe.ie</a>                       |
| ● Growing up LGBT          | <a href="http://www.ncse.ie">www.ncse.ie</a>                       |
| ● Mental Health Matters    | <a href="http://www.teni.ie">www.teni.ie</a>                       |
| ● Be safe Be wise          | <a href="http://www.crisispregnancy.ie">www.crisispregnancy.ie</a> |
|                            | <a href="http://www.belongto.org">www.belongto.org</a>             |
|                            | <a href="http://www.sexualwellbeing.ie">www.sexualwellbeing.ie</a> |

### **Timetabling:**

- Junior Cycle: Minimum of 6 classes during SPHE class. Where possible, the six classes will be taught to each year group at the same time.
- Transition Year: Each class group will receive the minimum requirement of 6 RSE classes in TY.
- Senior Cycle: Takes places during Religious Education (non-exam; rotation). Students will have one teacher for RSE for approximately 4-5 weeks.

The RSE team will create and review the RSE plan for all year groups with input from the SPHE Coordinator. This plan can be found in the SPHE Department Plan for each academic year.

### **Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the RSE programme**

We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this programme. This programme will be reviewed annually and changes will be made where applicable (*Appendix II*). A copy of the RSE plan will be distributed to relevant teachers and contained in the SPHE Department Plan.

This RSE Policy was updated in January 2021.

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### **Appendix I**

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 in that school. A written record of the report should be made and placed in a secure location by the Designated Liaison Person. The need for confidentiality at all times, as previously referred to in Chapter 1 Paragraph 1.2 of these guidelines, should be borne in mind. The supports of the school should continue to be made available to the child.*
- 4.2.1 *If the Designated Liaison Person is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation, he/she should report the matter to the relevant health board immediately.*

### **Appendix II**

According to the PDST's 'Guide for SPHE Remote Learning', "...not all SPHE education topics are appropriate to deliver remotely." In relation to RSE, it has been advised that: "Sensitive elements of RSE that are best taught in a safe classroom environment with peers and SPHE teachers" are not taught remotely.

Following consultation with the RSE team and the Management Team, RSE will not be taught remotely at this time. This decision is subject to review.