



**St Cecilia's College**  
Bligh's Lane, Derry, BT48 9PJ  
Tel 028 7128 1800 Fax 028 7128 1802  
Email: [office@stceciliacollege.com](mailto:office@stceciliacollege.com) Website: [www.stceciliacollege.com](http://www.stceciliacollege.com)

## Relationships Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

### Aspire, Endeavour, Achieve

#### Background Information and School Mission Statement

St Cecilia's is a College which provides for the education of all abilities between the ages of 11 and 18. The school aims to provide a comprehensive education based on Christian principles which will enable the pupils to develop their potential to the full and prepare them to become mature responsible citizens.

#### Rationale

St. Cecilia's College is a Catholic school committed to the education of the whole person. We, as a Christian Community, care for the faith and personal development of each student. We, like all Catholic schools, try to develop persons who are responsible and capable of making informed decisions, inspired by Christian values. Education at St. Cecilia's College prepares young people to open themselves up to life as it is and to create in themselves a positive attitude to life as it should be.

As parents/carers are the primary educators of their children, we will endeavour to engage in full consultation with them regarding aims, objectives and the teaching programme of this policy and their views will be considered when implementing and reviewing this policy.

In line with our school's ethos, RSE should provide opportunities that enable pupils to:

- form values and establish behaviour within a moral, spiritual and social framework consistent with our Catholic ethos
- learn how to develop and enjoy personal relationships and friendships which are based on responsibility and mutual respect
- build the foundations for developing more positive personal relationships in later life
- make positive, responsible choices about themselves and others and the way they live their lives

## **Policy Formation and Consultation Process**

### **Who was consulted?**

Pupils were consulted as to the content of the PD (RSE) programme within the school. A review of the curriculum content was also assessed by the SLT and a small steering committee was created to align current information with the guidelines set down by the CCMS/DoE as to what is appropriate within the context of a Catholic school.

- The Religious Education HOD - Mrs Davidson and Mrs J Kearney (RE) were consulted.
- The SLT were consulted on the RSE policy content and draft.
- The student council were also consulted on the policy and the teaching of RSE throughout each year group.
- Senior and junior leadership team and BOG

### **Implementation and Review**

Implementation of the policy will take place after consultation with the Governors in the 1st term 2023.

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years by the Principal, RSE Co-ordinator, the Governing Body and Staff. The next review date is November 2025.

### **Dissemination of the Policy**

The agreed policy will be given to all members of the Governing Body, and all teaching and non-teaching members of staff. Copies of the document will be available to all parents through the school's prospectus and a copy is available in the school office.

### **Defining RSE**

RSE is about the development of the pupil's knowledge and understanding of themselves as a sexual being, about what it means to be fully human, called to live in right relationships with self and others and being enabled to make moral decisions in conscience. RSE should give young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, not simply intimate relationships. It should enable them to know what a healthy relationship looks like and what makes a good friend, a good colleague and a successful marriage or other type of committed relationship.

### **Rationale**

The school is involved in relationships and sexuality education precisely because of our Christian beliefs about God and about the human person. The belief in the unique dignity of the human person made in the image and likeness of God underpins the approach to all education in a Catholic school. Our approach to RSE therefore is rooted in the Catholic Church's teaching of the human person and presented in a positive framework of Christian ideals.

At the heart of the Christian life is the Trinity; Father, Son and Spirit in communion, united in loving relationship and embracing all people and all creation. As a consequence of the Christian belief that we are made in the image and likeness of God, gender and sexuality are seen as God's gift, reflect God's beauty, and share in the divine creativity. RSE, therefore, will be placed firmly within the context of relationship as it is there that sexuality grows and develops.

RSE will be firmly embedded in the PD/HE/LLW/Science/Health & Well-Being and the RE Curriculum as it is concerned with nurturing human wholeness and integral to the physical,

spiritual, emotional, moral, social and intellectual development of pupils. It is centred on Christ's vision of being human as good news and will be positive and prudent, showing the potential for development, while enabling the dangers and risks involved to be understood and appreciated.

### **The Centrality of Virtue**

Our programme enshrines Catholic values relating to the importance of stable relationships, marriage and family life. It also promotes those virtues which are essential in responding to the God's call to love others with a proper respect for their dignity and the dignity of the human body.

### **AIMS**

#### **Objectives and Skills**

Our Mission Statement commits us to the education of the whole child (spiritual, physical, intellectual, moral, social, cultural, emotional) and we believe that RSE is an integral part of this education. Furthermore, our school aims state that we will endeavour to raise pupils' self-esteem, help them to grow in knowledge and understanding, recognise the value of all persons and develop caring and sensitive attitudes. It is in this context that we commit ourselves:

In partnership with parents, to provide children and young people with a positive and prudent sexual education which is compatible with their physical, cognitive, psychological, and spiritual maturity, and rooted in a Catholic vision of education and the human person.

#### **Aims of RSE**

In line with the school's ethos and CCEA guidelines our Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy aims to:

- promote a Catholic vision of sexuality that reflects selfless love, respect and commitment within a moral, social, spiritual framework
- help young people appreciate their worth, dignity and uniqueness as children of God
- enable young people to appreciate sexuality as a gift from God
- promote an appreciation of the value and sanctity of human life and the wonder of life from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death
- value the gifts of marriage and the family
- enable young people to grow in holiness by acting responsibly and generously towards others.
- value the concept and qualities of consent in relationships and understand the law in relation to consent
- recognise that compassion, forgiveness, mercy and tolerance are essential dispositions to develop within relationships
- Understand that being single and chaste is a virtuous, positive and fulfilling option
- promote respect for all individuals regardless of sexual orientation, race, gender or creed
- encourage the young to be a witness to human dignity at all times online
- encourage the young to see social media as another tool to reach people with the message that sexuality is a gift from God, not to be squandered and abused
- recognise common mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, disordered eating, self-harm and compulsive behaviours in themselves

## **Objectives of RSE**

In line with the school's ethos and CCEA guidelines, our Relationships and Sexuality Curriculum attempts to enable pupils to:

- realise that relationships can cause strong feelings and emotions including sexual attraction
- know the features of positive and stable relationships (including trust, mutual respect, honesty, equality) and those of unhealthy relationships (including imbalance of power, coercion, control, exploitation, abuse of any kind)
- help pupils cope with the breakdown of a relationship and the effect of change, including loss, separation, divorce and bereavement
- develop a positive sense of self-awareness, and the skills for building and
- maintaining self-esteem
- acquire and develop an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality and development
- cope with the social, physical and emotional challenges of growing up
- understand human physiology with particular reference to the reproductive cycle, human fertility and sexually transmitted infections and diseases
- value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood
- understand different family structures, and the diversity of family life
- recognise the need for self-control and the importance of the virtue of chastity
- explore the moral and ethical issues surrounding sexuality
- recognise peer pressure and have strategies to manage it
- recognise the need for online safety
- recognise the impact of drugs and alcohol on choices and sexual behaviour
- be aware that the media portrayal of relationships may not reflect real life and understand the possible impact of this on people's expectations of relationships
- help young people to become aware of the pervasive prevalence of pornography on the internet which can destroy and degrade human sexuality and relationships and reduce people to objects for gratification

## **Skills Promoted (including personal and social)**

Pupils will develop the ability to:

- form and maintain healthy, positive relationships which reflect the dignity of the human person
- make sound judgements and good choices
- manage emotions within relationships and the breakdown of relationships with sensitivity and dignity
- manage conflict positively and enable pupils to recognise the value of difference
- critically evaluate a wide range of information, opinion, attitudes and values
- develop the communication skills of active listening, negotiation, offering and receiving constructive feedback and assertiveness
- cultivate mercy and compassion, learning to forgive and be forgiven
- develop skills and strategies to respond appropriately to exploitation, bullying, harassment, and control in relationships (including the unique challenges posed by online abuse and the unacceptability of physical, emotional, sexual abuse)

- recognise when a relationship is unhealthy or abusive (including the unacceptability of both emotional and physical abuse or violence including ‘honour’ based violence, forced marriage and rape)
- be able to access support for self or others at risk
- develop the skills to challenge sexist, homophobic, racist and disablist language and behaviour
- evaluate the effect of alcohol and drug use on decision making and personal safety
- build resilience and the ability to resist unwanted pressures, recognising the influence and impact of the media, internet and peer groups and so develop the
- ability to assess pressures and respond appropriately
- develop coping strategies to overcome mental health issues and to recognise when they need to employ strategies to re-establish positive mental health including managing stress and anxiety

### **Inclusion and Special Education Needs (SEN)**

It is widely recognised that pupils with SEN are more vulnerable to all forms of abuse and exploitation. Teachers will try to ensure that they develop the knowledge, understanding and skills of pupils to enable them to:

- identify inappropriate and exploitative behaviour;
- help develop their own prevention strategies to stay safe;
- recognise and build healthy relationships; and
- know who they can talk to.

It is important therefore that we take cognizance of minority groups within our school. Employing a range of appropriate strategies which enable quality teaching to occur is central to inclusive practice and should include:

- differentiation strategies
- co-operative learning strategies
- classroom management strategies and
- the use of new technology.

We will ensure RSE is sensitive to the different needs of individual pupils in respect to pupils’ different abilities, levels of maturity and personal circumstances; for example, their own sexual orientation, faith or culture and is taught in a way that does not subject pupils to discrimination. Lessons will also help children to realise the nature and consequences of discrimination, teasing, bullying and aggressive behaviours (including cyber-bullying), use of prejudice-based language and how to respond and ask for help.

### **RSE Curriculum**

A school audit will be carried out to ensure consistency of approach and establish when and where aspects of the RSE programme are being delivered. Lessons and resources developed will be appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils to which they are delivered. Teachers delivering the programmes, will do so with sensitivity and care. They will also consider pupils’ knowledge, attitudes and beliefs and their capacity to understand issues. Special attention will be paid to young people with special educational needs where physical development may outstrip emotional maturity to ensure that programmes are delivered effectively.

### **Timetabling**

RSE will be timetabled during all PD classes in both KS3 and KS4. There will be discrete lessons within the year 9 programme as the students have a health & wellbeing class on a carousel. RSE will also be delivered through our PD lessons in sixth form. We will have various outside agencies delivering different aspects of the RSE curriculum through our Enrichment programme also.

### **Class organisation**

It is important that within the RSE programmes, activities are included to allow young people to talk about their interests, concerns and feelings. If students have respect for themselves then ultimately, they will have respect for others.

### **Resources**

The RSE pastoral team will review and quality-assure all the resources chosen before the pupils use them to ensure that they are inclusive and consistent with the school's moral and value framework. All new RSE programmes, either developed within the school or presented by external agencies, should be brought to the attention of the Diocesan Advisors for review and accreditation.

### **RSE Teaching Resources should:**

- Reflect the ethos of the School
- Be age-appropriate, inclusive, and sensitive to the pupils' needs and experiences;
- Be factually accurate, up-to-date and make clear distinctions between fact and opinion.

### **Teaching strategies**

RSE aims to develop personal and social skills and clarify attitudes and values within a moral framework. RSE seeks to promote behaviour which will allow pupils to take increasing responsibility for themselves as they grow and develop. Teaching methods which involve pupils actively in the process of their own learning is most beneficial.

Specifically, in terms of organising the learning environment, the teacher will be careful to create an atmosphere which respects the privacy of each individual student and treats all pupils with due sensitivity and care. Some important considerations might be:

- the degree of trust, respect and positive regard for pupils;
- the relationship between the teacher and the pupils and among the pupils themselves;
- the need for clear expectations, goals and learning objectives.

### **Assessment of RSE**

The nature of RSE is strongly orientated towards Personal Development which does not necessarily lend itself to summative assessment. RSE is not easily measurable as it is qualitative rather than quantitative. When required, RSE will be assessed and reported on in Years 8 – 12 by the Teacher who delivers the module at that level.

### **Use of Outside Agencies**

Where appropriate, the skills and expertise of outside agencies and professionals may be accessed. Where this occurs, the school should be satisfied that to contributions from

informed outsiders are an integral part of the whole programme and in harmony with the aims and ethos of the school. They will ensure that all teaching is rooted in Catholic principles and practice.

**It is essential that all outside visitors/speakers be approved by the Principal/RSE co-ordinator.**

A preliminary visit to the school to discuss ethical/practical considerations is advised. Appropriate follow up in relation to guest speakers is also advised.

The RSE co-ordinator and teachers involved in the delivery of RSE should ensure that resource materials obtained from other agencies and presentations by outside speakers are in harmony with the ethos of the school.

It is vital that any outside agency/individual delivering a support session in a school;

- receives a copy of the school's Relationships & Sexuality Education Policy;
- is made aware of and adheres to the school's Child Protection Policy;
- agrees to respect the ethos of the school;
- is made aware of the issues around confidentiality;
- is vetted as appropriate

**Parents/carers should be made aware in advance of the use of outside agencies.**

**During the session the teacher/s should be present at all times.**

Afterwards the teacher/s should provide pupils with the opportunity to discuss their experience/s and honestly evaluate the session/s. Schools can use their student feedback to inform future planning and provision along with any evaluation carried out by the outside agency/individual.

### **Parents and Carers**

Parents/carers will be informed of the content, timing and the delivery of the programme in order to enable them to support the work of the school and to enable parents to discuss the topics and issues raised by the programme with their children.

This will be achieved by sending an outline of programme home at the beginning of school year or

### **Ensuring the Curriculum is Balanced**

While promoting Catholic values and virtues, we will ensure that pupils are offered a balanced programme by providing an RSE programme that offers a range of viewpoints on issues.

Pupils will also receive clear scientific information as well as covering the aspects of the law pertaining to RSE relating to forced-marriage, female genital mutilation, abortion, the age of consent and legislation relating to equality. Knowing about facts and enabling young people to explore differing viewpoints is not the same as promoting behaviour and is not incompatible with our school's promotion of Catholic teaching. We will ensure that pupils have access to the learning they need to stay safe, healthy and understand their rights as individuals and to relate to other individuals in a mature and respectful way.

### **Responsibility for Teaching the Programme**

The programme will be led by the LLW/PD coordinator - Mrs Joanne Nichol

It will be taught by form tutors or external agencies (Enrichment programme in sixth form)

It will be supported by Mr J Lafferty (Pastoral Vice Principal)

## **OTHER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Trustees**

The Trustees are responsible for the strategic direction, organisational nature and ethos of their respective schools.

### **Board of Governors**

The Board of Governors should foster and support the development of an RSE policy and programme by collaborating with teachers and parents. It should also facilitate the consultative process whereby the school community can respond and contribute. The governors should examine and approve the completed policy and programme prior to their implementation in the school and review the policy at regular intervals.

At all times the governors of the school should seek to accommodate and be sensitive to the religious and cultural beliefs of both teachers and parents while fulfilling their responsibility to ensure the availability of adequate RSE for all young people.

### **Principal and Senior Management Team**

As with all subject areas, it is the role of the Principal to make possible a coherent and co-ordinated approach to RSE in keeping with the ethos of the school. It is the role of the Vice Principal to support the work of the Principal and if a VP is charged with responsibility for RSE it is her/his responsibility to ensure that RSE is delivered in a way which is in keeping with the ethos of the school.

The Principal and Senior Management Team co-ordinate the school's approach to RSE and consults the Board of Governors, staff, parent(s)/carer(s) and health professionals, as appropriate.

### **RSE Co-ordinator/Cross Curricular Working Party**

The RSE co-ordinator is a member of staff appointed to be responsible for co-ordinating all issues related to the RSE policy, the Department of Education specifications and the programme designed for the pupils. The Pastoral Vice Principal (Mr J Lafferty) is the RSE co-ordinator within St. Cecilia's College. It is essential that the co-ordinator is respectful and committed to the school's ethos and the aims and direction of RSE within the school.

The RSE Co-ordinator's role includes:

- upholding and ensuring that the programme is taught in accordance with the school's Catholic ethos;
- ensuring that the programme is taught effectively and is appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils;
- liaising with the Board of Governors, the Principal, the Vice Principal (Pastoral), all staff, parents and health and educational visitors on RSE matters;
- attending in-service training and disseminating appropriate information to other staff members;
- organising training for staff as and when appropriate;
- liaising with outside agencies where appropriate.

### **Pastoral Team/Designated Teacher/Special Needs Co-ordinator**

The Pastoral Team/Designated Teacher and Special Needs Co-ordinator will form part of the cross-curricular team and provide relevant information which will ensure that the needs of all pupils are met.



The Pastoral Team will ensure that the RSE topics delivered through Pastoral Programmes are in line with the Catholic ethos of the school. The Pastoral Team will liaise with the Designated Teacher and Special Needs Co-ordinator where necessary.

### **Teaching Staff**

The staff provide a link through communicating the content of RSE and the relevant programme, possibly through curriculum meetings and by other means. Teachers are of central importance in terms of review of RSE provision. They are also key to identifying their own needs around ongoing professional development in their RSE work.

### **Chaplain**

The role of the chaplain is to:

- support the teaching of RSE where possible;
- meet with the co-ordinator to discuss the RSE programme and its delivery in school;
- witness to Gospel values.

### **Diocesan Advisor/Diocesan Advisor Support Service**

The Diocesan Advisor supports schools in the development and delivery of an RSE policy and programme which reflects the Catholic ethos and respects the wishes of parents.

### **Relationship to other Policies and other Curriculum Subjects**

To ensure consistency all school policies should strive to be consistent and coherent within the framework of the overall school development plan. The RSE policy is developed in this context and shares links with, the following policies:

- Religious Education
- Teaching and Learning
- Child Protection/Safeguarding Children
- Personal Development
- Anti-Bullying
- Positive Behaviour
- Drugs
- Internet Safety/E-safety
- Homework
- Use of outside agencies and vetting arrangements.

### **Learning about RSE in PD, HE and RE classes will link to other school subjects**

Teachers of supporting subject areas should be informed of the content and timing of the delivery of RSE, and in so far as possible Relationships and Sexuality Education will be taught in a cross-curricular way. The following subject areas could contribute to a cross-curricular approach:

- Child Development
- Drama
- English
- Home Economics.
- Health and Social Care
- Learning for Life and Work
- Physical Education
- Religious Education

- Science & Technology

### **Responding to Pupils' Questions and Sensitive Areas**

While it is important to create an environment in which pupils can discuss issues openly, teachers may not always be able to answer all questions about issues and should set appropriate boundaries. Teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the pupils, the RSE curriculum and the RSE policy for the school. Any advice provided and the way teachers respond should support the role of the pupils' parents or carers and reflect the ethos of the school.

All staff teaching RSE related issues should use the proper biological names for body parts and sexual acts, where appropriate and relevant to the RSE programme. The use of common slang should be avoided.

Teachers should remember that, as they are not medical professionals, they must not give personal medical advice to any pupil. Teachers must advise pupils to seek advice from parents or carers and health professionals. If any question asked raises child protection issues, this should be referred to the designated teacher for child protection.

### **SPECIFIC ISSUES**

#### **The Status of the Family**

In keeping with the right of Catholic schools to present RSE within its own ethos, the school supports the Sacramental vision of marriage and family, while being sensitive to other family situations.

#### **The Virtue of Chastity**

In line with the ethos of the school and Christian morals, sexual abstinence before marriage and fidelity within it, will be presented as a positive, desirable and achievable option.

#### **The Sanctity of Life**

In keeping with the right of Catholic schools to present RSE within its own ethos, the value and sacredness of life will be actively promoted.

#### **Sexual Orientation**

All pupils have the right to learn in a safe environment, to be treated with respect and dignity and not be treated any less favourably or isolated in any way on the grounds of their sexual orientation. Antagonism/bullying or other forms of abuse against pupils who reveal that they are homosexual will not be tolerated by the school. Respect for all people regardless of sexual orientation will be promoted in line with the school ethos – no pupils should be isolated on the grounds of their sexual orientation. Pupils have the right to hold different views/lifestyles in a peaceful manner.

The Catholic ethos of the school ensures that gospel values, inclusivity, equality and respect for all and the right of everyone to learn in a safe and secure environment where all are treated with respect and dignity. The ethos of a Catholic school supports the guidance produced by the Equality Commission on eliminating sexual orientation discrimination. This

guidance relates to the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 and the guidance from the Equality Commission (NI) in March 2009.

### **Pastoral Care of Young People with Gender Dysphoria**

The disclosure of gender dysphoria by a child or young person is first and foremost a pastoral and welfare issue. As such, the priority of the school is to create a safe environment in which the vulnerable child can receive the support that they require.

### **Family Planning**

Catholic teaching on family planning will be presented and pupils will also be provided with accurate information about methods of artificial contraception in an age appropriate and sensitive manner.

### **Sexually Transmitted Infections**

It is important that pupils are provided with accurate, information about sexually transmitted infections, their transmission, the inherent dangers of risk-taking behaviour and how to obtain appropriate advice if they are concerned about their sexual health. Information on how to prevent the spread of infections should take note of the fact that the best way to prevent infection is to practice sexual abstinence before marriage and monogamy (inside marriage).

### **Digital Safety**

The RSE Programme will teach pupils how to safely navigate the digital world. Technology plays an integral role in the lives of pupils which poses both opportunities and risks. The RSE Programme will raise awareness of potential threats or dangers posed by the Internet such as sexting, cyber-bullying, pornography, abuse and exploitation. Pupils will explore the implications of the law, the strategies they can use to protect themselves and where they can access advice and support if they are at risk.

### **Supporting Children and Young People at Risk**

Children will need to feel safe and secure in the environment in which RSE takes place. Effective RSE will provide opportunities for discussion of what is and is not appropriate in relationships. Such discussion may, at times, lead to disclosure of a safeguarding issue. Teachers will need to be aware of the needs of their pupils and not let any fears and worries go unnoticed. Where a teacher suspects that a child or young person is a victim of or is at risk of abuse, they are required to follow the school's safeguarding policy and immediately inform the designated senior member of staff responsible.

### **Protocol for RSE classes**

- Code of conduct for the RSE classes
- Understand that the child's right to privacy must always be respected by the teacher and other pupils. Children will not be expected to answer any personal questions.
- Teachers will not promise confidentiality. A child does not have the right to expect
- Incidents in the classroom or school to go unreported.
- The Principal or designated teacher must be informed of any disclosures which might
- Suggest a child is at risk from physical or sexual abuse.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The RSE Co-ordinator will monitor the provision of the various dimensions of the programme by examining plans, schemes of work and samples of pupils work at regular intervals. The policy will be reviewed biannually.

### **Staff Development and Training**

Training will be organised by the RSE co-ordinator, in consultation with the Principal/ Pastoral, Vice Principal and Senior Leadership Team. Where it is deemed necessary the Diocesan Education Advisors, the Education Authority Advisors and other outside agencies may be consulted. Dissemination of training can take place during school in-service days.

It is essential that training be provided both for

- a) new staff to the programme and
- b) new teachers to the school.

**This policy was last reviewed by the Board of Governors: November 2023**

**Due to be Reviewed: November 2025**

**APPENDIX**

**Sample Service Level Agreement for External Agencies**

I/We acknowledge the school's ethos and policies of \_\_\_\_\_ and agree to abide by its ethos and policies:

- In working with young people and,
- In the delivery of the programmes outlined below:

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I am/we are, willing to provide full details of material content to: Leadership Management, Teachers, Parents, Governors and other Appropriate Bodies and agree to fully implement any changes deemed necessary by the above representatives.

I accept the right of the school to withdraw the invitation issued to support the school in the education of our young people.

I/We formally accept the above terms of reference and in so doing I/We will acknowledge the agreement made.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ (External Agency)

Dated \_\_\_\_\_

Countersigned \_\_\_\_\_ (Principal/Board of Governors)

Dated \_\_\_\_\_