



Tarbert Comprehensive School

**Relationships & Sexuality
Education**

School Policy Document

The school was established in 1973 and is comprehensive in the sense that it is a co-educational establishment catering for all ranges of abilities, embracing all social groupings, offering the widest possible range of subjects and being open to all religious persuasions.

It will always recognise, and insist on, the responsibility of parents as the first and most important educators of their children. Our role is to work in partnership with parents enabling young people to grow intellectually, physically, socially, culturally, creatively, morally and spiritually.

In line with Department of Education policy the above vision has been incorporated into the RSE programme currently being taught in the school as a module of SPHE at Junior cycle and RE at Senior level.

RSE Policy Statement enacted after consultation between staff, parent representatives, Principal and Board of Management - January 1998. Reviewed and updated - April 2008. Reviewed and updated November 2010.

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

Our School Mission Statement

In Tarbert Comprehensive School we seek to foster mutual respect and an atmosphere of trust. We promote a healthy work ethic and a love of learning in a spirit of collegiality and co-operation so that all may reach their full potential.

The ethos of the Comprehensive School is one of equality and inclusiveness, welcoming and nurturing all of the diverse abilities and talents of the various communities we serve.

We value each other, facilitate our special needs students, celebrate our achievements and look forward to becoming an increasingly multi-cultural school.

Each day we aim to live up to our school motto: "Mens Sana in Corpore Sano", a Healthy Mind in a Healthy Body.

Formulated by the Students, Parents, Staff and Management of Tarbert Comprehensive School, Partners in Education, April 2006.

Ratified by the Board of Management, May 2006.

What is R.S.E.?

Relationships & Sexuality Education Programme (R.S.E.) includes all aspects of the human person that relate to being male and female and is subject to change and development throughout life. It is a complex dimension of human life and relationships

Relationships and sexuality is a life long 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.

Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme seeks to provide young people with formal opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality and relationships through the process that will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework.

Relationships & Sexuality Education within Social, Personal & Health Education.

The Relationships and Sexuality Education policy guidelines 1997 state that Social Personal & Health Education is "spiral, developmental in nature and age appropriate in content and methodology". The R.S.E. programme is designed to follow this principle and pattern. Apart from the specific lessons of R.S.E., S.P.H.E. covers other areas which would be pertinent to the development of a healthy attitude to sexuality in oneself and one's relationship with others. S.P.H.E. deals with many issues such as self esteem, assertiveness, communication and decision making skills - all of which can contribute to the effectiveness of the R.S.E. programme.

The *aims of our Relationships and Sexuality Education programme

The R.S.E. programme will specifically aim to promote the overall development of the person and the integration of sexuality into personal life in order to:

- support parents in their desire for a comprehensive education for their children
- enable young people to develop responsible attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework in keeping with the policy and mission statement of the school
- help young people understand and develop friendships and relationships
- promote an understanding of sexuality
- promote a positive attitude and sense of responsibility to one's own sexuality and in one's relationships with others
- to promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction
- to 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

*It is acknowledged that in a course of limited duration, these aims are aspirational.

How R.S.E. is timetabled and taught:

R.S.E. is taught as one specific module for six class periods to 1st, 2nd and 3rd year S.P.H.E. classes. It is taught in the context of the comprehensive ethos and the mission statement of the school. Where possible, in line with best practice, the school facilitates the teaching of R.S.E./S.P.H.E. in small groups. Every effort is made to ensure the teachers retain their class group from 1st year through to 3rd year, thus establishing a safe and secure learning environment, especially important in the delivery of R.S.E. Teachers are assigned to the R.S.E. teaching team by consultation and through expression of interest.

R.S.E. is taught in the 3rd term when class climate, ground rules and a safe learning environment has been well established. R.S.E. is taught to senior cycle as an integrated module in the R.E. programme.

Staff development, training and resource issues:

School management encourages and facilitates teachers to attend relevant in-service training for the continued development of the R.S.E. programme. Information from each in-service course attended is placed on the Q drive. School management is very supportive of any requests made to update the resources and equipment for R.S.E. Resources are allocated on the basis of teacher/co-ordinator requisition.

The teaching team has access to the Internet etc. for classroom use when required.

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. An R.S.E. information letter is sent to the parents/guardians of first years well in advance of beginning the programme. Many of them will be familiar with the content in that most primary schools have already introduced aspects of the R.S.E. policy in fifth/sixth class. A full and complete syllabus, core resource material and the policy document is available in the school if parents wish to view it. Parents can also meet the R.S.E. teacher at the Parent/Teacher meeting.

Parents who require further information may contact the S.P.H.E. co-ordinator in the school.

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 sexual advice and treatment, e.g. their doctor or other suitable agency. Advice offered should not be directive and should be appropriate to the age of the pupil, and where necessary we would refer on to the chaplain and outside agencies, i.e. doctor, Kerry Adolescent Services, etc., in consultation with parents.

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 and may direct the student to seek information from their parent/guardian.

If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised he/she should consider the age and readiness of the students, the R.S.E. programme content, the ethos of the school and the R.S.E. policy.

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 Designated Liaison Person (the Principal) or the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (the Deputy 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 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 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 (Mr. Richard Prendiville) in our school. A written record of the report should be made and placed

in a secure location by the Principal. The need for confidentiality should be borne in mind at all times. 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.

Cross Curricular:

The team recognise the importance of linking with other subjects in planning and delivering the R.S.E. module. Most effective to date has been the link with R.E. when covering the R.S.E. module. The science department deals with the biological aspects of reproduction. Aspects are also taught in Home Economics, P.E. and L.C.A. (Social Education).

Withdrawing pupils from the R.S.E. Programme:

Our policy is made known to parents on our website and an opportunity to withdraw the child if offered. Parents do not have to give reasons for withdrawal, but we respectfully invite them to do so - sometimes we can then resolve misunderstandings. Once a parents request to withdraw is made, that request must be complied with until revoked by the parent. (See also Appendix 1.)

Role of Visitors:

It is school policy that most of the R.S.E. 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 R.S.E. Visitors to R.S.E. classes will deal with discussions in line with the aims of the programme and the ethos of the school. It is the duty of the teacher who organises the visit to ensure the suitability of the visit to the programme and the school. Teachers will remain with the class for the duration of the visit. The Principal must be informed in advance of all visiting speakers and the content of their presentation. Evaluations are carried out to assess the benefits.

Sexual Orientation:

Teachers do not promote any one life-style as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that homosexuality including Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) will be discussed during a programme of sex education. 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.

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 Needs:

Children with special needs may need more help than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up; and in being warned and prepared against abuse by others. R.S.E. teachers where necessary liaise with support services within the school.

Ongoing support:**Training;**

All teachers involved in this work do not necessarily have to be 'experts' on the issues concerned. However, they do require sensitivity to the needs of the group, an ability to deal with questions openly/honestly and preparedness to refer to more expert advice if necessary. The skills acquired in general teaching apply also to health education. Furthermore, many teachers have training in related areas such as counselling. Some teachers have expert training in the specific areas of health, relationships and sexuality education and will be encouraged to train other teachers.

The R.S.E. teaching team includes the Chaplain and Guidance Counsellor and several class teachers. The school has facilitated and will continue to facilitate teachers to obtain expert training in the R.S.E. field.

Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the R.S.E. programme:

We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this programme. Specifically important to the R.S.E. programme are:

- pupil feedback;
- staff review and feedback;
- parental feedback;

The reviewed policy is available for all staff to view on the Q drive. The R.S.E. teachers and students have reviewed the programme and as a result have updated materials and resources.

Reviewed and Updated: February 2015.

Appendix 1

What we do if a request for withdrawal from the R.S.E. programme is made by a parent:

- we 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 S.P.H.E. co-ordinator, the Principal may become involved if necessary).
- we 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 R.S.E. programme.
- we attempt to ensure that where a pupil is withdrawn there is no disruption to other parts of their education.
- we point out that pupils who have been withdrawn are vulnerable to teasing - we therefore attempt to cause minimal embarrassment to the pupil and minimal disruption to the programme.
- we also point out that pupils may receive inaccurate information from their peers.
- we offer the parents access to appropriate information and resources.
- parents of any student opting out of R.S.E. must make suitable arrangements with school management for the welfare of their child at these times.