

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

Drumshanbo Vocational School



Drumshanbo Vocational School
Drumshanbo,
Co. Leitrim
Roll no. 71570S

Drumshanbo Vocational School is a co-educational, academically non-selective school with an enrolment of approximately 370 students. The ethos of the school is one which respects every individual in the school community, promotes an environment which enhances self-esteem, and endeavours to develop the talents and aptitudes of every student.

School Mission Statement

Drumshanbo Vocational School including students, teachers, parents and community, seeks to provide for the intellectual/curricular, physical, social and personal education of the student.

The School aims to establish, develop and nurture attitudes, values and behaviour which will enable the whole school community to reach its full potential.

All students are encouraged to find their own strengths in order to grow into self-confident and responsible adults. Within a firmly established programme of Pastoral Care, we seek to enhance the spiritual aspects of all our students' lives.

Definition of Relationship 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.' www.education.ie

Drumshanbo Vocational School aims to provide young people with information and skills to evaluate the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values offered today, so they will make positive, responsible choices about themselves and the way they live their lives. The RSE programme also provides opportunities for young people to learn about relationships and sexuality, in ways that help them to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

Relationship of RSE to SPHE

A syllabus for SPHE at Junior Cert has been approved by the Department of Education and Skills. As a programme, SPHE aims to;

- Enable students to develop personal and social skills
- Promote self-esteem and self-confidence
- Enable students to develop a framework for responsible decision making
- Provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.
- Promote physical, mental and emotional health and well being.

The RSE programme forms part of the SPHE programme and both programmes are 'spiral, developmental in nature and age appropriate in content and methodology' (*Draft Guidelines for RSE*, NCCA, June 1995). Much of the content of the schools SPHE programme includes a range of topics which contribute to the effectiveness of the RSE programme.

Current Provision for RSE in Drumshanbo Vocational School

RSE is a whole school responsibility. At a formal level RSE is dealt with in certain subjects; Science, Religion, Home Economics and CSPE. However to meet the needs of students, specific provision for RSE is made within the Social, Personal and Health Education programme.

At Junior Cycle one class period of SPHE per week is allocated for each class group. At present SPHE is not timetabled for senior cycle students, and is not recommended as a compulsory subject at this level by the Department of Education and Skills. However, although there are no specified SPHE classes at senior level, many RSE topics are addressed through the Guidance Plan and Religious Education programme.

Aims of Drumshanbo Vocational School's RSE Programme

The RSE programme as dealt with within the framework of Social, Personal and Health Education has as its specific aims;

- To help students understand and develop friendships and relationships
- To promote an understanding of sexuality
- To promote an understanding of one's own sexuality
- To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction
- To enable students to develop attitudes and values toward their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework
- To provide opportunities for students to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways which help them to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

Objectives of the RSE programme within our School;

- Students will acquire the skills and understanding necessary to form healthy friendships and relationships.
- Students will develop a positive sense of self awareness and build skills to maintain high levels of self esteem
- Students will become aware of the variety of ways in which people grow and change, especially during adolescence, and will develop a respect for the difference between people
- Students will gain an age appropriate understanding of human physiology with reference to the reproductive cycle, human fertility and sexually transmitted diseases.
- Students will gain an understanding of the values associated with family life and the responsibilities of parenthood
- Gender issues, stereotyping and cultural issues will be explored as part of the course

- Skills to cope with peer pressure, conflict management and threats to personal safety will be developed

Overview of Topics Covered in Junior and Senior Cycle RSE

Junior Cycle	Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Me as unique and different. • Friendship. • Changes at adolescence. • The Reproductive System. • Images of male and female. • Respecting myself and others.
	Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From conception to birth. • Recognising feelings and emotions. • Peer pressure and other influences. • Managing relationships. • Making responsible decisions. • Health and personal safety.
	Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body image. • Where am I now? • Relationships- what is important? Sexual Orientation • Human reproduction and fertility. • Contraception. • Unplanned pregnancy. • Sexually Transmitted Infections. (STI's) • STI transmission.
Senior Cycle	Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What we value in relationships. • Healthy relationships. • Self-esteem. • The influence of self-esteem on our behaviour • Understanding boundaries. • Communicating boundaries. • Intimacy.
	Human Sexuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexuality. • Sexual orientation. • Influences and values. • Decision making. • Responsible relationships.
	Sexual Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human reproduction and fertility. • Contraception. • Unplanned pregnancy. • Sexually Transmitted Infections. (STI's) • STI transmission.

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of Relationships and Sexuality Education in Drumshanbo Vocational School

1. The Principal has full responsibility for timetabling arrangements and staff allocation regarding the teaching of the RSE programme
2. The School recognises parents as the primary educators of their children and their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality, is seen by the School as very important.
3. Offering Advice: The School's function is to provide a general education about sexual matters and contraception and not to offer individual advice, information or counselling on aspects of sexual behaviour and contraception.
4. Explicit questions: Teachers may choose not to deal with explicit questions in class. When deciding to answer questions, teachers should consider the age and readiness of the students, the ethos of the School and the RSE policy.

In circumstances where a pupil is considered at some risk of any type of abuse, or in breach of the law, teachers will follow the Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary Schools as stated in paragraph 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 DLP. 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, and in paragraph 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

Withdrawing Student's from the RSE programme.

Parents have a right to withdraw their child from any aspect of RSE, and will be provided with a copy of this policy if they request. Parents do not have to give reasons for withdrawal. Misunderstandings regarding the programme will be dealt with, should they arise. Once a parent's request to withdraw their child is made, that request must be complied with until revoked by the parent.

Many RSE issues such as over-population, birth control, and other sexual matters are dealt with in a minor way in Geography and Religious Studies. However, as discussion is limited and set within the context of another particular subject, it does not constitute part of the RSE programme.

Should a request for withdrawal be made by a parent, the following procedure will be followed:

- (a) 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 RSE coordinator and the Principal/Deputy Principal). We will reassure parents and address their specific concerns. Care will be taken not to undermine the integrity of the RSE programme and the entitlement of the other pupils.
- (b) We will attempt to ensure that where a pupil is withdrawn there is no disruption to other parts of their education.
- (c) We will point out to parents that pupils who are withdrawn are vulnerable to teasing – we therefore attempt to cause minimal embarrassment to the pupil and minimal disruption to the programme.
- (d) We also point out that pupils may receive inaccurate information from their peers
- (e) Parents will be given access to appropriate information and resources.

Visiting Speakers

Approval from the Principal must be sought before visitors speak to a class group. The SPHE co-ordinator must provide the visitor with a copy of the RSE programme and make the visitor aware of the School's ethos and the manner of delivery of the RSE programme.

The content and presentation material to be used by visiting speakers must be carefully considered by the teacher, to ensure it's suitability for the particular class group.

LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender)

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. 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 and will be addressed both at Junior and Senior Cycle in a sensitive and appropriate way in the classroom, using the Growing Up LGBT resource.

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.

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.

Special Needs

Children with special 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 behaviour are and are not acceptable, and in being warned and prepared against abuse by others.

Training

Teachers involved in the delivery of the RSE programme need not be experts on the issues concerned. General teaching skills apply to the teaching of health education, with sensitivity been shown to the particular needs of the group. Ongoing training of staff in the teaching of health education will be facilitated by the school, as deemed appropriate by the Principal.

Resources

The school Principal will consider all requests for appropriate resources in terms of time, finance and personnel.

Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the RSE programme

The SPHE co-ordinator in association with the school management will monitor the implementation of this policy.

The policy will be reviewed and evaluated every three years under the direction of the Board of Management. This process will be co-ordinated by the SPHE Coordinator and involve teachers directly involved in the delivery of the programme, in consultation with the wider school community.

On-going review and evaluation will take cognisance of changing information, guidelines, legislation and feedback from parents/guardians, students, teachers and others. The SPHE co-ordinator will have the role of monitoring aspects of the policy. This policy will be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation and within the framework of school planning.

The following indicators will be used to gauge the impact and effectiveness of the policy, at review.

- RSE is being successfully taught through SPHE for all relevant students
- Where SPHE may not be timetabled, e.g. at Senior Cycle, that these students are receiving RSE
- Adequate resource material is available to teachers
- Appropriate in-service for teachers is available and relevant teachers are availing of it
- Students are aware of the policy
- Parents/Guardians are aware of the policy
- Positive feedback is received from teachers, other school staff, students, parents/guardians, members of the Board of Management.

The following may be considered to support the process of review and evaluation:

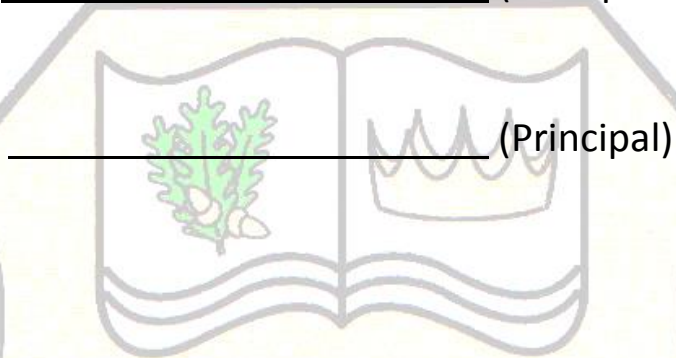
- A confidential survey of students and staff
- Feedback from the student body.
- Parent/Guardian feedback, including at parent/teacher meetings
- A comment/suggestion box.



Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

This policy was approved by the Board of Management on:

Signed: _____ (Chairperson)



Approved by the ETB on : _____

Signed: _____ (Chief Executive)

