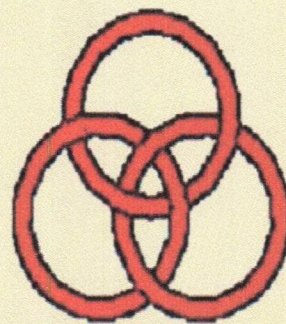


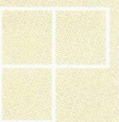
2025/ 26

St. Colman's  
Community  
College, Midleton.  
Relationship & Sexuality  
Education



POBALCHOLÁISTE  
CHOLMÁIN

*Mainistir Na Corann*



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## Introduction

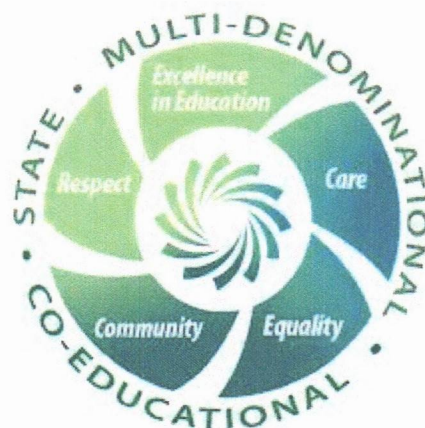
St Colman's RSE policy reflects the core values and ethos of the school as outlined in the school mission statement below.

## Mission Statement

Our Mission in St Colman's Community College is to provide the best possible education for the students in our care. We want all in our school community to develop and achieve their potential in a positive atmosphere of respect, effort and fairness.

ETB Ethos:

The five core values of the Ethos framework are the foundation of this policy. Equality, Care, Community, Respect and Excellence in Education are fundamental to our implementation of the Wellbeing curriculum and considered in all areas of the programme.



## Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality. Discussion about relationships and sexuality also takes place in classes other than SPHE/RSE; it is therefore important that school staff, students, board of management, parents/guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators are familiar with the policy.

## Rationale

It is necessary to have an RSE policy as RSE is a key element of healthy social and personal development as:

- Young people are exposed to a wide variety of messages about sexuality and sexual activity. Schools in consultation with parents/guardians need to reflect on how to provide for the needs of their students.
- The Education Act 1998 requires that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them. Section 4 of the Rules and Programme for secondary schools requires schools to have an agreed policy for RSE and a suitable RSE programme in place for all students at both Junior and Senior cycle. At both Junior and Senior Cycle the RSE programme is part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).

Circulars M4/95, M20/96, 0043/2018, 0027/28, 0023/2010, and C37/2010, 0087/24

The effectiveness of an RSE programme is dependent on a collaborative policy process involving teachers, parents/guardians, members of the board of management and students.

- Spiritual, moral and religious issues will arise when teaching RSE. The RSE policy will guide teachers in the treatment of such issues in accordance with the ethos of the school. It is important that teachers of RSE understand that their role is to express

the views of the whole school community on these sensitive issues and not their own personal views. In this regard, it should be noted that:

- Schools are required to deliver all aspects of the RSE curriculum, including those in relation to sexual orientation, contraception, sexually transmitted infections etc. This can be done within a context in which teaching of the programme is informed by the school's ethos.
- A school can express its ethos while at the same time facilitating students in discussing a range of views in relation to topics within the RSE programme.

## Aims:

This RSE policy intends to achieve the following:

- To help young people understand, develop and respect friendships and relationships
- To promote an understanding and respect towards sexuality
- To promote a positive attitude and acceptance to one's sexuality and the sexuality of others
- To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction
- To enable students to develop attitudes and values in a moral/ social context.

## Objectives:

- The policy will ensure clarity and consensus on how RSE is taught in the school.
- It will articulate the relationship between RSE to SPHE
- It will articulate the aims of the RSE programme
- It will clarify the rights, roles and responsibilities of all within the school community, in relation to the RSE programme, with particular reference to school staff, students, parents/guardians and the Board of Management.
- It will ensure that teachers, parents/guardians and students understand how the teaching of RSE is linked to the school ethos.
- It will provide information on the practicalities of delivering the programme.

## Key Measures:

### A: Provision of training and staff development

- Arrangements regarding the deployment of staff will be made by the Principal. Consideration will be given to the gender balance. However, it would be preferable to consult with and timetable teachers who express an interest in teaching RSE/SPHE. All teachers involved in this work do not 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 also apply to RSE.
- Inservice training for the teaching of RSE will be provided by the SPHE support service. Staff will be encouraged to attend by the Principal and the SPHE Coordinator.

### B. Inclusion of Parents/Guardians:

- Parents/Guardians are the primary educators of their children and their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality education is seen by the school as very important.

This RSE policy is linked in the Parents' Handbook along with the content of the RSE Curriculum at Junior and Senior Level. Parents are informed of the topics covered and guided to contact the school if there are any questions or issues.

- The policy has been designed in consultation with the Parents' Association representatives and the views expressed by parents will be taken into account when the policy is reviewed. A copy of this policy will be available on the school website. A hard copy will be available at the main office on request.

Note: [The Education Act 1998](#) provides that a student is not required to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parents or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18, the students. Hence parents/guardians have a right to opt their child out of the sensitive issues of RSE if they so wish. Parents do not have to give a

reason for withdrawal, but a meeting with school management must take place and written communication must be provided. Once a parent/guardian's request to withdraw is made, that request must be complied with until revoked by the parent. Parents/ guardians must collect and supervise students at this time.

### C. Ethical/Moral Considerations

#### Answering Questions:

- While it is important to create an environment in SPHE/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. Students may ask questions about issues which are not included in the curriculum, teachers will use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, the RSE curriculum and the RSE policy for the school.
- Students should be made aware at the beginning of the RSE programme that asking personal questions of staff and peers is inappropriate and unacceptable. It is suggested that teachers might make available a 'questions box' in the classroom, into which students may place questions of an embarrassing nature to be dealt with anonymously and in the strictest of confidence. If the teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised they should inform/seek help from the Principal (DLP)/ Deputy Principal (DDLDP).

#### Confidentiality:

- While students should not be encouraged to disclose personal or private information in SPHE/RSE classes, there may be times when they choose to talk about their own lives. Confidentiality should be respected unless a teacher becomes aware that a student is at risk, in which case the appropriate action should be taken e.g. follow procedures set down in the [Child Protection Procedures and Guidelines for Post Primary Schools 2025](#)

The Child Protection Procedures for Schools states:

*4.2.2 Any member of school personnel including a registered teacher who receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected, is required to report the matter, without delay, to the DLP in the school. (2025)*

In cases of under-age sexual activity, the school will be guided by the Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025

In St Colman's Community College, the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Principal Mairin Lally and Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDL) is Deputy Principal Yvonne O Mahony.

- It is important that students must be made aware of the limits of confidentiality and that teachers do not give unconditional guarantees of confidentiality. Students must be aware that any incident may be conveyed to the Principal and possibly the parent/guardian if the Principal decides that it is in the best interests of the child. Teachers will inform students when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential.

Sexual Activity:

- It is advisable for teachers to 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.

### Contraception:

The post-primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines state that the subject of family planning should be covered within the Senior Cycle RSE Programme. The programme requires that young people are provided with information about methods of contraception and these lessons can be found in the students textbook.. Age appropriate information is already taught as part of the Junior Cycle Science curriculum.

### Sexual Orientation:

- The post-primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines include the subject of sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is part of the RSE Senior Cycle Resource Materials. RSE training courses delivered by the Oide provide teachers with further materials.
- The school may decide that if the topic needs to be addressed before Senior Cycle, especially if homophobic bullying or gender identity is an issue. Teachers do not promote any one lifestyle as the only acceptable one for society. Therefore it is inevitable and natural that homosexuality and gender identity will be discussed during the RSE programme. Discussion of sexuality, homosexuality and gender identity should be appropriate to the age of the pupils.
- It is important that any student who is coming to terms with their sexual identity/gender identity should not experience any harassment, embarrassment or isolation which may impact on their mental and emotional health and they should be offered support from the Student Support Team if required.
- The whole school community has been awarded the BelongTo quality mark, all staff are fully trained and certified in gender identity and LGBTQ+ awareness.

The school has a transition process in place to support students who are transitioning.

### RSE Policy/DES Circulars

### Abortion:

- This topic will be discussed within an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all aspects of the issue in a non-directive way and in accordance with Irish legislation.

### Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

- While awareness of STIs is one of the objectives of the Second Year SPHE/RSE syllabus, STIs are mainly addressed in the Senior Cycle. This is covered in the Senior Cycle curriculum in the RSE Senior Cycle Resource Material and their book.

### Consent

As part of the RES programme at both Junior and Senior Cycle the topic of consent will be addressed in an age appropriate manner. Resources used will reflect this.

### Online Safety

Online Safety is a key component of the SPHE and RSE programme in the school.

The relevant topics for RSE are -Online pornography , Coercive behaviour , Cocos Law , inappropriate image sharing . The resources used for these topics will be age appropriate and DES approved <https://www.webwise.ie/classroom-videos/>

## D. Practical Issues

### Time Allocation:

- Junior Cycle SPHE  
All first, second and third years have one period of 1 hour of SPHE per week.  
A minimum 6 class periods per year are allocated to RSE.
- Senior Cycle  
RSE is incorporated into Transition Year in SPHE course. At least 8 hours of RSE are included in this course. RSE is delivered to Senior cycle students using their weekly SPHE class. A minimum of 10 class periods per year are allocated to RSE.

Delivery outlined above is subject to review at the end of the academic year 2025/2026 and furthermore in accordance with DES guidelines. Teacher inservice will continue to ensure we are equipped to deliver the up to date programme.

### Structure of Class Groups:

- Classes remain mixed for all aspects of SPHE and RSE.

### The Role of Outside Speakers

While visitors to the classroom can be immensely valuable as part of SPHE, the delivery of the programme remains the responsibility of the teacher. In light of this, where visitors/outside agencies are used in supporting SPHE/RSE, they will be required to familiarise themselves with the school RSE policy and SPHE visitors guidelines in the SPHE handbook available on the SPHE website. Evaluation of speakers is compulsory.

See 0042/2018 .

- Teachers will be involved in the planning of the above and have a presence during presentations.

### Students with AEN:

- The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 'Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities' contains comprehensive guidelines on teaching SPHE to students with mild general learning disabilities at primary and post-primary level, and to students with moderate and severe and profound general learning disabilities. These guidelines are available on [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie). Our school is cognizant of these guidelines when delivering our RSE programmes.
- Students with additional needs may need more support in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of the RSE programme. A resource list for students with learning difficulties is made available to all teachers of SPHE and RSE. A team of teachers have specialist RSE training provided by the NCSE.
- An individual SPHE/RSE programme will be used when appropriate with students who may have more complex learning needs and may benefit from additional support during the teaching of RSE.
- Autism Good Practice Guidance for Schools – Supporting Children and Young People's wellbeing, learning, participation, whole-school and individualised supports, social inclusion, communication, transitions, staff training and environment.

Students who may be pregnant:

- If a teacher is aware that a student is pregnant they will inform the student in advance of teaching the RSE module so the student can decide whether to participate.

## Links to Other Policies and to Curriculum Delivery:

### Policy Links

The RSE policy is delivered within the framework of our overall school plan and policies. These policies include:

- Child Protection Policy
- Guidance Plan
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Bi Cinealta
- Code of Behaviour
- AUP/ Mobile Phone Policy
- Wellbeing Policy
- Health and Safety

### Cross - Curricular Links

Aspects of RSE are delivered across the curriculum particularly in the following areas:

- Religious Education
- Science - Junior Cycle
- Biology at Senior Cycle
- Home Economics
- The topic may come in other subjects from time to time

## Monitoring the Implementation of the policy:

- The Principal is responsible for the implementation of the policy but may assign the monitoring to the RSE staff or a member of.
- When the programme will be delivered during the school year will be decided at department meetings in August, at which resources, outside speakers, teaching methodologies and CPD will also be discussed.

## Reviewing and Evaluating the policy:

- This policy is constantly under review due to the nature of implementation, changing information, guidelines, legislation and feedback from parents/guardians, students and teachers.
- The policy will be revised as necessary in the light of such reviews and evaluation and within the framework of school planning.
- This current new policy will be reviewed in May 2028.
- The policy will be reviewed at 3 year intervals or sooner, if necessary.

Some practical indicators will be used to gauge the impact and effectiveness of the policy.

They include:

- A student/teacher evaluation form may be given to some classes at the end of the RSE Module.
- The range of resource material available to teachers.
- In-service availed by teachers.
- Student awareness of this policy.
- Parents/Guardians awareness of this policy.
- Positive feedback is received from teachers, students, parents/guardians and members of the Board of Management.

The following may support the process of review and evaluation:

- A confidential survey of staff and students
- Feedback from student council or student body
- parent/guardian feedback

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management.

Implementation Date 11/09/25

This policy is in effect after being signed by the Board of Management

Signed  \_\_\_\_\_  
Susan McCarthy

Date 11/09/25      Chairperson of Board of Management

Expected date of review: May '28