**Coláiste Chríost Rí**



**Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy 2020**

**Our School:**

Coláiste Chríost Rí is a voluntary secondary school for boys run under the patronage of the Presentation Brothers. Located in the heart of Cork City, we currently have an enrolment of over 580 students.

Coláiste Chríost Rí is an evolving Christian community committed to the ministry of Catholic Education. We cherish highly an ethos based on Gospel values. We pursue especially academic and sporting excellence within a unique Gaelic culture and tradition. We seek to promote full participation in all aspects of school life, bringing about the balanced development of each person. Our vision is Christian and Gaelic.

On our school crest, these aspirations are encapsulated in the motto, "Adveniat Regnum Tuum". Go dtaga do Ríocht is an acknowledgement of the need for God's grace and power to be experienced as a strength in our personal lives and in our shared lives with others. The challenge for our culturing and Christening community is to respect the personal dignity of all, to value equally every person and to give pupils, parents and teachers a sense of belonging.

Central to this challenge, is our belief that in all aspects of education excellence is the basic ingredient in the ethos of Coláiste Chríost Rí. Our Curriculum tries to maintain a creative balance between preparation for the workplace and the development of the person. We acknowledge the decisive role of parents as partners with management and teachers in this educational endeavour.

The RSE programme aims to enhance the development of the schools' mission through its content and structure.

**Scope:**

The policy will apply 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 all teachers are familiar with the RSE policy. Furthermore, the policy will apply to school staff, students, board of management, parents/guardians, visiting speakers.

**Rationale**

Circular 0037/2010 states that schools have an obligation to:

(a) develop a school policy in regard to Relationships and Sexuality Education and

(b) implement a programme in this area as an element of Social Personal and Health Education at junior cycle, and as an RSE programme in senior cycle.

**What is R.S.E. and what are its aims?**

R.S.E. at post-primary level deals with three main themes:

1. Human relationships

2. Human growth and development

3. Human sexuality

R.S.E. emphasises the importance of self-awareness and self-esteem and the development of one’s ability to interact respectfully with others. It provides students with an opportunity to understand different types of relationships and the attitudes, values and life skills that support the healthy development of these relationships.

R.S.E. helps students to develop a positive attitude to their own and others’ sexuality and sexual health. Students can also develop an understanding of familial, cultural and religious values and consider how these values support healthy informed choices in relation to relationships, sexuality and sexual health. (N.C.C.A. curriculum)

R.S.E. aims to provide opportunities for children and young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way. (Department of Education, R.S.E., Going Forward Together)

**Rationale for inclusion of Relationships and Sexuality Education in the Curriculum**

Education aims to contribute towards the development of all aspects of the individual. It is in this context that Social, Personal and Health Education, encompassing Relationships and Sexuality Education, is being included as part of the curriculum of Primary and Post-Primary schools. Relationships and Sexuality Education in the formal education system is mandatory in line with Child Protection procedures. Educational groups, including the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, teacher unions and national parent representative bodies, support the need for such a formal programme in schools, from primary through second level. Aspects of contemporary life also point to the need for a soundly-based Relationships and Sexuality Education programme.

**Relationship of RSE to SPHE**

The Department of Education and Skills has approved the recommended syllabus for SPHE at junior cycle. As a life skills 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. 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. The content of the school’s SPHE programme includes a wide range of topics such as self-esteem, self-identity, assertiveness, motivation, effective communication, decision–making skills, bullying, healthy eating, hygiene and safety – all of which can contribute to the effectiveness of the RSE programme.

**The Aims of our Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme**

The RSE programme aims to give students the skills and competencies to learn about themselves and others to make informed decisions about their health and social relationships. Ultimately, Coláiste Chríost Rí envisions that the RSE programme will enable students to participate in society as responsible adults who make decisions which respect the dignity of others and of themselves.

Relationships and Sexuality Education which is located in the overall framework of SPHE has as its specific aims:

1. To help young people understand and develop friendships and relationships.

2. To promote an understanding of sexuality.

3. To promote a positive attitude to one’s own sexuality and in one’s own relationship with others.

4. To educate the students to have a clear understanding of the male and female reproductive systems.

5. To enable the students to develop attitudes and values toward their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework.

**Guidelines for management and organisation of RSE in our school**

**What the School currently provides**

In its broadest sense, RSE is a whole-school responsibility and all members of this community share responsibility for modeling relationships that are characterized by justice and respect. At a more formal level, RSE is dealt with in the context of certain subjects; Guidance Counselling, Science, English and Wellbeing [C.S.P.E., PE & Religion] and population demographics/social studies within the Geography syllabus.

Schools are required to provide RSE as part of the national SPHE curriculum. To ensure an adequate response to the needs of all students, a minimum of six classes are apportioned each year for junior cycle students within their SPHE timetable.

The programme for Senior students involves an RSE module within the SPHE framework in 4th,5th and 6th year.

The content of RSE at post primary level is described under three themes:

1. **Human Growth and Development:** This theme consists of an age appropriate understanding of the biology and psychology of the human life cycle. This is accompanied by a rationale for responsible behaviour in relationships and sexuality.

2. **Human Sexuality:** Sexuality is an integral part of the human personality and has biological, psychological, cultural, social and spiritual dimensions. The theme offers opportunities to develop a holistic understanding of sexuality as contributing to the development of personal wellbeing, enhancing personal and family relationships and ultimately contributing to the wellbeing of society.

3. **Human Relationships:** This theme focuses on the importance of relationships for health and well-being. It examines how one relates to self and others, stressing the importance of self-esteem as a basis for worthwhile friendships and relationships. It addresses issues such as communication, influence, intimacy, sexual attraction and sexual expression in relationships consistent with personal and moral integrity.

These themes are neither sequential nor discrete; they merge and overlap with each other. Teaching strategies will reflect this relationship and be age appropriate.

Planning for students with special educational needs will refer to the NCCA guidelines and programmes can be differentiated to meet the needs of the students.

**Whole School Provision of RSE**

• The school encourages parents / guardians to ensure that students participate in this programme as a way of supporting parents as the primary educators of their children.

• Religious Education programme which discusses relationships, adolescence, responsibility, values, peer pressure, conflict and decision-making.

• Student centered pastoral care structure supports include Year Heads, Guidance and Counselling, Pastoral Care Team, Learning Support, Student Council, Wellbeing team, Principal and Deputy Principals.

• The Pastoral Care Team are fully aware of the circumstances which may make children more vulnerable to harm. These include Parent/ Carer factors, child factors, community factors and environment factors.

• Possibility of one-to-one conversations with the school Guidance Counsellors.

• Anti bullying strategy and programme of prevention emphasising respect for the rights and dignity of others.

• Education of human physiology and human reproduction – Science and Biology classes.

• Visits by speakers on topics such as drugs and alcohol misuse and hygiene and sexual health.

**Informing Parents**

Parents are the prime educators of their children and their role in R.S.E. is seen by the school as a very important one. Coláiste Chríost Rí will play a supportive and complementary role to the home in its provision of R.S.E. As part of the national curriculum, students receive R.S.E. during S.P.H.E. classes. The parents/guardians of the students in question are contacted by letter when the R.S.E. module is set to commence (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2).

If these documents require further discussion or clarification, this will be accommodated by the school.

**Confidentiality:**

While students should not be encouraged to disclose personal or private information in SPHE / RSE classes, there may be times when they do talk about their own lives. Confidentiality will be respected unless a mandated person becomes aware that a child is at risk, in which case the appropriate action will be taken. It is school policy that in circumstances where a student is considered at some risk of any type of abuse or in breach of the law, the mandated person (e.g. class teacher) must refer this immediately to the Principal as the Designated Liaison Person. The mandated person, in consultation with the DLP should always inform Tusla if they have reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected. Mandated persons must act in accordance with Child Protection Procedures outlined in the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017 which came about arising from the enactment of the Children First Act 2015.

The following is also school policy:

• Mandated persons must not promise absolute confidentiality;

• Students must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the Principal and possibly to parents if the Principal and/or the mandated person decides that it is in the best interests of the student to notify parents;

• Mandated persons must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidentiality can be maintained having heard the information;

• Mandated persons must indicate clearly to students when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential.

See Appendix 3 for an extract from the relevant section of the Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children: 2017, p.30/31.

**Visiting speakers**

Much of our R.S.E. programme is provided by teachers who are known and trusted by students. However, visitors can enhance the quality of the provision of R.S.E. and can provide additional support to the school and our students. In this regard the schools informed by Circular 0043/2018.

Visiting speakers and external facilitators will be identified at the school reception and one of the school’s teachers will always be present while the talk/presentation/workshop is taking place. This supervision will be organised by the event co-ordinator in the school and possible topics may include consent, safety and support regarding the availability of pornographic material. All guest speakers on R.S.E. to the school are approved by the Principal. The programme must be provided in line with the ethos of the school.

**Offering advice:**

The school’s function is to provide a general education about sexual matters and issues. Students are encouraged to make an appointment with a Guidance Counsellor for individual advice, information or counselling on aspects of sexual behavior and contraception.

Teachers may provide students 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 student.

**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. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised, he/she should seek advice from the SPHE co-ordinator, Guidance Department or the Principal. When deciding whether or not 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.

The division between biological and non-biological aspects of sex education:

The Science Department deals primarily with the biological aspects of reproduction but within the teaching of RSE biological terms will be used and there may be a cross-over of content within both areas. This may provide an opportunity for cross-curricular co-operation and team teaching

**Withdrawal of students**

Our school is mindful of objections to the inclusion of elements of this programme and recognises the rights of parents to act in accordance with their stated beliefs. Parents do not have to give reasons for withdrawal, but we respectfully invite them to do so. It may be that a misunderstanding can be resolved at this stage. If a request to withdraw a student from R.S.E. is made; the school will, where possible, make alternative arrangements for the student/s, until that request is revoked. However, we ask parents to be aware that additional supervision may not always be available. In such cases, parents may be asked to make alternative arrangements themselves. With regard to any of the above, we request that communication is made with the school to discuss the issues of concern before a decision is made.

**Support**

**Training**

S.P.H.E. teachers receive training through the Professional Development Service for Teachers (P.D.S.T.) and JCT. Through this process, teachers in our school who are timetabled for S.P.H.E. are also encouraged to attend a specific R.S.E. training module. Teachers will require sensitivity to the needs of the group, an ability to deal with questions honestly and preparedness to refer to more expert advice if necessary. In a situation where an S.P.H.E. teacher is awaiting training on R.S.E., which may happen from time to time, other teachers in the school and school management will provide support to them.

**Resources**

The school will use approved Department of Education materials. Suitable materials are often provided for teachers at S.P.H.E. in-service training. The school may also source appropriate teaching materials which have been identified by staff as useful. Such resources must be approved by the principal. Applying for resources is, as always, considered within the normal budgetary framework and as school funding will allow.

A resource folder will be made available to RSE teachers and this will allow teachers to work collaboratively in storing and accessing resources.

A text book may be available at Junior Cycle level.

**Communication, involvement and dissemination**

The formation of this policy was done by engaging in a process of collaboration involving the principal and deputy principal, S.P.H.E. teaching staff, the school care team, our guidance counsellors, the students’ council and the parent’s council.

**Evaluation**

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

* Pupil feedback
* Staff feedback
* Parental feedback

**Ratification**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Review and Development**

We are also committed to the review and development of our school policies. As part of our ongoing review process, this policy will be examined to reflect feedback from our evaluation practices and also to ensure legal compliance and the maintenance of best practices.

**Appendix 1**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

As part of the Social, Personal & Health education (S.P.H.E.) syllabus, we are required to cover the area of Relationships and Sexuality (R.S.E.) during the school year.

The teaching of this topic will commence shortly. R.S.E. plays a critical role in supporting and preparing young people for the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Should you have any queries or concerns, the S.P.H.E. department will be happy to address these.

Regards,

S.P.H.E. Department

**Appendix 2**

Dear parent/guardian,

As part of the Social, Personal & Health education (S.P.H.E.) syllabus, we are required to cover the area of Relationships and Sexuality (R.S.E.) in senior cycle.

The teaching of this topic will commence shortly. R.S.E. plays a critical role in supporting and preparing young people for the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Should you have any queries or concerns, the S.P.H.E. department will be happy to address these.

Regards,

S.P.H.E. Department.

**APPENDIX 3**

**CHILDREN FIRST: NATIONAL GUIDANCE FOR THE PROTECTION AND WELFARE OF CHILDREN (2015-P.30/31) (Published in 2017)**

**AIM OF CHAPTER**

The aim of this chapter is to help all organisations working with children and young people to create a culture of safety that promotes the welfare of children and young people availing of their services. Most of these organisations will provide ‘relevant services’ as defined in the Children First Act 2015 and will have specific statutory obligations under the Act. This chapter will help staff and volunteers of these organisations to fulfil their statutory obligations.

The chapter also outlines best practice procedures in child safeguarding that all organisations dealing with children and young people should consider. This is in addition to any statutory obligations under the Act.

***For the purpose of this chapter, the definition of children includes young people up to the age of 18.***

**STATUTORY OBLIGATIONS OF RELEVANT SERVICES**

One of the main objectives of the Children First Act 2015 is to ensure that your organisation keeps children safe from harm while availing of your service. The legislation and this Guidance relate to the obligations of relevant services to prevent, as far as practicable, deliberate harm or abuse to the children availing of their services. While it is not possible to remove all risk, your organisation should put in place policies and procedures to manage and reduce risk to the greatest possible extent.

The Act places specific obligations on organisations which provide services to children and young people, including the requirement to:

* Keep children safe from harm while they are using your service
* Carry out a risk assessment to identify whether a child or young person could be harmed while receiving your services
* Develop a Child Safeguarding Statement that outlines the policies and procedures which are in place to manage the risks that have been identified
* Appoint a relevant person to be the first point of contact in respect of the organisation’s Child Safeguarding Statement.

The legislation imposes deadlines on organisations in both carrying out a risk assessment and preparing a Child Safeguarding Statement. If your organisation is already in existence, you must complete the requirements for a risk assessment and Child Safeguarding Statement within three months of the relevant sections of the Children First Act 2015 coming into force. If your organisation is established after the Children First Act 2015 comes into force, you must comply with the requirements within three months from the date the service commenced.

The Children First Act, in section 11(4), requires providers of relevant services to have due regard to this Guidance and any guidelines issued by Tusla – Child and Family Agency concerning child safeguarding statements. Any guidance issued by Tusla concerning Child Safeguarding Statements may be found on its website (www.tusla.ie).

**What are relevant services under the Act?**

The organisations that have statutory responsibilities under the Children First Act 2015 are those that provide a relevant service to children and young people. The types of organisations and services to which the legislation applies include the following:

• Early years services

• Schools and centres of education

• Hospitals, hospices and health centres, and other centres providing physical or mental health services to children

• Residential care settings, including residential centres providing care to children with disabilities

• Special care units

• Children detention schools

• Reception or accommodation centres where children seeking asylum may be accommodated

• Domestic violence shelters where children may be accommodated

* Any work or activity which consists of inspecting services provided to a child

• Any inspection, examination or investigation undertaken by the Ombudsman for Children

• Any work or activity which involves providing treatment, therapy or counselling to a child

• Any work or activity which involves providing:

» Educational, research, training, cultural, recreational, leisure, social or physical activities to children

» Care or supervision of children

» Formal consultation with, or formal participation by, a child in matters which aspect his or her life

• Any work or activity which involves providing advice or guidance services to a child

• Any work or activity as a minister, priest or other person involved in the advancement of any religious belief

• Any work or activity as a driver, assistant to a driver, conductor or supervisor of children on a vehicle where children travel unaccompanied by a parent or guardian

• Any work or activity as a member of An Garda Síochána whose work involves access to, or contact with, children

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_[date]

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson of Board of Management Principal

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date of next review: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_