



# Moyne Community School

Relationships and Sexuality Education  
(RSE) Policy

Enacted after consultation with staff, members of student council and the parents' association. Ratified by the Board of Management.

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

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## School

Moyne Community School is a multi-denominational, co-educational school in rural Ireland with enrolment varying between 600–650. The school has always been renowned for its warm friendly atmosphere, based on a relationship of mutual respect between teachers and pupils.

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## Mission Statement

Moyne Community School offers a holistic education, upholding the Christian values and traditions of the communities from which the school evolved. We are committed to enabling students and staff to develop their full potential within the school's formal and informal curriculum, in a friendly, safe and caring environment.

The holistic development of students, enabling them to grow to their full potential, is at the core of the school's culture and this is reflected in the extensive pastoral care system. The chaplain works in co-operation to ensure the spiritual and pastoral needs of all students are met. Students are encouraged to develop a sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and to respect the needs and safety of others. Values such as courtesy should influence the behaviour of all students, and they are expected to show respect for others at all times.

We fully recognise the role of parents as having the primary responsibility for the development of their children and we support them in this role. The Code of Behaviour is drawn up in consultation with the entire school community and ratified by the Board of Management.

### **We aim to provide a positive school culture and climate which:**

- Focuses on developing students as a whole.
- Welcomes difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity.
- Promotes strong relationships across the wider school community.

- Represents a Christian value system encompassing respect and co-operation.

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## Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

RSE is a developmental process through experiential learning in which students participate to help cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships. RSE is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge, understanding and skills which enable us to develop attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy (DES 1996).

While parents are the primary educators in this area, ideally the school will work in partnership with parents to provide comprehensive RSE for young people. In the school setting, RSE is integral as it seeks to promote the overall development of students and includes the integration of sexuality into personal understanding, growth and development.

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## Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) within SPHE

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. SPHE deals with many issues such as self- esteem, assertiveness, communication and decision making skills - all of which can contribute to the effectiveness of the RSE programme.

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 Junior Cycle, the RSE programme is part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). It is the responsibility of the Board of Management to ensure that an RSE programme is made available to all students.

The Department of Education and Science have issued Circulars [M4/95](#), [M20/96](#), [M22/00](#), [M11/03](#), [M27/2008](#), [0037/2010](#), [0043/2018](#) to post-primary schools, requiring schools to develop a Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) policy and programme as well as offering advice on external facilitators. Schools must implement both RSE policy and

programme for all students from First to Sixth Year, as an element of SPHE in Junior Cycle, and as an RSE programme in Senior Cycle.

## **Aims of Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme**

- To help young people understand and develop friendships and relationships.
- To promote an understanding of sexuality.
- To promote a knowledge of and respect for reproduction.
- To promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and relationships with others.
- To enable young people to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- 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.

*Moyne CS supports the aims on which RSE is modelled. We encourage good behaviour, open communication, understanding and tolerance of differences, and respect for oneself as well as others. We recognise that both students and staff have rights and responsibilities in school, and aim to foster a sense of responsibility while paying attention to the wellbeing of all members of the school community.*

## **Scope of the Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy**

As the title suggests, this policy applies to all teaching and learning concerning relationships and sexuality. RSE is cross-curricular, and discussions about these issues may take place in classes that are not SPHE/RSE. Therefore, it is necessary that all teachers are familiar with the RSE policy of the school. This policy will apply to all school staff, students, Board of Management, parents and visiting speakers.

## **Current Provision**

RSE in Moyne Community School is currently provided through SPHE classes at Junior Cycle, Social Education classes in TY, and Religion classes at Senior Cycle. The school encourages parents to ensure students participate in the programme as a means of supporting them as the primary educators of their children.

Various resources developed by the HSE and DES are used, including but not limited to; b4udecide.ie manual, Busy Bodies, On Your Own Two Feet Resource, WebWise Resources, All Together Now and Belong To Resources (for LGBT+ lessons), RESPECT Guidelines, Relationships & Sexuality Education Teacher's Manual, and the TRUST Programme.

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## Current Provision (contd.)

### Moyne CS currently provides:

- A minimum of 5-6 timetabled classes (40 minutes) of RSE for all year groups, as per Department recommendations.
- A RE programme which discusses relationships, values, peer pressure, conflict and decision-making.
- Extensive student-centred pastoral care supports, including Year heads, Class Tutors, Guidance and Counselling, School Chaplain with assistance from student Chaplaincy Teams, Learning Support, Mentoring Programme, Student Council and Chaplaincy Teams of senior students.
- Availability of one to one conversations with the school Guidance Counsellor and School Chaplain.
- An Anti-Bullying Policy and programmes of prevention (Friendship Week, Internet Safety week etc.) which emphasise respect for the rights and dignity of others.
- Education of reproduction in Science, Home Economics and Biology classes. Home Economics also encompasses relationships within the family, maturity, adolescence, independence and responsibility.
- Visits by speakers on topics which may be relevant to Senior Cycle RSE.

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## Policies and Plans Supporting SPHE/RSE

- Child Protection Policy
- Wellbeing Plan
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy

- Admissions Policy
- Suspension & Expulsion Policy

## Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in Moyne Community School

All education partners are consulted before ratifying school policy i.e. Staff, Students, Parents and Board of Management. Any resources used by teachers for the duration of RSE will be in keeping with the ethos of Moyne CS, the whole school plan for SPHE and the RSE policy.

### **1. Confidentiality**

Students are not encouraged to disclose personal/private information in RSE classes, however there may be times when students talk about their own lives and experiences.

Confidentiality will be respected unless a teacher becomes aware that a child could be at risk; at which point the Child Protection Policy will be followed and appropriate action taken, i.e. refer to the DLP (Principal Des Cullen).

**The following is also school policy:**

- a) Teachers must not promise confidentiality.
- b) 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.
- c) As mandated people, teachers must use professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard the information.
- d) 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.

### **2. Informing/Involving Parents**

Parents are the primary educators of their children and their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality is seen by Moyne Community School as very important. Parents will be informed that the school implements the RSE strands of SPHE and RE. They will also be informed in advance of RSE lessons via a letter (for sample letters see Appendix 2).

Relevant sections of this RSE policy will be included in the school's *Information for Parents* sheet and a copy of the policy will be made available to any parent on request.

This policy has been designed in consultation with Student Council and Parents' Association and the views expressed by parents will be taken into account when reviewing the policy.

## **Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in Moyne Community School (contd.)**

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### **3. Withdrawal of Students from RSE**

It is our hope that all students will avail of the RSE programme provided by the school, however if parents choose to provide RSE at home, their rights as parents with regards their children's participation will be respected. We understand that at times parents may wish to withdraw their child from particular aspects of the RSE programme due to perceived conflict with their values and beliefs. The school respects this parental right (as per the Education Act 1998 Section 30, Subsection 2E) but will engage with parents with a view to resolving any misunderstandings or perceived difficulties. A request for withdrawal from the RSE programme must also be made in writing to the Board of Management.

In the event a student is withdrawn, arrangements will be made where possible between parents and management for their care and supervision while the programme is in progress.

Once a parent's request to withdraw is made, that request must be complied with until revoked by the parent (See Appendix 1).

### **4. 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 agencies.

Any advice offered should not be directive and should be appropriate to the age of the pupil.

### **5. Sensitive Issues**



Occasionally, some topics within the RSE Programme may prove particularly sensitive for certain students. Every effort will be made by staff to become aware of the profile of the group in advance of delivery of the programme, and our Guidance and chaplaincy services will be available.

## **Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in Moyne Community School (contd.)**

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### **6. Explicit Questions**

It may not be appropriate to deal with some explicit questions in class, therefore it is recommended that teachers of RSE do not facilitate questioning in class, but rather deal with questions through the medium of an anonymous question and reflection box, 'snowballing' methodology, or a similar alternative.

If teachers choose to accept questions during the class, they do not have to be answered immediately. It should be made clear to students that no personal/opinion questions should be asked of the teacher. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised, they should seek advice from the SPHE/RSE co-ordinators or the Principal.

When deciding whether or not to answer questions the teacher should consider the age of the students, the RSE programme content, the ethos of the school and the RSE policy.

### **7. Sexual Orientation and Contraception**

Teachers do not promote any one life-style as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that sexual orientation will be discussed during a programme of sex education. An advantage of exploring issues concerning LGBT+ is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions and address prejudice. Discussion of sexual orientation should be appropriate to the age of the pupils.

Both topics will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issues in a non-directive way.

### **8. Students with Special Needs**

Students with special educational needs are welcomed and facilitated in SPHE/RE/Social Ed. during the RSE programme. SNAs are present in some classes and work with the teacher to facilitate student learning. Adapted RSE resources for SEN from pdst.ie may be included in these lessons.

Students 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 be warned and prepared against abuse by others.

## **Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in Moyne Community School (contd.)**

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### **9. Staffing/Cross-Curricular Opportunities**

Moyne CS currently has two RSE co-ordinators appointed by the Principal; one for Junior Cycle and one for Senior Cycle. This is a voluntary position that will rotate on a two-yearly basis. The school has 4 teachers who are fully trained to deliver a RSE programme to all years.

Management will provide a commitment to the programme by facilitating its implementation through teacher recruitment and training, ongoing in-service, timetabling and consultation.

Teaching methods in SPHE/RE/RSE are concerned with the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes and skills. An open, facilitative teaching style and participative and experiential methodologies are essential.

A respectful and safe classroom environment will be prioritised and the teaching of topics within RSE will involve giving students clear information, building up their self-esteem and helping them to learn to communicate, to make decisions and to express feelings in an appropriate way.

Teachers with specialist knowledge in particular areas can support the work of RSE at various stages in the programme. At Junior Cycle, contributions can be made by teachers of Science, Biology, Home Economics, RE and PE. Good co-ordination can enhance cross-curricular opportunities and ensure comprehensive delivery of RSE to all students.

### **10. Support from Visitors/External Facilitators**

The wider community can support the work of the school by providing visitors/external facilitators to address particular aspects of RSE. However, in accordance with DES circular [0043/2018](#), Moyne CS believes that the RSE programme is best discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by the pupils.

However, at the discretion of the class teacher, visitors may enhance the quality of the provision as long as they are used in addition to, not instead of a planned programme of RSE.

In keeping with child protection guidelines all visiting speakers and facilitators will only have supervised access to students (i.e. the class teacher will be present), will be made aware of the school's ethos and will have to agree to work within the parameters of this. The content of all such presentations will be vetted by the RSE teachers and/or management in advance. (See Appendix 3 for more).

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## **Provisions for Ongoing Support, Development and Review**

### **1. Training**

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, a positive disposition towards the teaching of RSE and a readiness to refer to more expert advice if necessary.

Where possible, staff will be given opportunities to attend further professional development courses. We maintain an updated record of in-service courses attended by staff, and these records are reported to management regularly. All RSE staff are encouraged to register with sphe.ie for in-service.

### **2. Planning**

Where possible, the RSE team are given time to meet at school development planning days. At these meetings the RSE co-ordinators will update staff in relation to; in-service training available, any pertinent information gleaned at in-service and the possibility of further relevant teachers obtaining training.

### **3. Parents**

Moyne CS will continue to offer supports to parents through the pastoral care team, the parents' association and visiting speakers/talks for parents.

### **4. Resources**

All resources mentioned in current provisions above (page 5) are available for staff to access on the school's server. Staff may also avail of web-based resources for class planning; every classroom is equipped with a computer and projector to aid the use of ICT. The pastoral care team can offer resources in the form of HSE leaflets on stress management, pregnancy and sexuality issues etc. These can be obtained from the Guidance Counsellor or School Chaplain.

## **5. Monitoring, Evaluating and Reviewing the RSE programme**

We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of our RSE programme. This is conducted through student reflections and evaluations, feedback via the student council, staff review and parental feedback. This policy will be reviewed every two years, unless a need arises at an earlier time.

## **Appendix 1: Withdrawal of a Student from RSE**

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What we do if a request for withdrawal from RSE is made by a parent:

Once written request has been submitted to the Board of Management, management will meet with the parent to discuss the nature of the concerns with them. A copy of the RSE policy will be made available to them on request and access to appropriate information and resources used for the duration of the programme can be offered to the parent.

Consider whether the programme can be amended or improved in a way that will reassure the parent - care is taken not to undermine the integrity of the RSE programme and the entitlement of the other pupils, e.g. it may be appropriate and desirable to have single sex classes for some sections of the RSE programme.

Attempt is made to ensure that where a pupil is withdrawn there is no disruption to other parts of their education.

We point out that students who have been withdrawn are vulnerable to teasing - we therefore attempt to cause minimal embarrassment to the student and minimal disruption

to the programme. We also point out that pupils may receive inaccurate information from other students outside of class time.

## Appendix 2: Sample Letters to Parents

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(A copy of these are also available for RSE teachers in the 'RSE' folder on the school's server).

### **Senior RSE**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

This term as part of our Senior Cycle Programme, we will be teaching the module on Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). RSE is much wider than the physical aspects and incorporates the moral, spiritual, social and psychological elements of each person.

Your son/daughter may wish to talk about the topics raised in class and you are best placed to address any concerns that they may have. We aim to run this programme from February mid-term to Easter.

If you would like to discuss this further, or if you have any queries, do not hesitate to contact the Principal.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing support.

Yours sincerely,

Senior RSE Teachers.

## **Junior RSE**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

This term as part of our Junior Cycle SPHE Programme, we will be teaching the module on Relationships and Sexuality (RSE). RSE is much wider than the physical aspects and incorporates the moral, spiritual, social and psychological elements of each person.

Your son/daughter may wish to talk about the topics raised in class and you are best placed to address any concerns that they may have. We aim to run this programme from February mid-term until Easter.

If you would like to discuss this further, or if you have any queries, do not hesitate to contact the Principal.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing support.

Yours sincerely,

Junior SPHE Teachers.

## Appendix 3: Procedure for Visitors/External Facilitators

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What we do if a need is identified by RSE teachers to introduce a Visitor/External Facilitator:

They firstly need to be approved by the Principal and Board of Management, in consultation with the relevant teaching staff. The visitor/external facilitator will be provided, well in advance of the visit, with a copy of this RSE policy. The organiser will make the visitor aware of the ethos of the school and the manner of delivery of the RSE programme. All materials proposed for use must also be agreed in advance with the teacher and management. Visitors/External Facilitators always work under the guidance and supervision of the class teacher, who remains in the room with the students and retains a central role in the delivery of the subject matter (DES 2018).

Issues to consider are:

Will staff take an active role in the visitor's activities?

How will the visit be built upon and followed up?

Visitors should be given advance notice of the composition of the class and an idea of how their contribution fits into the scheme of work.

In order to inform the visitor of the precise requirements of a group and to make better use of the time of the visitor it is advisable for the group to draw up questions in advance and these should be forwarded to the visitor. This will involve the pupils in the visit and will make the experience more relevant for them - it also facilitates planning.

The Office should be informed of the date, time and name of the visitor.

Where applicable, refreshments should be arranged with the catering staff.

The visitor should be welcomed at the main door.

At the end of the session a vote of thanks should be given by a pupil and the visitor escorted to the main door after refreshments.

A written acknowledgement of their contribution should be sent to the visitor.



