



BORD OIDEACHAIS AGUS OILIÚNA
CHILL DARA AND CHILL MHANTÁIN
KILDARE AND WICKLOW
EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

St. Farnan's Post Primary School

Draft

Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy 2023-2024



Our Mission Statement

St. Farnan's is a school community which strives to be inclusive and caring. We aim to develop all students to reach their full potential, personally, academically and spiritually, so that they may enrich the school and wider community.

St. Farnan's is a co-educational post primary second level school in Prosperous, Co. Kildare under the patronage of Kildare and Wicklow ETB. The school opened in 1941 with three classrooms, student numbers have grown over the years and we now have over 575 student spaces filled (2023/24). The catchment area for our school is Prosperous, Timahoe, Donadea, Allen, Allenwood, Coill Dubh, Robertstown & Staplestown.

Our Core Values motto is 'Cothrom na Féinne' (Justice, Equality & Fair Play) are empowered by our F.A.I.R. acronym *Friendly, Ambitious, Inclusive of All and Respectful of Each Other* which guide all our policies and procedures and all stakeholders working relationships with each other in school.

Draft Policy to be Ratified by the Board of Management Term 2 2024

1.Introduction and Scope of this Policy:

This document sets out the policy of St Farnan's Post Primary School in relation to the Relationships and Sexuality Education provided to our students. As a school, we try to create an atmosphere of care and concern within which each student is cared for and feels cared for, and where each student can feel safe and valued as they grow to maturity.

2.Our Mission Statement:

St. Farnan's is a school community which strives to be inclusive and caring. We aim to develop all students to reach their full potential, personally, academically and spiritually, so that they may enrich the school and wider community.

3.Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education:

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a lifelong process where a person may acquire knowledge and understanding to develop attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. 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 will provide structured opportunities for students to acquire a knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, caring and responsible manner.

RSE equips young people with information and skills to critically evaluate the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values experienced today, and so make positive, responsible choices about themselves and the way they live their lives.

In the school setting, RSE will be taught in the context of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). In LCA students will be taught RSE in Social Education classes.

4.Relationship of RSE to our School Mission Statement:

St Farnan's Post Primary School is committed to providing the best holistic education possible for all our students, by providing a caring learning environment where all aspects of the student are valued and nurtured. We aim to provide an education for all students which will embrace their full human development: personal, academic, physical, moral and spiritual. Relationships and Sexuality Education encompasses the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about relationships, sexual identity and intimacy, contributing towards the full human development of the student. As outlined by the Department of Education and Skills in Circular 0037/2010 no aspect of the RSE programme including STI's, family planning, or sexual orientation can be omitted on the grounds of religious ethos. As we seek to promote the overall development of the student, this involves the integration of Relationships and Sexuality into personal understanding, growth and development within the context of our holistic educational ethos.

The policy will apply to school staff, students, board of management, parents /guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators. 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; it is therefore important that all teachers are familiar with the RSE policy.

5. The aims of our Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme:

The aims of Relationships and Sexuality Education within St Farnan's Post Primary School are:

- to help pupils understand and develop friendships and relationships.
- to promote an understanding of sexuality.
- to promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's relationship with others.
- to promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction.
- to enable pupils to develop attitudes and values toward their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework in keeping with the policy of the school.
- 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.

These are the overall aims of the programme to be met in ways appropriate to the age and stage of development of the students.

6. Guidelines for the management and organisation of Relationships and Sexuality Education in St. Farnan's Post Primary School.

Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff will be made by senior management in consultation with staff.

A. Provision of RSE in St Farnan's PPS

The SPHE department ensures the delivery of a relevant and appropriate RSE programme in St Farnan's Post Primary School.

At Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle (LCE) the RSE program is delivered to the class by their SPHE teacher. The SPHE syllabus includes a full module on RSE: other subjects at Junior Cycle level, such as Science, Home Economics, Religion and Cultures, Customs and Ethics also cover material important to RSE.

In the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), RSE is delivered to students as part of the Social Education class.

Students enrolled in our Moderate Learning Unit will receive age and developmental appropriate RSE in room 26.

Students enrolled in our ASD class will receive developmental appropriate RSE in room 25 or in mainstream SPHE, depending on the extent of mainstream inclusion they are involved in.

B. Teacher Training and Development:

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 a preparedness to refer to more expert advice if necessary. 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 extend their knowledge and expertise to other teachers.

The school will facilitate teachers to obtain professional training from OIDE when the in-service courses are offered.

C. Inclusion of Parents/Guardians:

It is recognised by the school that parents/guardians are the primary educators of children and their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality is seen by the school as very important.

Information is provided for parents/guardians about the content and the timing of the RSE module prior to its delivery in an academic year (see appendix A and B) Informing parents/guardians of when these topics are being taught in school enables them to discuss any further issues at home. The RSE policy is available on the school's website for parents/guardians.

D. 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.

E. Confidentiality:

It is school policy that in circumstances where a pupil is considered at risk of any type of abuse or in breach of the law, the teacher must refer this immediately to the Designated Liaison Person in the school, the Principal. The Principal will decide whether to inform the appropriate authorities and or parents/guardians. However, as mandated persons, teachers can proceed with a referral if deemed necessary.

The following is also important:

- Teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality;
- Pupils must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the Principal and possibly to parents.

The Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary Schools (revised 2023) state in 4.1.1. and 4.1.2.

4.1.1. The Children First Act, 2015 has placed a statutory obligation on specific people to report child protection concerns that are at or above a threshold of harm (as defined in that act) to Tusla. Such persons are referred to as “mandated persons” under the Act. All teachers who are registered with the Teaching Council are mandated persons under the Children First Act, 2015.

4.1.2. This chapter applies to all registered teachers working in schools, including the DLP and the deputy DLP. It outlines the statutory obligations that now apply to all registered teachers under the Children First Act, 2015.

All personnel in the school and other individuals connected to the school can access and refer to the child safeguarding statement in the school to follow the procedures.

F. Withdrawing pupils from the RSE Programme:

Parents have a right to withdraw their child from sensitive aspects of RSE. Parents will always have access to this policy on our school website, as well as information leaflet provided by National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and other appropriate agencies (Appendix A and B)

G. 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 LGBTQ+ will be discussed during a programme of RSE. One of the advantages of exploring issues concerning LGBTQ+ is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions and address prejudice. Discussion of LGBTQ+ should be appropriate to the age of the pupils.

H. Timetabling of SPHE classes:

SPHE is timetabled for all Junior Cycle, Transition Year and Senior Cycle classes for one period per week. RSE module is covered as part of this subject and is also covered in the subjects Religion, Biology, Home Economics and Culture, Ethos and Ethics. For Leaving Certificate Applied Students, RSE is delivered as part of the subject Social Education. SPHE and RSE are taught in students' tutor class groups. Students are taught together for all aspects of RSE.

I. Visiting Speakers:

The RSE Program is mainly delivered by the staff of the school. When visiting speakers are invited to speak to the students the relevant areas of the RSE Policy will be communicated to the speaker verbally. If necessary, a copy of the policy will be given to the speaker.

J. Special Educational Needs:

For children with special educational needs, the teacher will explain the information in more detail or more appropriate language as required. It may be necessary to highlight appropriate behaviours to some students with special needs and also to give guidelines regarding self-protection from possible abuse.

7. Subject Evaluation and Review:

Going forward we are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this programme through;

- Pupil feedback.
- Staff review and feedback.
- Parental feedback.

Resources:

- SPHE shared folder on Google drive.
- You've Got This (1st Year) and Health & Wellbeing 2 and 3 Junior Cycle textbooks.
- It's Your WellBeing Senior Cycle Wellbeing textbook.
- B4uDecide.ie
- Relationships and Sexuality Education Resources for Post Primary School Teachers on HSE.ie
- NCCA.ie

Links to other School Policies and Nationwide supports:

It is imperative that all school policies are consistent with one another and cohesive within the framework of the overall school plan.

The RSE policy is developed in this context and takes into consideration many of the schools policies. Listed below are some of school policies which will be taken into consideration;

- Well-being Policy
- Gender Identity and Gender Expression Policy 2024
- Guidance Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Inclusion Policy
- Admissions policy

Nationwide Supports

- Department of Education: Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (revised 2023)
- HSE & ESRI: Talking about Sex and Sexual Behaviour of Young People in Ireland 2020
- HSE: Relationships and Sexuality Education 1 (Activities to support the teaching of the updated Junior Cycle SPHE Curriculum 2023)

- Rape Crisis Network Ireland: ‘Storm and Stress’ An Exploration of Sexual Harassment Amongst Adolescents 2021

Teachers of our RSE programme will be informed of the content, and the timing of the delivery of RSE.

Additional Information

What we do if a request for withdrawal from the RSE programme is made by a parent/guardian:

- We discuss the nature of the concerns with the child's parent/guardian and if appropriate attempt to reassure them (initially such discussion takes place at a meeting with the Year Head and SPHE teacher. 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 RSE programme and the entitlement of the other pupils.
- We attempt to ensure that where a pupil is withdrawn there is no disruption to other parts of their education,
- We also point out that pupils may receive inaccurate information from their peers and unreliable media sources.
- We offer the parents access to appropriate information and resources.

This policy will go forward for approval with all our stakeholders and after a consultation period in Term 2 of academic year, 2023-2024.

This policy was approved by the Board of Management of St Farnan’s Post Primary School on

Date: _____ Signed _____

Chairperson of Board Of Management

Date: _____ Signed _____

Principal

Review Date: School Year 2024-2025

Appendix A. Template of Parent/Guardian RSE Letter: Junior and Senior Cycle Letter

Prosperous, Naas, Co. Kildare

Tel: 045 868152 Fax: 045 [861014](tel:045861014) Email: info@stfarnans.ie www.stfarnans.ie



ST. FARNAN'S
POST PRIMARY SCHOOL
PROSPEROUS
COUNTY KILDARE



Please amend what is in red.

Date

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am writing to inform you that your son/ daughter's class will take part in a Relationship and Sexuality Education Course in line with the Department of Education and Skills requirements.

RSE is a developmental process through experiential learning in which pupils participate to help cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships.

The themes covered in Junior Cycle RSE are Human Relationships, Human Growth and Development and Human Sexuality. The course will run from the week commencing _____ until _____.

Parents are the primary educators of their children. Therefore, our school and teachers will complement the education of relationships and sexuality during this course.

I would like to take this opportunity to direct you to the following parent information sources about RSE <https://ncca.ie/media/6217/jc-sphe-information-for-parents-en.pdf> and <https://b4udecide.ie/parents/rse-in-schools/>

While we assume that all students will want to participate in the RSE course if you have any concerns about your son/daughter attending the classes please contact the principal.

Your sincerely,

Mr. Purcell, Principal

Your Name, RSE Teacher

Principal Andrew Purcell Deputy Principal Sarah Kennedy
Kildare and Wicklow Education Training Board



ST. FARNAN'S
POST PRIMARY SCHOOL
PROSPEROUS
COUNTY KILDARE



Please amend what is in red.

Date

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am writing to inform you that your son/ daughters class will take part in a Relationship and Sexuality Education Course in line with the Department of Education and Skills requirements.

RSE is a developmental process through experiential learning in which pupils participate to help cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships.

The themes covered in Senior Cycle RSE are Human Growth and Development, Human Sexuality and Human Relationships. The course will run from _____

Parents are the primary educators of their children. Therefore our school and teachers will complement the education of relationships and sexuality during this course.

I would like to take this opportunity to direct you to the following parent information sources about RSE.

https://pdst.ie/sites/default/files/parent_booklet_going_forward_together.pdf and

<https://b4udecide.ie/parents/rse-in-schools/>

While we assume that all students will want to participate in the RSE course if you have any concerns about your son/daughter attending the classes please contact the principal.

Your sincerely,

Mr Purcell, Principal

Your name, RSE Teacher

Principal Andrew Purcell Deputy Principal Sarah Kennedy
Kildare and Wicklow Education Training Board

Appendix B. NCCA Information for Parents SPHE Leaflet

Information for parents

Junior Cycle SPHE

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is currently working on updating the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum from primary through to senior cycle education. The new Junior Cycle SPHE course will be introduced in schools in September 2023.

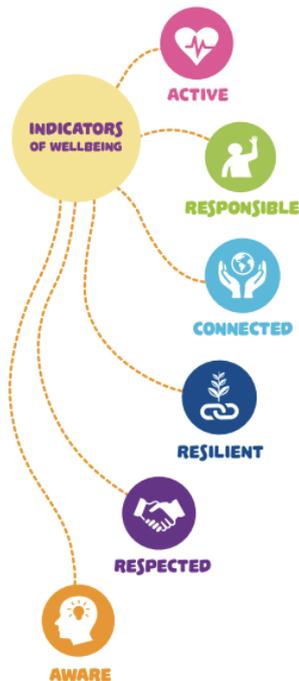
Why SPHE matters

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) provides a safe classroom setting where students can discuss and learn about important aspects of their lives. Within this space, students can grow in awareness, and develop the understanding and skills they need to maintain healthy lives, make healthy choices and build caring and respectful relationships.

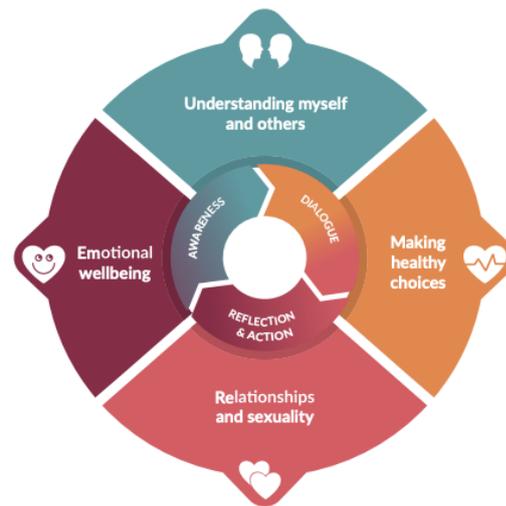
SPHE places a strong focus on developing the important life skills that young people need growing up in a fast changing and complex world. Specifically, it focuses on developing the social and emotional skills of self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, social awareness and relationship skills.

SPHE is a key pillar of the junior cycle Wellbeing programme in all schools as it helps students identify actions they can take to protect and promote their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others. SPHE fosters all 6 indicators of Wellbeing.

Source: [Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines](#)



What will students be learning in SPHE?



Learning in the course is divided into four strands with each setting out important learning for students. These strands are:

- Understanding myself and others
- Making healthy choices
- Relationships and sexuality
- Emotional wellbeing

Teaching and learning in SPHE focuses on

- **awareness-building** so that students understand their own thoughts, emotions, values and behaviour and how different factors influence these
- **respectful dialogue** which gives students opportunities to hear and to discuss a diversity of viewpoints and enlarge their understanding on topics of relevance to their lives.
- **students reflecting** on what they have learned and coming to informed thoughtful decisions about how the learning can help them in their lives now or in the future.

Information for parents

The four stands of Junior Cycle SPHE

Understanding myself and others

This is a foundational strand as it focuses on developing self-awareness and self-esteem and building some of the social and emotional skills needed for healthy relationships. This strand helps students to identify their personal strengths and values. It explores the range of influences that impact on self-esteem and self-image and self-identity.

Making healthy choices

This strand is about helping students to consider how they can make healthy choices and the influences at play. They will discuss a range of aspects – food, sleep, alcohol and other addictive substances and behaviours, and of course their online world.

Relationships and sexuality

Here the key focus is on creating and maintaining healthy and respectful relationships. So students will discuss the signs of healthy, unhealthy and abusive relationships, how to set boundaries in relationships and show respect for the boundaries of others. They will learn about the importance of consent as an aspect of all healthy relationships and how to take care of their reproductive health. There is also a focus on responsible decision making and examining some of the pressures on young people to become sexually active.

Emotional wellbeing

The focus in this strand is on developing young people's skills, knowledge and coping strategies to help them manage stress, self-regulate their emotions, know how to self-care and where to seek help if needed. The aim is to enable them to cope with the normal emotional ups and downs of teenage life.

For more detail go to SPHE ([curriculumonline.ie](https://www.curriculumonline.ie))

The role of parents

Parents are the primary educators of their children and important partners in all aspects of the education process. NCCA has consulted with parents in developing the updated junior cycle course and will continue to consult on further SPHE developments.

Is the same SPHE curriculum taught across all schools?

There is a national curriculum for all subjects, including SPHE, that is taught across all primary and post-primary schools irrespective of the particular school ethos. The SPHE curriculum sets out the topics to be taught in schools, and teachers have freedom to choose the classroom resources they will use when teaching the curriculum. They are aware of the need to teach topics in a way that is sensitive to the age and stage of development of their students and meets their needs.

How can we ensure that the learning is age-appropriate?

In developing the curriculum, significant work goes into ensuring that learning is age-appropriate. Decisions about what to include in the curriculum are based on research and best practice, as well as extensive consultations with parents/guardians, teachers and children/young people themselves.

Within the classroom, the teacher has flexibility to judge how and when topics should be taught, so that learning takes place in a way that is meeting the needs, stage of development and school context of their students.

For further information

www.ncca.ie Go to junior cycle curriculum developments