

Dominican College,
Fortwilliam, Belfast

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

Approved by the Board of Governors September 2014

Introduction

RSE is a statutory element of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. The revised DENI circular 2001/15 and the guidelines produced by CCEA have informed this policy. It is intended that this policy will be a flexible and 'living' document, so that the programme associated with it can be modified and adapted as appropriate. The Head of Personal Development/ RSE will review the policy at the end of each year in consultation with the Pastoral Vice-Principal. The policy is one part of the overall Pastoral Care Programme at Dominican College.

Context

Northern Ireland has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in Europe, and the incidence of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) continues to rise. It is against this backdrop that the Department of Education commissioned CCEA to produce guidance for Relationships and Sexuality Education (2002) and directed every school to have a policy setting out how the school will address RSE within the curriculum.

Relationships and Sexuality Education is a lifelong process which encompasses the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills, and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about personal and social relationships and issues concerning gender and sexuality (CCEA 2001). Sexuality includes all aspects of the human person that relate to being male or female. Sexuality is an integral part of the human personality and has biological, cultural, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions. (CCEA 2001)

How are the statutory requirements of RSE being delivered?

A whole school curriculum audit was conducted in 2013/14 by the Head of Personal Development. Curricular provision of RSE in Key Stages 3 and 4 is evident across a range of subject areas. The tutorial programme also addresses some specific elements of the RSE curriculum. The most significant driver of RSE is through the provision of Personal Development and this RSE policy also applies to the delivery of Personal Development. From time to time approved external agencies will deliver aspects of the RSE programme e.g. *Love for Life* educational agency. The Catholic ethos of the College is at the heart of the policy.

Aims and Objectives of Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

- To foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral and social framework.

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the young people in our care.
- To help a young person to develop healthy and mutually respectful friendships and relationships based on honesty, trust and commitment.
- To promote an appreciation that healthy human relationships are not based on exploitation but rather involve recognition, rights, duties, responsibilities and care.
- To promote responsible behaviour and the ability to make informed decisions.
- To help a young person acknowledge the value of family life and marriage.
- To appreciate the responsibility of parenthood.
- To promote personal safety and to manage personal risk.
- To facilitate communication about personal and sexual matters.
- To support all aspects of the College's anti-bullying policy within the Personal Development programme.

Values and Moral Framework

“Dominican schools seek to create a community permeated with the gospel of freedom in constant search for truth.”

(In Search of Truth)

The pursuit of truth is the impetus of every aspect of learning and teaching in the delivery of RSE. Central to the ethos of Dominican College is the idea that the potential of each individual pupil should be fully recognised, respected and developed. The RSE programme endeavours to further these values by fostering partnerships between teachers and students, and with parents as appropriate, so as to address relevant issues within the extended Catholic family and the broader human community.

Equal Opportunities

All young people, male and female, have a right to an education which adequately prepares them for adult life, regardless of their age, gender, culture, sexual orientation, disability status, religion and social class (Section 75). In order to ensure that the RSE learning experiences are effective, positive and relevant for all young people, the programme is developmental, accessible and appropriate to the age and maturity of each group. All young people attending the College have a right to access RSE.

As students with special educational needs have the same rights of access to RSE as others, the content and delivery of the programme should take account of their learning needs.

It is recommended that teachers of RSE consult with the Pastoral Vice-Principal before delivering the programme to their groups. Teachers need to be sensitive to the personal and emotional circumstances of each young person, bearing in mind that they will have differing attitudes and beliefs, and that there will be within each group a range of existing knowledge and understanding.

Organisation of RSE programme

Who will teach RSE?

The programme should be delivered by teachers who feel confident, competent and enthusiastic about all aspects of the programme and its presentation within the context of the Dominican College's ethos.

Confidentiality and Child Protection

Staff should respect the privacy of young people and the programme should be delivered with an expectation of confidentiality. This will only be limited by considerations of child protection, since a teacher of RSE who has such concerns must follow the child protection procedures, as outlined in that policy.

Monitoring and Evaluation

This policy will be updated as appropriate and reviewed on an annual basis. Students and teachers will be asked to complete an evaluation questionnaire on the RSE programme. Examples of these questionnaires are available to teachers, students and parents from the Head of Personal Development.

Reviewed August 2015