

# Grange Post-Primary School



## Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

**Patron:** Mayo Sligo Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB)

**Policy Area:** Social, Personal and Health Education / Wellbeing

**Applies to:** All students, parents/guardians, staff, school management, Board of Management and external facilitators

**Date of Ratification:** 12/1/26

**Date of Next Review:** 2028/2029

# **Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy**

## **1. School Context and Ethos**

Grange Post-Primary School is a co-educational, academically non-selective day school operating under the patronage of Mayo Sligo Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB). The school is committed to providing a safe, inclusive and respectful learning environment where all students are supported to achieve their full potential.

The work of the school is underpinned by the core values of respect, equity and fairness. These values inform all policies, practices and relationships within the school, including the delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE).

RSE forms an integral part of the school's Pastoral Care Programme and is embedded within the school's whole-school approach to wellbeing. The programme supports students' social, emotional and personal development and contributes to a positive school climate where respectful relationships are promoted and upheld.

This policy applies to all members of the school community, including students, parents and guardians, teaching and non-teaching staff, school management, the Board of Management and any external facilitators engaged to support the delivery of RSE.

## **2. Relationship of RSE to the School Mission**

The RSE programme supports the mission of Grange Post-Primary School to enable each student to develop as a caring, respectful and responsible individual in a changing world. Through the combined efforts of staff, students and parents/guardians, the school seeks to create a climate of care where each student is valued, supported and treated with dignity.

RSE contributes to this mission by providing students with accurate, age-appropriate and unbiased information, and by supporting the development of attitudes, values and skills necessary for healthy relationships and personal wellbeing.

## **3. Policy Statement**

This Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy has been reviewed following initial consultation with staff, parent representatives, students, school management and the Board of Management. It reflects current Department of Education requirements, national guidance and statutory obligations.

The policy recognises that young people are exposed to a wide range of messages and influences relating to relationships and sexuality. In partnership with parents and guardians, the school has a role in supporting students to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to make informed, responsible and respectful decisions.

All references to gender in this policy are inclusive, and the term parent is taken to include guardian.

## **4. Policy and Legislative Context**

This policy is developed in accordance with current Department of Education requirements, national guidance and statutory obligations relevant to post-primary schools. It reflects the expectation that Relationships and Sexuality Education is delivered within a whole-school approach to wellbeing, safeguarding and inclusion.

The policy is informed by, and operates in compliance with, the following legislative and policy frameworks:

- Education Act 1998, which requires schools to promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and to provide health education
- Education (Welfare) Act 2000, in relation to attendance, participation and student welfare
- Children First Act 2015 and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, which govern reporting, safeguarding and the limits of confidentiality
- Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017, including provisions relating to age of consent and protection of children and young people
- Equal Status Acts 2000–2018, which prohibit discrimination and require schools to promote equality and respect for diversity
- Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2024), which emphasise prevention, student voice and restorative approaches
- Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2023, which situates SPHE and RSE within a whole-school wellbeing structure
- Social, Personal and Health Education and Relationships and Sexuality Education curriculum guidance issued by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
- School Self-Evaluation processes and associated Department of Education guidance, which support ongoing review, improvement and accountability

This policy operates alongside, and is read in conjunction with, other relevant school policies and plans including the Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment, Code of Behaviour, Anti-Bullying Policy, SPHE Plan, Wellbeing Plan, Guidance Plan and policies relating to students with additional educational needs.

## **5. Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education**

Relationships and Sexuality Education is a developmental and educational process delivered through experiential learning. It supports students in developing a healthy understanding of themselves and others, particularly in relation to sexuality, relationships, personal wellbeing and responsible decision-making.

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## **5. RSE within Social, Personal and Health Education and Wellbeing**

RSE is delivered within the overall framework of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) at Junior Cycle and through structured modules at Senior Cycle. SPHE and RSE are developmental, spiral in nature and age-appropriate in content and methodology.

RSE also contributes to the school's whole-school approach to wellbeing and complements learning in other subject areas where relevant, including Science, Home Economics, Religious Education, Geography and Guidance.

## **6. Aims of the RSE Programme**

The aims of the RSE programme are:

- to help students understand and develop healthy friendships and relationships
- to promote an understanding of human sexuality
- to foster a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and to relationships with others
- to promote knowledge of and respect for human reproduction
- to enable students to develop attitudes and values in a moral, social and personal framework consistent with school policy
- to provide opportunities for students to learn in ways that encourage responsible, caring and respectful behaviour

## **7. Organisation and Delivery of RSE**

### **7.1 Content Overview**

Junior Cycle RSE addresses areas including:

- personal development and self-esteem
- friendships and relationships
- puberty and physical development
- human reproduction
- personal safety and consent
- sexual orientation and respectful relationships

Senior Cycle RSE addresses areas including:

- healthy and respectful relationships
- consent and communication
- sexual health and wellbeing
- contraception and family planning
- values, decision-making and responsibility

Content is delivered in an age-appropriate, non-directive and inclusive manner.

## **8. Roles and Responsibilities**

The Board of Management ensures that an appropriate Relationships and Sexuality Education policy is in place, that it reflects current requirements and that it is reviewed on a regular basis.

The Principal has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and for ensuring that the RSE programme is delivered in a structured, consistent and age-appropriate manner as part of the school's wellbeing framework.

The SPHE/RSE Coordinator supports planning, coordination, monitoring and review of the programme, and liaises with school management, staff and external agencies where appropriate.

Teachers delivering RSE are responsible for implementing the agreed programme, maintaining a respectful and inclusive classroom environment, engaging in relevant professional development and adhering to this policy.

Parents and guardians are recognised as the primary educators of their children and are encouraged to engage with and support the RSE programme.

Students are active participants in the RSE programme and are expected to engage respectfully and responsibly with the content and with one another.

## **9. Parents and Guardians**

Relevant sections of this policy are made available to parents/guardians through school publications and the school website.

## **10. Handling Questions and Classroom Boundaries**

Teachers create a safe and respectful classroom environment where questions may be raised. However, it may not be appropriate to address all questions in a class setting. Teachers may defer or decline to answer questions that are outside the scope of the programme, not age-appropriate or of a personal nature.

Teachers use professional judgement, guided by the age and maturity of students, the RSE curriculum, this policy and the ethos of the school. Where concerns arise, teachers consult with the SPHE Coordinator, Guidance Counsellor, Designated Liaison Person or Principal.

## **11. Confidentiality and Child Protection**

The RSE classroom is not a context for personal disclosure. Teachers do not promise absolute confidentiality. Students are made aware of the limits of confidentiality.

Where a teacher becomes aware of information indicating that a student may be at risk of harm, abuse or is involved in underage sexual activity, the matter is referred immediately to the Designated Liaison Person in accordance with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures.

## **12. Withdrawal from RSE**

Parents/guardians may withdraw their child from participation in specific elements of the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme by submitting a written request to the principal. Once a parent/guardian's request to withdraw their child is made, the request will be complied with until such a time as the request is revoked by the student's parent/guardian.

## **13. Visiting Speakers and External Facilitators**

The school recognises that the qualified classroom teacher is best placed to deliver Relationships and Sexuality Education in a consistent, developmentally appropriate and trusted manner. The use of visiting speakers and external facilitators is guided by Department of Education Circular 0043/2018, which sets out best practice for the use of programmes and

external facilitators in promoting student wellbeing. Visiting speakers and external facilitators may be used to enhance the RSE programme where their contribution adds value, expertise or perspective that complements the planned curriculum.

The use of visiting speakers is supplementary and does not replace the school's responsibility to deliver a structured RSE programme.

All visiting speakers and external facilitators must be approved in advance by the Principal. Approval is granted only where the proposed content, methodology and materials are appropriate to the age, maturity and needs of the students and are consistent with this policy and the ethos of the school.

Visiting speakers are provided with a copy of the school's RSE Policy in advance of their visit and are made aware of the school's expectations regarding content, delivery, confidentiality and safeguarding. All external contributors must comply with the school's Child Safeguarding Statement and relevant statutory requirements, including Garda vetting where applicable.

A member of staff, normally the SPHE or RSE teacher, remains present and actively involved for the duration of any session delivered by a visiting speaker. The teacher retains responsibility for classroom management and for ensuring that the content delivered is appropriate and aligned with the agreed programme.

Parents and guardians are informed in advance of visits by external speakers and are provided with an outline of the content to be covered. Parents and guardians may withdraw their child from such sessions if they wish, in accordance with school procedures.

Preparatory and follow-up work may be undertaken with students, where appropriate, to ensure that the input from a visiting speaker is contextualised within the broader RSE programme and supports student learning and wellbeing.

The effectiveness and appropriateness of visiting speakers may be reviewed by school staff and students as part of ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the RSE programme.

## **14. Students with Additional Educational Needs**

Students with additional educational needs may require differentiated, sensitive and carefully planned approaches to Relationships and Sexuality Education. The school is committed to ensuring that all students can access RSE in a manner that is appropriate to their individual needs, level of understanding and stage of development.

Planning for RSE provision for students with additional educational needs takes place through collaboration between the Special Educational Needs team, SPHE/RSE teachers, Guidance Counsellor, school management and parents/guardians, as appropriate. This collaboration ensures that content, pace, methodology and supports are tailored while maintaining the integrity of the RSE programme.

Where necessary, RSE content may be adapted, scaffolded or delivered in alternative formats to support student understanding, communication needs and personal safety. Particular attention is given to supporting students in understanding boundaries, consent, appropriate behaviour and protection from exploitation or abuse.

Any adjustments made are consistent with Department of Education guidance, the school's SEN policy and the principles of inclusion, dignity and respect.

## **15. Resources and Staff Development**

The school is committed to ensuring that appropriate, up-to-date and age-appropriate resources are available to support the effective delivery of the RSE programme.

RSE and SPHE resources are centrally stored within the school and are accessible to all teachers delivering the programme. These resources may include approved textbooks, teacher manuals, lesson materials, digital resources and materials provided or endorsed by the Department of Education, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and the Health Service Executive.

Digital resources used in the delivery of RSE are selected carefully to ensure they are educationally appropriate, inclusive, evidence-informed and consistent with the school's ethos and policy framework. All digital content is used in accordance with the school's ICT Acceptable Use Policy and data protection requirements.

The school prioritises the use of resources that promote factual accuracy, respectful language, inclusivity and student wellbeing. Only materials that have been approved by school management may be used in RSE lessons or distributed to students.

Teachers delivering RSE are supported and encouraged to engage in ongoing professional development in the areas of SPHE, RSE, wellbeing and safeguarding. Where possible, the school facilitates access to relevant training provided by Oide, the Department of Education and other recognised bodies, subject to available resources and the needs of the school.

Professional collaboration is encouraged through subject planning, sharing of good practice and reflective discussion among staff involved in SPHE and RSE.

## **16. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation**

The school is committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the RSE programme on an ongoing basis. Review processes are informed by student feedback, staff reflection and parental feedback, and are integrated into the school's School Self-Evaluation cycle.



Student voice is a key element of the evaluation of RSE provision. Opportunities are provided for students to reflect on their learning and to provide feedback on the relevance, appropriateness and effectiveness of the programme.

Findings from monitoring and review inform future planning, resource selection and professional development, ensuring that the programme remains responsive to student needs and aligned with current guidance.