



## **Beaufort College**

### **RSE Policy**

**2022/23**

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

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

#### **Relationships and Sexuality Education within Social Personal and Health Education**

The guidelines for RSE (NCCA, June 1995, 1.2) state that social, personal, and health education is “spiritual, developmental in nature, and age-appropriate in content and methodologies”. 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.

## **The aim of our Relationship and Sexuality Education Programme**

Relationships and sexuality education, which is in the overall framework of Social Personal and Health Education, has its specific aims:

- a) To help students to understand and develop friendships and relationships
- b) To promote an understanding of sexuality
- c) To support a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's relationship with others
- d) To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction
- e) To enable students to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework in keeping with the policy of the college
- f) To provide opportunities for students to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring, and responsible way.

It is acknowledged that in a course of limited duration these aims are aspirational

## **Guidelines for the management and organisation of Relationships and Sexuality Education at Beaufort College.**

### **1. Teaching the programme**

Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff will be made by the principal.

### **2. Informing and involving parents**

Parents are the primary educators of their children and their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality is seen by Beaufort College as particularly important. Relevant sections of the policy will be communicated to the parents at the relevant time. Parents are asked to sign the notice of consent in students' school diary. Parents are encouraged to contact the school if they feel that content is not appropriate for their child.

### **3. Offering Advice**

Beaufort College's function is to provide general education about sexual matters and issues and not to offer individual advice, information, or counseling on aspects of sexual behaviour and contraception – however, sources of professional information and advice will be identified when appropriate. Teachers may provide students with information about where and from whom they can receive sexual advice and treatment, e.g., their doctor or other suitable agency. The information should not be directive and should be appropriate to the age of the student.

#### **4. The Division between biological and non-biological aspects of sex education**

It is policy in Beaufort College that the Science Department deals primarily with the biological aspects of reproduction.

#### **5. Contraception**

This topic will be dealt with in an age-appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issues in a non-directive way. During senior cycle, students will be given a copy of the booklet in class to assist with the lesson. Students may take this home if they wish.

#### **6. Abortion**

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

#### **7. Sexually Transmitted Infections**

Given that the rate of STI transmission is increasing, it is important that the subject is addressed in Beaufort College. While the awareness of STIs is one of the objectives of the Third Year SPHE/RSE syllabus, STIs are mainly addressed in Senior Cycle. At senior cycle students will be given a copy of a HSE booklet in class to assist with the lesson. Students may take this home if they wish.

#### **8. Special Needs**

Students who have additional educational 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 is and are not acceptable, and in being warned and prepared against abuse by others. The SEN teacher liaises with the well-being teacher to stay informed on topics being completed and discussed.

#### **General guidelines for the provision and organisation of SPHE and RSE in Beaufort College**

##### **1. Timetabling of SPHE and RSE General guidelines for the provision and organisation of SPHE and RSE in Beaufort College.**

SPHE is an integral part of the Wellbeing/SPHE programme and is timetabled in all Junior Cycle classes. RSE is taught to transition years, fifth years, and sixth years in the Wellbeing class. The programme is delivered in a mixed setting of boys and girls.

##### **2. Guest Speakers in SPHE and RSE**

(a) It is the school's policy that most of the RSE programme is best discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by the students. However, visitors can enhance the quality of the provision if they are used in addition to, not instead of a planned programme of RSE. The

Wellbeing Coordinator informs the school principal who presents the names of the guest speakers to the board of management for approval to visit the school. All speakers are checked and approved before entry to the school.

(b) After gaining approval from the principal for the visit, the Wellbeing Co-Ordinator makes the visitor aware of the ethos of the school and the manner of delivery of the RSE programme.

Issues to consider are:

1. The degree of explicitness of the content and presentation.
2. Will the visitor be accompanied by teaching staff?
3. Will the staff take an active role in the visitors' activities?
4. How will the visitor be prepared for the visit?
5. How will the visit be built upon and followed up?

(c) 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.

(d) 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 students in the visit and will make the experience more relevant for them.

(e) School Management and the office should be informed of the date and name of the visitor.

(f) All visitors are asked to complete a visitor's form before arrival.

### **3. Provision of Support, Training and Staff Development**

All SPHE Teachers are encouraged and facilitated to attend RSE and SPHE training. Teachers of RSE and SPHE have access to teaching materials and resources. Teachers who express an interest in SPHE/RSE will be given consideration.

### **4. Inclusion of Parents**

Parents of all students are asked to sign the consent form in the school journal. They are encouraged to contact the school if they have any questions about the RSE programme.

## **5. Withdrawing students from the RSE programme**

The Education Act (1998: section 30, subsection (2)(e) provides that a student is not required to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the consent of the parent or in the case of a student who has reached the age of eighteen years; The students' parents have a right, therefore, to withdraw their son/daughter from all or any aspect of RSE. Parents must notify the principal in advance of their wish to have their child withdrawn from all or part of the programme. The Principal will meet the parent/guardian to discuss alternative supervision arrangements.

### **Ethical/Moral Considerations – Guidelines for Teachers**

#### **1. Answering Explicit Questions**

It is unlikely to be appropriate to deal with a student's explicit questions by dealing with it in front of the whole class. In practice, this means that teachers should say that it is not appropriate to deal with that question at this time. The teacher may also exercise his or her own professional judgement in deciding whether to answer the question privately after the class has finished. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised, he/she may seek advice from the Guidance Counsellor and may refer to the DLP.

#### **2. Confidentiality**

It is school policy that in circumstances where a student is considered at some risk of abuse (physical, sexual, emotional or neglect) or in breach of the law, the teacher must refer this immediately to the DLP, or the DDLP. The DLP or the DDLP will decide whether to inform the parents and will inform the appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling. Teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality. Students must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the DLP and possibly to parents. The DLP decides if it is in the best interests of the student to notify parents. Teachers must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard the information. Teachers must indicate clearly to students when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential – the student can then decide whether to proceed or not.

#### **3. Sexual Activity**

The RSE policy statement gives teachers a framework related to morals and values within which the issue of sexual activity should be addressed. These are to be found within the RSE Programme and resource itself. Teachers will give young people information on the age of consent which is 17 years of age for both males and females, for heterosexual and homosexual relationships. Teachers who become aware that a student is sexually active under the age of consent must bring this information to the DLP who will then inform the parents/TUSLA. Under the 'Childrens First' Guidelines if teachers become aware of a student who is sexually active and is under the age of 18 but above the age of consent, he or she must bring this information to the DLP who will then inform the parents.

#### **4. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Identities, Sexual Orientations and Related Issues**

Teachers do not promote any one lifestyle as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that sexual orientation, sexual identity, and gender identity will be discussed during a programme of sex education.

#### **5. Sensitive issues e.g., Sexual Activity, Abortion and Contraception**

These will be dealt with in an age-appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issues in a nondirective way, within the context of the school's ethos.

#### **6. When do we teach RSE**

Whole school RSE will be provided between February Mid Term Break and the Easter Break each year as this provides the teachers with an opportunity to get to know their students in advance of introducing this programme.

## **Topics for RSE at Junior Cycle include:**

### **Human Growth and Development**

- an understanding of physical and emotional changes at puberty.
- fertility, conception, pregnancy and birth.
- sexually transmitted infections.
- an awareness of the consequences and implications of sexual activity.

### **Human Sexuality**

- understanding and respecting what it is to be male or female.
- an appreciation of the roles of women and men in society.
- awareness of discrimination.
- personal safety.
- sexual orientation.

### **Human Relationships**

- developing skills regarding making and maintaining good relationships and friendships.
- family roles and responsibilities.
- group behaviour and resolving conflict.
- an understanding of how peer pressure works.

## **Topics for RSE at senior cycle include:**

### **Human Growth and Development**

- fertility and family planning.
- a deeper understanding of pregnancy and the developing foetus.

### **Human sexuality**

- treating women and men with equal respect.
- sexual harassment.
- sexual abuse, rape, legal right: voluntary and statutory agencies.
- making moral and healthy choices regarding sexual activity.

### **Human relationships**

- an awareness of what constitutes a loving relationship.
- the long-term commitment involved in marriage.
- Parenting and family life.

