

## **Linn Dara School**

### **Relationship and Sexual Education Policy**

#### **1. Our School**

Linn Dara School is a multi-denominational, co-educational school. Linn Dara School is designated by the DES as a Special School for students experiencing Severe Emotional Disturbance. The school depends on grants and fulltime teacher resources provided by the DES. It operates within the regulations laid down from time to time by the DES in so far as is possible in the particular context. The function and purpose of Linn Dara School is to provide continuity of educational provision for children and young people who are temporarily absent from school due to their medical needs.

#### **2. Our School Philosophy and Mission Statement**

Linn Dara School supports the principles of inclusiveness, particularly with reference to enrolment of children with a disability or other special educational need; equality of access and participation in the school; respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life in society. Linn Dara School aims to promote self-esteem and educational achievement. This school community commits itself to maintaining a safe, positive, structured, caring environment where the spiritual, moral, intellectual, social, personal and aesthetic development of the school community is paramount. It recognises that the parents/guardians are the primary educators and home is the natural environment in which Relationship and Sexual Education (RSE) should take place.

#### **3. Definition of Relationship and Sexuality Education**

Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a developmental process through experiential learning in which pupils participate to cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, particularly in the area of relationships and sexuality.

#### **4. Relationship and Sexuality Education within Social Personal and Health Education**

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 Relationship and Sexuality Education Programme is designed to follow this principle and pattern.

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

Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme will be taught as part of the SPHE Programme. The aims of RSE are

- To help students understand and develop friendships and relationships
- To promote an understanding of sexuality
- To promote a positive attitude to students own sexuality and in their relationships with others
- To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction
- To enable students to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework in keeping with the ethos of the school
- To provide opportunities for pupils to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that encourage them to think and act in a caring and responsible way

*It is acknowledged that these aims are aspirational due to the time constraints of the course and the specific needs of individuals and groups*

## **6. To what will this policy apply?**

This policy will apply to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality. Discussion about relationships and sexuality will take place in other subjects other than SPHE/RSE; it is therefore important that all teachers are familiar with the RSE Policy.

## **7. To whom will this policy apply?**

This policy will apply to school staff, students, Board of Management, parents/guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators and will be freely available to all personnel.

## **8. Guidelines for the management and organisation of Relationship and Sexuality I our school**

The Principal will make arrangements regarding the teaching of the RSE Programme and the deployment of staff. Teachers will follow the guidelines and lesson plans drawn up by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

One timetabled period per week will be allocated to SPHE and out of the SPHE Programme, **six timetabled periods will be assigned to RSE.**

## **9. Classroom Issues**

### **Participation**

SPHE is a core curricular subject on the Junior Cycle Curriculum. Relationships and Sexuality (RSE) is one module of the programme. Parents/Guardians should be informed of the RSE Policy from the time of enrolment of the student. While all partners in the school community – teaching staff and management – are agreed on the programme we recognise, nevertheless, the right of any parent/guardian who so wishes to request that his/her son/daughter should not participate in the programme. The school will respect this choice. Where students are withdrawn from RSE the school cannot take responsibility for any versions of class content passed on to them by other students. Parents/Guardians wishing to withdraw their son/daughter will make their wishes known to the principal. We will also be guided by the advice of the multidisciplinary teams.

### **Answering Questions**

While it is important to create an environment in SPHE/RSE in which students can discuss issues openly, teachers may not be able to answer all questions asked by students and can set limits. It may not be appropriate to deal with a student's explicit questions in a classroom situation e.g. questions on oral sex or abortion. The teacher may say that it is inappropriate to answer the question in class and may exercise his/her professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, in deciding whether to answer the question privately after class has finished. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised, he/she should seek advice from the Principal.

### **Confidentiality**

Students should be asked not to disclose personal information in SPHE/RSE class. It is important that students are made aware of the limits of confidentiality. Teachers must not guarantee confidentiality. Pupils must be informed that if a teacher becomes aware that a pupil is at risk of abuse, or in breach of the law, this information will be conveyed to the Principal and the appropriate action will be taken, as set down in the Child Protection Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools (2004)

## **Sexual Activity**

Students should be made aware that, following the passage of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006, the age of consent for sexual activity for both males and females is 17 years of age in the Republic of Ireland. In circumstances where a teacher becomes aware that a pupil is engaging in underage sexual activity, the teacher must refer this immediately to the designated liaison person (DLP) i.e. the Principal.

## **Outside Speakers**

The RSE programme will be delivered openly by teachers who are known and trusted by pupils. However 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. The visitor will be provided with a copy of the RSE policy prior to the visit. A member of the teaching staff will be present with the visitor during the talk to ensure that our RSE policy is strictly adhered to.

## **Offering Advice**

The school's function is to provide a general education about sexual matters and not to offer individual advice or counselling on aspects of sexual behaviour. However, 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. Advice offered should not be directive and should be age appropriate to the student.

## **Family planning/Contraception**

The subject of family planning is covered within the senior cycle RSE programme. However, the topic may need to be addressed before senior cycle. Students will be provided with information about methods of 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.

## **Homosexuality**

The subject of sexual orientation is included in the RSE curriculum at senior cycle. The topic may need to be addressed before senior cycle. Discretion will be used with regard to the age at which students discuss homosexuality and it should be discussed in a clear and open manner and in a non-directive way

## **Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)**

While awareness of STIs is one of the objectives of the second year SPHE/RSE syllabus, STIs are mainly addressed in senior cycle. This topic will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner.

## **Special Needs**

Children with Special Needs may need more help in coping with physical and emotional aspects of growing up.

## **10. Provision of Training and Staff Development**

SPHE Support Services offers training and support to teachers in both Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle RSE/SPHE and the school will endeavour to upskill and train the RSE/SPHE teachers in this important area on an ongoing basis.

## **11. Resources**

The school will purchase appropriate RSE teaching materials which have been identified by staff as useful and which have been approved by the Principal, within the normal budgetary framework and as general school resources allow. Various resources are centrally located in the school for the teaching of the RSE module within the SPHE and Pastoral Care programmes.

## **12. Monitoring of Policy**

The implementation of the RSE Policy will be monitored at SPHE/RSE department meetings and other meetings deemed necessary by the Principal or Board of Management.

## **13. Evaluating and Reviewing the RSE Programme**

The school will review this policy periodically after its ratification by the BOM. The RSE Policy may be reviewed and amended, prior to that date, where necessary.


This policy was reviewed by the Board of Management on the 12<sup>th</sup> September 2019.

**Signed**



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**Chairperson of Board of Management**  
**Date: 12/9/19**

**Signed**



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**Principal**  
**Date: 12/9/19**

**Date of next review: first Board of Management meeting in the 2022-23 school year.**