



## **Oatlands College**

### **Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy**

#### **1. School Ethos**

Oatlands College is an Edmund Rice school community composed of students, teachers and other staff, parents and management under the Trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust [ERST]. The central purpose of this community is the religious, moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic and social education of the students. Inspired by the vision of Edmund Rice, as set out in the religious and educational philosophy of the ERST Charter, the school seeks to create an atmosphere of Christian care and concern in which students can grow to maturity.

#### **2. What is Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)?**

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding, and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy.

The RSE programme in both Junior and Senior cycle teaches the dignity and beauty of human sexuality through delivery of the curriculum and through a diversity of learning methodologies in an age-appropriate way. Students learn to cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships.

#### **3. Rationale for RSE**

Education about relationships and sexuality is delivered in both formal and informal settings by parents/guardians, teachers, peers, adults and the media. The school recognises that the primary providers of such education are parents/guardians and that the home is the natural environment for such education. Within the school, it is acknowledged that formal and informal processes of relationships and sexuality education take place as outlined in this policy.

Circular 0043/2018 states: Schools must have a policy for RSE that has been developed in consultation with teachers, parents/guardians, members of Boards of Management, and students. Schools are required to teach all aspects of the RSE programme. Elements of the programme cannot be omitted on the grounds of the school ethos. All aspects of the programme can and should be taught within the ethos and value system of the school as expressed in the RSE policy. The Board of Management has a responsibility to ensure RSE is made available to all students.

#### **4. RSE Programme**

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is one of ten modules on the Junior Cycle Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum. It also forms part of the schools Transition Year (TY) curriculum and is taught during different modules of Religious Education (RE) during 5th and 6th year. Throughout their time in Oatlands College, each student will study differing elements of RSE for a minimum of six weeks each year.

The formal provision of RSE means building on the primary school programme and providing young people with information and skills to critically evaluate the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values offered today. This will allow them to make positive and responsible choices about themselves and the way to live their lives. Throughout the years, students are introduced to relationships and sexuality education in an age-appropriate manner.

#### **5. Formal Provision of RSE**

RSE should enable students to:

- Acquire the understanding and skills necessary to form healthy friendships and relationships.
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness and the skills for building and maintaining self-esteem.
- Become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change especially during adolescence and to develop respect for the difference between individuals.
- Understand human physiology with particular reference to the reproductive cycle and human fertility.
- Understand sexual development and identity and explore aspects of sexuality and sexual orientation including sex role stereotyping and an introduction to gender issues.
- Promote a positive, respectful and accepting attitude of one's own sexuality and that of others.
- Value family life, the changing nature of the family and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood.

- Develop strategies for decisions and actions consistent with personal moral integrity and respectful of the rights and dignity of others.
- Develop skills for coping with peer pressure, conflict and threats to personal safety. This encompasses areas such as explicit images, messages and pornography.<sup>1</sup>
- Promote an awareness of what constitutes a respectful intimate and sexual relationship.

## **6. Ongoing Support, Development and Review**

It is the policy of the school that staff teaching RSE should be appropriately trained. Support from school management for ongoing in-career development of SPHE/RSE teachers is vital for effective delivery of a relevant, informed and valuable RSE programme. This is provided by encouraging and enabling teachers to attend all relevant courses.

All SPHE/RSE teachers have access to resources including:

- RSE Junior and Senior Cycle Resource Materials Book.
- PDST Workshops.
- B4UDecide.
- Trust.
- TENI (Transgender Equality Network Ireland)
- Belong to
- INTO LGBT+
- HSE leaflets and videos.
- Growing Up LGBT

## **7. Organisation of RSE**

Students in junior cycle are timetabled for one forty-minute period SPHE class per week. Six of the timetabled classes are designated to the delivery of the RSE programme. These six classes are generally taught towards the end of the academic year, but this is ultimately left to each SPHE teacher to decide. Where possible students will have the same teacher for SPHE throughout their junior cycle programme.

As part of a rotation module, first year students will also undertake twelve extra periods of RSE.

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<sup>1</sup> While certain explicit sexual material is dealt with under the national specifications/ curriculum (e.g., sexting) Oatlands College acknowledges that pornography exists and that students may have been exposed to pornography. Therefore, teachers will facilitate conversation on this matter in the course of class should this topic arise. All conversations will be held in a respectful, non-threatening and age-appropriate manner.

In transition year (TY) students are timetabled for two forty-minute periods of RSE per week. For each class, this module runs for eight weeks.

At senior cycle, students are taught at least 6 periods of RSE during both 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year in small groups of approximately 15 students. This module is integrated as part of their Religious Education programme. The Senior Cycle RSE Programme follows from the Junior Cycle, with the same emphasis placed on respect, tolerance, and positive relationships with others.

Aspects of the RSE programme are taught in other timetabled activities including:

- Science – Biology
- Physical Education (PE)
- Home Economics (HE)
- Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) in Junior Cycle

This cross-curricular approach ensures a whole-school involvement in the formation of the moral, spiritual and behavioural values of our students.

The RSE programme can best be discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by their students. However, Oatlands College recognises that visiting speakers/facilitators play a valuable role in supplementing, complementing and supporting our programme.

Visitors/visiting groups are required to adhere to the following guidelines for good practice:

- All visits will be planned in line with the relevant whole-school SPHE/RSE programmes.
- Visitors to the school will be made aware of the SPHE/RSE policy and other policies as relevant.
- Talks/programmes delivered by external speakers/agencies must be consistent with the ethos of Oatlands College and the SPHE/RSE programmes. All visits must be planned with school personnel.
- A teacher(s) must remain in the classroom with the student group.
- All programmes and events delivered by visitors and external agencies must use appropriate, evidence-based methodologies with clear educational outcomes. Such programmes are best delivered by those specially qualified to work with young people for whom the programmes are designed.
- All programmes, talks, interventions and events should be evaluated by students and teachers in terms of subject matter, messages, structure, methodology and proposed learning outcomes.

Pupils with special 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 are and are not acceptable, and in being warned and prepared against abuse by others.

## **8. The role of Parents/Guardians**

Parents are encouraged to read the Oatlands College RSE policy and also to familiarise themselves with the SPHE/RSE programme and methodologies which can be found on the [NCCA Website](#). Through this, parents can find an overview of the syllabus and questions can be clarified.

Parents retain the right to withdraw their children from classes. If a parent wishes to withdraw his/her child from the RSE lesson/s, that wish must be put in writing and presented to the Year Head and Principal. This letter must indicate that the parent/guardian is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves. The student will be placed in another class for the duration of the RSE course. A new request to withdraw their son from participating in the RSE programme must be made in writing each year or it will be assumed that the withdrawal request has elapsed at the end of each academic year.

Parents should also be aware that material taught during the RSE programme may be discussed by the students outside class time, and the staff will have no control over what aspects of the information are passed on. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that social media, access to websites, advertising, and of course friends and peers, are sources of information and influence about relationships and sexuality.

## **9. Confidentiality**

It is school policy that in circumstances where a pupil is considered at some risk of any type of abuse or in breach of the law, the teacher must refer this immediately to the DLP. The DLP will decide whether to inform the parents and/or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling. Teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality and pupils must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the DLP and possibly to parents if the DLP decides that it is in the best interests of the pupil to notify parents. Teachers must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard the information and must indicate clearly to pupils when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential - the pupil can then decide whether to proceed or not. In all cases best practice in relation to The Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary schools must be followed at all times.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 14th June 2022.

## (A) Module Syllabus - Junior Cycle

The RSE programme at Junior Cycle is linked to the SPHE syllabus. The topics highlighted in orange are considered relevant to the RSE course.

Module	First Year	Second Year	Third Year
Belonging and Integrating  Self-Management	Coping with Change Joining a new group Appreciating Difference Bullying is everyone's business Coping with loss	Looking back, looking forward Group work Family ties	Goal setting for third year Work contract
	Organising myself Organising my work at home and school Balance in my Life	What motivates me? Study skills	Organising my time Planning for effective study. Coping with examinations
Communication Skills	Express yourself Learning to listen Passive, assertive, and aggressive communication	Assertive communication	Learning to communicate Communications in situations of conflict
Physical Health	Body care Healthy eating Exercise	Body care and body image	Physical exercise Relaxation Diet
Friendship	Making new friends A good friend	The changing nature of friendship	Boyfriends and girlfriends
Relationship and Sexuality	Me as unique and different Friendship Changes at adolescence The reproductive system Images of Male and Female Respecting myself and others Understanding sexual identity and orientation, LGBT	From conception to birth Recognising and expressing feelings and emotions Peer pressure and other influences Managing relationships Making responsible decisions Health and personal safety Understanding sexual identity and orientation, LGBT	Body image Where am I now? Relationships- what's important The three R's _ respect, rights, and responsibilities Conflict Understanding sexual identity and orientation, LGBT
Emotional Health	Recognising feelings Respecting my feelings and the feelings of others	Self Confidence Body Image	Stress Feelings and mood
Influences and Decisions	My Heroes	Positive and negative influences Making decisions	Making good decisions
Substance Use	Drug use Alcohol: the facts Smoking and its effects Smoking- why, why not?	The effects of drugs Alcohol and its effects Alcohol: why, why not? Cannabis and its effects Cannabis: why, why not?	Ecstasy: the realities Heroin: the realities
Personal Safety	Accidents at home Feeling threatened My Online Presence		Recognising unsafe situations Violence Help agencies Messaging Online

## Senior Cycle

Module	Transition Year	Fifth Year	Sixth Year
Substance Use and Misuse	Alcohol and its effects on health Peer pressure and decision-making Smoking Impact of legal drugs Addiction	Classifying Drugs	Alcohol and its effects on health Addiction and misuse, social and personal implications
Physical Activity and Nutrition	Healthy food choices Body image and self-esteem Active lifestyles Physical Health and Wellbeing	Diet and Emotions Wellbeing	Choosing a healthy diet/healthy eating – links to wellbeing, stamina, performance /level of motivation, overall health and absence of illness
Mental Health	Mental Health and Wellbeing Anxiety and Stress Bereavement Managing negative emotions	Self-esteem Mental health and mental illness Coping with stress Relaxation	Self-Awareness Self-Esteem Stress Management
Relationships and Sexuality	Healthy and unhealthy relationships Relationship skills Fertility and reproduction, health, and pregnancy Introduction to contraception Health and hygiene Making decisions and peer pressure Personal rights and safety: being safe in school, the community. Human rights, respecting the rights of others Sexual identity	Healthy and unhealthy relationships Relationship skills Effective communication in relationships Peer pressure, impact of social media on relationships Adolescence/puberty, menstrual cycle, and fertility Contraception STIs, safer sexual practice LGBT Consent	Healthy and unhealthy relationships Relationship skills Fertility, reproduction, health Contraception Consent
Gender Studies	Defining gender Male and female responses to decision making Respecting different identities	Gender and sex Gender stereotyping Gender equality, LGBT Gender and culture influences	Male and female experiences of health and well-being