



Bush Post Primary School

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy (RSE)

2024-2026



Ratified by the BOM
January 31st 2024

1. Our School Mission Statement and Core Values

We acknowledge the uniqueness of students in our care: each with individual needs and potentialities. The realisation of each student's potential is our mission.

We recognise the importance of self-esteem. It is our mission to engender, foster and protect a positive self-image and wellbeing of each person in our care.

Our mission is to create an effective educational environment, where our school community will thrive. This environment, managed with fairness and firmness, will allow each person in our care to develop personally, educationally, socially and spiritually.

Our School Motto "**Ar thóir na tuisceana**" translates as "in Search of Understanding"

2. **Louth Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB) Core Values**



Louth Meath Education and Training Board School and colleges are state schools, co-educational and multi-denominational. The Core values for schools in Education and Training Boards of Ireland (ETBI) are:

- Care
- Community
- Equality
- Respect
- Excellence in Education

Bush Post Primary School seeks to provide a safe, secure and holistic learning environment that promotes mutual respect and responsibility among all members of the school community. The information within this document applies to Bush Post Primary School community.

3. Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and the Junior Cycle Wellbeing Programme

SPHE is a key pillar of the Junior Cycle Wellbeing Programme as it helps students identify actions they can take to protect and promote their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others. SPHE fosters all six indications of wellbeing namely:

- Active
- Responsible
- Connected
- Resilient
- Respected
- Aware

In Bush Post Primary School, Junior Cycle students will follow the Short Course Curriculum in SPHE. This short course was first published in 2016 and was updated in 2023. Students starting first year in 2023 will be studying the new specification approved by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. All schools are required to deliver this specification.

Overview: Course

This junior cycle course in SPHE is designed to support students in developing a positive sense of self and a capacity to care for themselves and others. It is designed around four interconnected strands and three cross-cutting elements.



Ratified by the BOM
January 31st 2024

4. Junior Cycle Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

SPHE has four strands namely:

Strand 1: Understanding Myself and Others

Strand 2: Making Healthy Choices

Strand 3 Relationship and Sexuality

Strand 4: Emotional Wellbeing

Teaching and learning in SPHE focuses on awareness building, respectful dialogue and student reflecting on what they have learned and coming to informed decisions about how the learning can help them in their lives now or in the future. In the RSE Strand 3 section of SPHE the key focus is on creating and maintaining healthy and respectful relationships.

The four strands are underpinned by three cross-cutting elements that are foundational for effective teaching and learning in SPHE. These are:

- Awareness
- Dialogue
- Reflection and action

Awareness

Awareness is the ability to understand one's own thoughts, emotions, values and behaviour. It includes understanding how different factors influence our sense of self and how we live our lives, including the influence of family, peers, the internet, gender, culture and social norms. This element also includes an awareness that to be human is to be in relationships and that we all share a common humanity and dignity, have rights and responsibilities.

Dialogue

Through dialogical teaching and learning students are facilitated to engage with a diversity of viewpoints; discuss and reflect on their own perspectives, values, and behaviours and those of others; enlarge their understanding of topics of relevance to their lives; and come to informed, thoughtful decisions based on their personal values, with due regard to their own rights and responsibilities and the rights and responsibilities of others. Respectful dialogue is aided by presuming a diversity of backgrounds, identities, cultures and experiences in every classroom and seeing this as a resource for learning.

Reflection* and action

This cross-cutting element focuses on students reflecting on what they have learned and coming to their own personal insights and conclusions in response to their learning. It enables students to consider how the learning can inform their choices, behaviour and relationships, and discerning what it means for their lives now or for the future. Learning in SPHE is a 'praxis'; an ongoing process of critical reflection and action, nurtured by dialogue with others.

*Reflection is "the ability to take a critical stance before deciding, choosing and acting, such as, by stepping back from the assumed, known, apparent, and accepted, comparing a given situation from other, different perspectives, and looking beyond the immediate situation to the long-term and indirect effects of one's decisions and actions. This enables individuals to reach a level of maturity that allows them to adopt different perspectives, make independent judgments and take responsibility for their decisions and actions." OECD, 2020, Technical Report: Curriculum Analysis of the OECD Future of Education and Skills 2030.

5. Rationale and Aim

Rationale

The teaching and learning of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) provides a unique space where students can develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, dispositions and values needed to support their physical, emotional, social and spiritual* wellbeing, now and in the future. The SPHE specification is grounded in values of respect, equality, inclusivity, responsibility, dignity, compassion and empathy.

Adolescence is a time of important change and challenge for young people as they come to a clearer sense of their identity and gain a more secure sense of who they are. The lifelong process of 'becoming your own person' and gaining a secure sense of identity is a prime developmental concern in adolescence. All young people need knowledge and skills to help them develop a strong sense of self, make informed and healthy decisions, be able to take care of themselves and others, and manage life's challenges.

This course places a strong focus on the development of important life skills that young people need growing up in a fast changing and complex world. Specifically, it focuses on developing the core social and emotional skills of self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, social awareness and relationship skills. These have been shown to determine how well people manage changing and challenging environments and can influence many important life outcomes.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is an integral part of, and connects with, aspects of SPHE. It is of particular importance for young people at this stage of their lives as they reflect on questions such as 'what kind of person am I?' and 'what matters for me in relationships?'. As they continue to form their identity, they are making sense of life experiences, information, images and messages about relationships and sexuality from a range of informal sources such as their peers, family, the media, online world. Having the opportunity to think about and discuss relationships, sexuality and healthy sexual expression within a safe classroom setting and with a skilled teacher is vitally important.

Through the use of critical and participative pedagogies, SPHE can provide a safe, supportive and non-judgemental space where students' self-awareness and awareness of others can grow, and where they engage in reflection and dialogue, and identify actions they can take to protect and promote their own wellbeing and that of others. By affirming and developing young people's strengths and capacities as active agents in their own lives, SPHE can play an important role in enabling young people to find their voice and develop self-efficacy.

In Junior Cycle, six indicators have been identified as central to students' wellbeing. Teaching and learning within the SPHE classroom can provide meaningful learning opportunities to foster all six indicators of wellbeing, helping students become more Active, Responsible, Connected, Resilient, Respected and Aware. SPHE is thereby a core pillar of a school's Wellbeing programme in junior cycle.

The SPHE/RSE specification supports teachers in adopting an approach that is inclusive in accordance with principles of equality, human rights and responsibilities. This ensures that all students can see themselves, their families and their communities reflected across the learning and can learn to value diversity as a feature of humankind and as a source of enrichment. SPHE thus contributes to building a cohesive, compassionate and fair society; one that is inclusive of all genders, sexualities, ethnicities, religious beliefs/worldviews, social classes and abilities/disabilities.

Aim

This course aims to build students' self-awareness and positive self-worth; to develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, dispositions and values that will support them to lead fulfilling and healthy lives; empower them to create, nurture and maintain respectful and loving relationships with self and others; and enhance their capacity to contribute positively to society. The new Junior Cycle SPHE Curriculum Specification can be viewed at <https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Short-Courses/SPHE/>

The Education Act 1998 requires that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.

Ratified by the BOM
January 31st 2024

Section 4 of the Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools requires schools to have an agreed policy for RSE and a suitable RSE programme in place for all students at both junior and senior cycle.

The effectiveness of an RSE programme is dependent on a collaborative policy process involving teachers, students, parents/guardians and members of the Board of Management.

The policy ensures clarity and consensus on how RSE is taught in the school. It articulates the relationship of RSE to the school's Social Personal Health Education (SPHE) programme.

It strives to ensure that teachers, parents/guardians and students understand how the teaching of RSE is linked to the school's Mission Statement and Core Values (as stated above). It outlines the aims of the RSE programme. It clarifies the rights, roles and responsibilities of all within the school community, in relation to the RSE programme, with particular reference to school staff, students, parents/guardians and the Board of Management.

It provides information about the delivery of the programme.

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

SPHE/RSE will be taught in the context of a whole school climate that is inclusive and respectful. The teaching of RSE will reflect ETBI core values of Care, Community, Equality, Respect and Excellence in Education in conjunction with the ethos of the school, as outlined in the school's mission statement above.

The Department of Education requires schools to teach RSE in accordance with Circular 0037/2010. RSE in our school will be delivered in a manner that provides a general education on sexual and relationship matters and issues. The role of the teacher is to provide a professional delivery of the RSE Curriculum. It is acknowledged in a course of limited duration that these aims are aspirational. RSE forms part of the SPHE programme delivered in Bush Post Primary School.

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 also takes place in other classrooms other than SPHE/RSE; it is therefore important that all teachers are familiar with RSE policy.

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.

6. Guidelines for the management and organisation of Relationship and Sexuality Education in 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 in the year, six timetabled periods will be assigned to RSE.

RSE is included in the Transition Year programme and fifth and sixth year SPHE programme.

The school policy is that the Science and Home Economics departments deal with the biological aspects of reproduction.

7. RSE Classroom Practice

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

While all partners in the school community – teaching staff, parents/guardians and management are agreed on the programme we recognise, nevertheless, the right of any parent/guardian who so wished to request that his/her son/daughter should not participate in the programme. The school will respect this choice but as stated above, the parent/guardian must collect their child from school before the RSE lesson and return them to school after the lesson. Where students are withdrawn from RSE the school cannot be responsible for any versions of class content passed on to them by other students.

Parents/Guardians wishing to withdraw their son/daughter from RSE must contact the Principal in first instance. After discussion with the Principal, if the Parent/Guardian still wishes to withdraw their child from RSE, then this request should be made in writing to the Principal by February 15th 2024. Otherwise, the student will take part in the RSE classes. Going forward, parents/ guardians must notify the school in writing by September if they wish to opt their child out of the RSE module. (Only one letter from parents/guardians will be necessary to cover all years the student attends Bush Post Primary School).

NOTE: 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 conscience of the parent or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years. Hence parents/guardians have a right to opt their child out of sensitive issues in RSE if they wish to do so. The school will ask parents/guardians to put their request in writing. LMETB cannot provide alternative supervision for students who have opted out of RSE lessons. Parents and guardians will be asked to collect their child before the lesson and return them to school after the lesson.

8. 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 and should set appropriate limits. Inappropriate questions will not be answered by a teacher in class. Students may ask questions about issues which are not included on the curriculum. On these and all questions asked, teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, together with the student's emotional maturity, the RSE Curriculum and RSE Policy for the school. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised, they should inform/seek advice from the Deputy Principals, (the Deputy Designated Liaison Person for Child Protection for Child protection), or the Principal, (Designed Liaison Person for Child Protection) as per Child Protection Procedures and Guidelines for Post Primary Schools.

9. Management of Information and Confidentiality

While students should not be encouraged to disclose personal or private information in SPHE/RSE classes there may be times when they talk about their own lives. Students should be made aware of the limits of confidentiality and that teachers cannot give unconditional guarantees of confidentiality. Confidentiality should be respected unless a teacher feels that the student is at risk, or other students are at risk.

In such a case the appropriate action should be taken in accordance with the procedures set down in Bush Post Primary School's Child Safeguarding Statement, prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Children First Act 2015, Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017, the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (Revised 2023) and Tusla Guidance on the preparation of Child Safeguarding Statements.

If a teacher is concerned about a student's safety, as a mandated person they can report their concerns directly to TUSLA or report it to Bush Post Primary School's Designated Liaison Person for Child Protection (DLP), Mr Kevin Joyce, or in his absence, to the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDL), Ms Rosanna Hart.

Where the matter is reported to the principal/ (DLP) and he is satisfied on advice that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation, a report should be made to the TUSLA as per the school's Child Protection Policy, in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education and Skills' Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary (Revised 2023).

The Principal will report to the Board of Management as per the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary School (Revised 2023).

10. Outside Speakers

Outside speakers are invited to speak at Bush Post Primary and while visitors to the classroom can be immensely valuable as part of the SPHE programme, the delivery of the programme remains the responsibility of the teacher. In light of this, it is recommended that where visitors/outside agencies are used to support SPHE, the SPHE teacher may remain with the class group during the visit.

11. Sexual Activity

Teachers should use their professional judgment, guided by the age of the students, together with the student's emotional maturity, the RSE Curriculum and the RSE Policy for the school, while dealing with the topic of Sexual Activity. It is advisable that teachers give young people information on the age of consent which, following the passage of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act, 2006, is 17 years for both males and females. The topic of consent is covered in RSE classes in both Junior and Senior Cycle.

12. Family Planning

The post primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines state the subject of the Family Planning should be covered within the Senior Cycle RSE Programme. The RSE Programme requires that young people are provided with the information about the methods of contraception. Teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, together with the student's emotional maturity, the RSE Curriculum and the RSE Policy for the school, while dealing with the topic of family planning.

13. Gender and Sexual Orientation

Teachers do not promote any one lifestyle as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that sexuality will be discussed during a programme of sex education. The post primary RSE Curriculum Guidelines include the subject orientation which will be taught in an open and age-appropriate manner in conjunction with our school's mission

statement and core values. The Equal Status Act, 2000, and the Equality Act, 2004, prohibit discrimination across nine grounds, including sexuality. Teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, together with the student's emotional maturity, the RSE Curriculum and the RSE Policy for the school, while dealing with the topic of sexual orientation. It is important that any student who is coming to terms with their sexual identity should not experience any harassment, embarrassment or isolation which may impact on their mental and emotional health, and they should be offered the help of the Guidance Department and the Care Team.

14. Sexually Transmitted Infections

Creating awareness of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) is undertaken in second level schools. Information on STIs is mainly addressed in Senior Cycle. Teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, together with the student's emotional maturity, the RSE Curriculum and the RSE Policy for the school, while dealing with the topic of Sexually Transmitted Infections.

15. Assessment and reporting

The junior cycle places a strong emphasis on assessment as part of the learning process. This approach requires a more varied approach to assessment in ensuring that the assessment method or methods chosen are fit for purpose, timely and relevant to the students. Assessment in Junior Cycle SPHE will optimise the opportunity for students to become reflective and active participants in their learning and for teachers to support this.

Essentially, the purpose of assessment and reporting at this stage of education is to support learning. The SPHE course supports a wide variety of approaches to assessment. It is envisaged that most assessment in SPHE will be formative in nature and students will provide evidence of their learning through multiple means of expression, including oral, written, visual, digital and art-based pieces. In these contexts, students, with their teachers and peers, will reflect upon and make judgements about their own and others' learning by looking at the quality of particular pieces of work, and they will agree the next steps in their learning based on feedback they give and receive. In this way, ongoing formative assessment can support the student in their learning journey and in preparing for the Classroom-Based Assessment related to this course.

Student progress and achievement in short courses, both in ongoing assessments and in the specific Classroom-Based Assessment relating to this course, will be communicated to parents/guardians in interim reporting and in the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA).

To support this, teachers and schools will have access to online assessment support material in addition to the guide to the Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) process. The

contents of the online support material include a range of assessment supports, advice and guidelines to enable schools and teachers to engage with the assessment system and reporting arrangements in an informed way, with confidence and clarity.

In addition, specially developed materials to support SPHE teaching and learning are available in the 2023 SPHE Toolkit.

16. Special Needs

Children with special needs may need more help than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up.

17. Links to Other School Policies

School policies being examined or reviewed, should be considered with reference to the school's RSE policy; while the implications of other school policies for the RSE policy also need to be considered, such as:

- Child Safeguarding and Risk Assessment Policy
- School's Guidance Plan.
- Anti-bullying Policy.
- Substance Mis-use Policy.
- ICT Policy
- Wellbeing Policy

18. Provision of Training and Staff Development SPHE & RSE

SPHE

Bush Post Primary School has appointed an SPHE Co-ordinator. SPHE Support Service offers training and support to teachers in both Junior and Senior Cycle RSE/RE and the school will endeavour to up skill and train the SPHE/ RE teachers in this important area of the SPHE Curriculum on an ongoing basis.

RSE

The RSE programme will be delivered by the teachers timetabled for SPHE up to 6th year. SPHE/RSE will be taught in the context of a whole school climate that is inclusive and respectful. The teaching of RSE will reflect the mission statement core values of Bush Post Primary School, as outlined in the school's mission statement and Core Values.

Ratified by the BOM
January 31st 2024

The Department of Education requires schools to teach RSE in accordance with Circular 0037/2010. And the new 2023 RSE Specification. RSE in our school will be delivered in a manner that provides a general education on sexual and relationship matters and issues. The role of the teacher is to provide a professional delivery of the RSE Curriculum.

The SPHE co-ordinator will ensure staff teaching SPHE are made aware of all training and in-service available in relation to RSE and SPHE. Staff will be facilitated by management to attend. Resources are assembled in the Subject Department folder on the school's website, which can be easily accessed by all teachers.

19. Timetabling of RSE Lessons

Note: Students attending Learning Support classes must return to their timetabled class for the RSE programme in term 2 each year.

The Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle RSE Programme is delivered in term two of each school year consisting of 6, one-hour lessons.

20. Resource Materials

1st Year textbook 'You've Got This'

2nd Year textbook 'My Life 2'

3rd Year textbook 'My Life 3'

Senior Cycle: NCCA Resources

1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year
Gender Stereo types	Gender Identity & sexual orientation	Body image
Equality, Equity and Inclusivity	Forming relationships	Respect in Relationships

Changes in Adolescents	Managing Relationships	Setting Boundaries in Relationships
Female Reproduction	Healthy Relationships	Sexual Health
Male reproduction	From Conception to birth	Relationship problems
Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships	From conception to birth (Cont.)	Responsibilities of Pregnancy and Parenting

Transition Year	5th Year (LC1)	6th Year (LC2)
Healthy Relationships	Consent and Sexting	STI's-Sexually Transmitted Diseases
Building a relationship	Consent and Sexting (Cont.)	Contraception
Consent	Contraception and Fertility	Consent & Coco's Law
Consent and Coco's Law	STI's -Sexually Transmitted Diseases	Consent & Coco's Law
Resisting Relationship Pressures	Victim Blaming	Sexual Harassment

Teenage Pregnancy	Gender Bias	Homophobia
-------------------	-------------	------------

These modules will be reviewed and updated each year as per the new RSE Specification and posted in the RSE policy on the school website.

21. 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.

22. Inclusion of Parents and Guardians

The programme will be in line with the NCCA curriculum specifications and guidelines. The curriculum and guidelines will be available to parents on request. All parents and guardians will be able to view the RSE policy (available on school website). This policy has been devised in conjunction with the Department of Education's CL0036, the updated Child Protection Guidelines, 2023.

Links to Other Subjects RSE is linked to Science and Home Economics.

23. Implementation, Ratification and Communication

The previous RSE policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management in June 2023. Once ratified, this revised policy will be the agreed RSE policy of Bush Post Primary School. All teaching staff will need to be familiar with the policy and aware of any changes implied in curriculum delivery and will receive a copy of said document promptly after it has been ratified. The parent's council will also be made aware of this. The policy will be available on the school website.

24. Monitoring

The SPHE Co-ordinator will monitor policy implementation. Any teachers using this policy should discuss any reactions, concerns, suggestions that may arise during the course of implementation. The SPHE Coordinator will in turn discuss these with management.

26. Evaluating the Policy

Ratified by the BOM
January 31st 2024

Ongoing review and evaluation will take cognisance of changing information, guidelines, legislation and feedback from parents/guardians, students, teachers and others. The SPHE co-ordinator will have the role of monitoring aspects of the policy. The policy will be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation and within the framework of school planning.

25. Ratification and Review

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management on ____/____/____ 2024. It will be reviewed in 2026 or as necessary should any Department of Education updates occur that impact on this policy.



Board of Management Policy Consultation

Please present this form to your BOM when considering the policy at BOM level for ratification

Ratified by the BOM
January 31st 2024