



Coláiste Iognáid S.J.

Bóthar na Mara, Gaillimh

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Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

MISSION STATEMENT

Coláiste Iognáid is a Jesuit, Catholic school dedicated to accompanying young people as they strive for excellence in all things. We support the development of competent individuals of conscience and compassion who are committed to being people for others.

Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam

School Philosophy

As a Jesuit, Catholic school, Coláiste Iognáid aims to foster each pupil's unique talents and qualities, promoting excellence, confidence, compassion, and social responsibility. The holistic formation of every student is central to our ethos, with a focus on cura personalis (care for the individual). Our educational approach is committed to nurturing individuals who are competent and capable of critical thinking, grounded in strong moral values and a commitment to serve others.

Scope of the RSE Policy

This Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) policy applies to all students in both the Junior and Senior Cycles and is integrated within the Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum. It is in line with the most recent Department of Education guidelines and policies, ensuring that RSE is inclusive, age-appropriate, and respectful of the diverse needs and values of students.

Parents/guardians remain the primary educators in their children's lives, and the school acknowledges their role, working in partnership to support RSE education.

Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education

RSE is a developmental process where students engage in learning to foster a healthy attitude toward themselves and others, with a particular focus on personal relationships and sexuality. It is part of a holistic educational approach, integrating emotional, moral, spiritual, and social aspects.

Aims of the Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme

RSE at Coláiste Iognáid seeks to:

1. **Promote understanding of healthy relationships**, emphasising mutual respect, equality, and personal boundaries.
2. **Develop an understanding of consent**, helping students make informed, respectful decisions in relationships.
3. **Promote knowledge and respect for reproduction and sexual health**, including contraception and the prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
4. **Foster positive attitudes toward one's sexuality**, promoting self-respect, self-awareness, and personal responsibility.
5. **Develop critical thinking skills**, allowing students to evaluate issues around sexuality and relationships within a moral, ethical, and social framework.
6. **Support LGBTQ+ inclusivity**, ensuring students of all orientations and gender identities feel respected and represented.
7. **Address issues of digital safety**, including the influence of the online world including the possible influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations.
8. **Encourage emotional well-being**, emphasising the connection between mental health and relationships.

Programme Delivery and Structure

The RSE programme is delivered through the SPHE framework, which is spiral and developmental, progressing with the age and maturity of the students. RSE is supported across other subjects, including Science, Biology, Home Economics, and Religious Education. This cross-curricular aspect only occurs where there is cross-over with the subject curriculum e.g. Human reproduction in Biology.

1. Junior Cycle

Students explore the cognitive, physical, emotional and social aspects of relationships and sexuality through a positive, inclusive, rights and responsibilities-based approach. The focus is on family relationships, friendships, romantic and potential sexual relationships in the future.

2. Transition Year

In Transition Year, students explore personal development, emotional well-being, and more complex issues in relationships, with an emphasis on healthy decision-making and ethical reflection.

3. Senior Cycle

Students explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. Students are also supported to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Note: LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

Guidelines for Programme Management and Organisation

1. Parental Involvement

Parents/guardians are key partners in the education of their children in RSE. The curriculum is available online www.curriculumonline.ie and parents can access the RSE policy via the school website. Parents retain the right to withdraw their children from specific aspects of the programme due to perceived conflict with their own beliefs and values.

2. Withdrawal from the Programme

In accordance with The Education Act, 1998 (section 30, subsection (2)(e)), the school affirms that a student is not required to attend instruction which is contrary to the conscience of the parent. Parents thus have a right to opt their child out of the sensitive issues in RSE if they wish to do so. Parents or, in the case of a student who has reached 18 years, the student, who wish to withdraw their child from parts of the RSE programme must do so in writing. A meeting must be sought with the principal. The principal will engage in discussions to address any concerns parents may have, while respecting their decision. Alternative tuition will not be offered in lieu of RSE class time.

3. Visiting Speakers

Visiting speakers can complement the RSE programme but will not replace core RSE lessons. Speakers must adhere to the ethos of the school and the principles of RSE, and the school will ensure teacher presence during any presentations.

4. Additional Educational Needs

Students with additional educational needs may be provided with tailored support in RSE, ensuring content is accessible and delivered in a manner that addresses their unique needs.

5. Use of Resources

The school will utilise up-to-date resources in line with Department of Education recommendations. These include resources produced by the NCCA and the HSE (<https://www.curriculumonline.ie/junior-cycle/short-courses/sphe/sphe-2023/sphe-toolkit/resources-for-teaching-and-learning-in-sphe/>).

The Junior Cycle textbook is My Wellbeing Journey, 2nd Edition (Gill Education). Approved resources produced by the Manuela Riedo Foundation are used at Senior Cycle Level.

Staff are encouraged to continuously update their knowledge and resources.

Confidentiality

Students must be made aware that while confidentiality is respected, some disclosures may require reporting to the appropriate authorities, including the Principal (Designated Liaison

Person) or Deputy Principal (Deputy Designated Liaison Person) in line with child protection guidelines.

Consent and Healthy Relationships

Teaching about consent is a fundamental part of the RSE curriculum. Students will learn about the legal and ethical dimensions of consent, the importance of mutual respect, and how to recognise signs of unhealthy or abusive relationships.

Sexual orientation and gender identity

The RSE programme will include discussions around how sexual orientation and gender identity are experienced and expressed in diverse ways. Such discussions- will be respectful, age-appropriate, and aligned with the ethos of the school. This approach will aim to dispel myths, reduce stigma, and promote understanding and inclusivity.

Contraception and Sexual Health

These topics will be covered in a non-directive, informative way, presenting factual, age-appropriate content on all aspects of sexual health and reproduction. The school will emphasise the importance of personal responsibility and decision-making in these matters.

Digital Safety and Online Relationships

Recognising the growing role of technology in relationships, the RSE programme will address issues such as cyberbullying, sexting, online grooming, and the impact of pornography. Students will be educated on how to navigate online spaces safely and responsibly.


Professional Learning for Teachers

Teachers involved in delivering RSE will be supported through ongoing professional learning. The school will ensure that staff are trained in the latest approaches to teaching sensitive topics, including consent, digital safety, and LGBTQ+ inclusivity.

Ongoing Support, Review, and Evaluation

The RSE programme will be regularly reviewed to ensure it remains relevant, effective, and in line with the latest educational guidance. Feedback will be gathered from students, parents, and teachers to inform updates. The programme will undergo a regular review by the Principal, Deputy Principal, and RSE teachers, in consultation with parents and the wider school community.

Signed: 
Principal

Signed: 
Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 5/2/2025.