



Presentation Secondary School

Church Street, Castleisland, Co. Kerry



Relationships & Sexuality Education Policy

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 18th December 2023



*Our vision is to prepare accomplished, confident, independent and resilient young adults, who follow their passions,
develop a love of learning and become positive role models in society.*

Introduction

Presentation Secondary School, Castleisland (the 'School') is a Catholic all girls voluntary secondary school with a Catholic ethos under the trusteeship of CEIST (Catholic Education An Irish Schools' Trust). The School draws on the richness of the religious and cultural heritage of the past, interpreted and lived out for students living in today's world. The School ethos is based on Nano Nagle's vision of bringing God's love to all people and is dedicated to an all-round Christian education based on gospel values.

Presentation Castleisland provides a programme of RSE to all students. The RSE policy is developed within the context of our Vision Statement:

Our vision is to prepare accomplished, confident and independent young adults to pursue their aspirations and develop a passion for equality, justice and life-long learning so that they will make a positive contribution to the society in which they live.

RSE Definition & Aims

RSE is a life-long developmental process of acquiring knowledge and an understanding of human relationships and sexuality. It is primarily the responsibility of parents and family. The RSE class gives students formal opportunities, through experiential learning, to cultivate healthy attitudes and values towards themselves and others, promoting the overall development of the person and the integration of sexuality into personal life.

The aims of RSE include:

- To build on the primary school programme which strives to help young people learn at home and at school about their own development and about their friendships and relationships with others.
- To promote an understanding of sexuality.
- To promote a positive attitude towards one's own sexuality and one's relationships with others.
- To enable students to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- To promote knowledge of and respect for human reproduction.
- To provide young people with information and skills to evaluate critically the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values offered today, in order that they will make positive, responsible, moral and caring decisions about themselves and the way they live their lives, while also respecting the dignity of others.

The School recognises that parents are the primary educators and home is the natural and primary environment in which RSE should take place.

The following themes are discussed in a spiral manner in the provision of RSE, as outlined by the NCCA Guidelines:

- Human Growth and Development
- Human Sexuality
- Human Relationships

RSE Policy Context

Presentation Castleisland's programme of RSE is provided in the context of the guidelines set out in Circular M4/95 *Relationships and Sexuality Education*, M20/96 *Relationships and Sexuality Education*, C23/10 *Social and Personal Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education-Best Practice Guidelines for Post Primary Schools* and C37/2010 *Relationships and Sexuality Education*.

This policy applies to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality. It applies to all School staff, students, parents /guardians, visiting speakers, invited guests, volunteers and members of the Board of Management.

Some aspects of RSE are approached during subjects such as Biology, CSPE, Guidance and Counselling, Home Economics, Physical Education, Religious Education and Science. Where there are cross-curricular links with RSE, the School ethos is respected at all times and informs what is taught. The RSE programme is supported by the Pastoral Care system and by the Management and Staff of the School.

Relationship of RSE to SPHE

In Presentation Castleisland, the RSE programme is principally delivered within the context of the School's SPHE programme. It is designed to be spiral and developmental in nature, and age-appropriate in content and methodology. SPHE provides students with a unique opportunity to develop skills and competencies, to learn about themselves, to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, their personal lives and their social development. SPHE covers other areas which are pertinent to the development of a healthy attitude to sexuality in oneself and one's relationship with others, including self-esteem, assertiveness, communication and decision-making.

As a result, this RSE policy should be read in conjunction with the School's overall SPHE Policy. In particular, attention is drawn to the following paragraphs of the SPHE policy:

- Delivery and teaching
- Staff development and subject development
- Participation
- Sensitive issues
- Referral
- Confidentiality
- Guidelines for use of external agencies
- Assessment, record keeping and reporting
- Whole school support

School Ethos and RSE

In accordance with S.15 (2) (b) of the Education Act, 1998, the Board of Management of Presentation Secondary School, Castleisland, shall uphold, and be accountable to the patron for so upholding, the characteristic spirit of the school as determined by the cultural, educational, moral, religious, social, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions which inform and are characteristic of the objectives and conduct of the school. "Catholic Ethos" in the context of a Catholic voluntary secondary school means the ethos and characteristic spirit of the Roman Catholic Church which aims to promote: (a) the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person, including the intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual aspects; (b) a living relationship with God and with other people; (c) a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; and (d) the formation of the students in the Catholic faith in accordance with the doctrines, practices and traditions of the Roman Catholic Church, and/or such ethos and/or characteristic spirit as may be determined or interpreted from time to time by the Irish Episcopal Conference.

Schools are required to deliver all aspects of the RSE curriculum, including those in relation to sexual orientation, contraception, sexually transmitted infections etc. This can be done within a context in which teaching of the programme is informed by the school's ethos. A school can express its ethos while at the same time facilitating students in discussing a range of views in relation to topics within the RSE programme.

The School's RSE policy guides teachers in the treatment of issues in accordance with the ethos of the School. It is important that teachers of RSE understand that their role is to express the views of the whole school community on these sensitive issues, and not their own personal views.

Class Organisation and Timetabling

RSE is covered for all Junior Cycle students during SPHE classes. R.S.E is covered for all Senior Cycle students through Religious Education classes, and in Senior cycle SPHE classes where possible.

Some aspects of RSE are approached during subjects such as Biology, CSPE, Guidance and Counselling, Home Economics, Physical Education, Religious Education and Science. Some are taught informally using a cross curricular approach and support what is taught in Junior Cycle SPHE (see SPHE Policy) e.g. CSPE / RE - values, rights and responsibilities. Where there are cross-curricular links with SPHE / RSE, the School ethos is respected at all times and informs what is taught. The RSE programme is supported by the Pastoral Care system and by the Management and Staff of the School.

The boundaries of the RSE programme will be delivered with due deference to the age of the students, the School ethos, RSE curriculum guidelines, limits of confidentiality and discussion, ensuring the RSE classroom is a safe place for all.

Other issues

The School adopts and adheres to the DES Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary (Revised 20230, Children First Legislation (2017) and has a Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment in place, with the Principal as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and the Deputy Principal as the Deputy DLP. All staff personnel are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons under the child protection legislation. The School recognises that child protection and welfare considerations permeate all aspects of school life. This RSE Policy is cognisant of all aspects of our current Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment, including the reporting of child protection concerns to Tusla where necessary.

Ratification

This policy was ratified and adopted by the Board of Management on:

Signed: Mary O'Keefe Date: 18/12/23
Chairperson of the Board of Management

Signed: Patricia Dwyer Date: 18/12/23
Secretary to the Board of Management

Appendix A:
Sample wording for notification to parents on RSE

Dear parent/guardian,

As part of the Social, Personal & Health education (S.P.H.E.) syllabus, we are required to cover the area of Relationships and Sexuality (R.S.E.).

The teaching of this topic will commence shortly.

R.S.E. plays a critical role in supporting and preparing young people for the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Should you have any queries or concerns, we will be happy to address these.

Regards,

School Principal