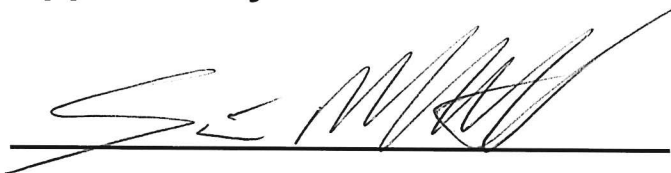


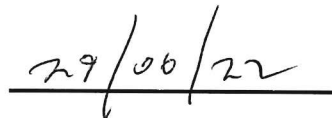
# Coláiste Feirste

○ Relationships & Sexuality Education Policy

**Policy Reviewed: 29 June 2022**

**Approved by the Board of Governors**

  
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## **Mission Statement**

Coláiste Feirste is an Irish-medium, post-primary school. Irish is the learning and working language of the school. Coláiste Feirste is a child centred, inclusive co-ed school where everyone is valued, respected and given every opportunity to realise their potential and to take their place as a positive contributor to society.

## **Rationale**

All young people have a right to an education which adequately prepares them for adult life and quality relationships. RSE provides them with opportunities for young people to critically evaluate the information they are bombarded with in today's society. Particularly the often distorted and inaccurate information about sex and relationships they are exposed to from their peers and social media.

In Coláiste Feirste we recognise that parents/guardians have the primary duty and right to educate their children in this sensitive area. We see our role as supporting and assisting parents to fulfil this responsibility. RSE is intended to supplement and complement what goes on at home.

The RSE programme at Coláiste Feirste seeks to provide young people with formal opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality and relationships within a moral, spiritual and social framework which reflects the inclusive ethos of the school. We believe our pupils will make informed choices and decisions by providing opportunities in RSE for them to examine their own attitudes and values in the light of those held by others. A deeper understanding of their own personal values and beliefs can help young people to clarify why they think and behave as they do, separate fact from fiction, recognise prejudice, and respect the views emotions and feelings of others.

(CCEA 2015)

The RSE programme in Coláiste Feirste seeks to provide young people with formal opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality and relationships within a moral and social framework which reflects the caring and inclusive ethos of our school. The programme aims to help pupils appreciate and make informed decisions about family life, marriage, partnerships and responsible parenting.

## **Context**

Relationships and Sexuality is a major issue for young people. The North of Ireland has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancies in Europe. The incidence of Sexually Transmitted Infections is rising and there is a continuing concern over the rise of HIV infection also. The media/social media culture that prevails in society is also an issue. Male and females can be promoted as sexual objects and the suggestion often made is that engaging in sexual activity carries no responsibility or consequences.

## **Policy Formation**

The RSE policy was written in accordance with the guidance provided in DE circulars 2001/15 2001/15b 2010/10 and 2013/16. It is also written in accordance with CCEA's guidance for post primary schools on relationship and sexuality (2001) and Personal Development (2007). Guidance from the Equality Commission on Eliminating Sexual Orientation in Northern Ireland was also used. This policy is a key safeguarding policy and is closely linked to our Child Protection Policy Health and Safety Policy Behaviour Policy and Mobile Phone Policy.

## **Morals and Values**

The Education Department recognises that RSE is an issue which places distinct demands on schools and teachers. It is an important part of pupil's preparation for adult life. RSE is not intended to be value free. It should be tailored to the age, maturity and understanding of the pupils. Our programme aims to provide information in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner set within a clear framework of moral values and an awareness of the law on sexual behaviour. We encourage our pupils to appreciate the value of family, marriage, permanent loving relationships and the responsibilities of parenthood. As they mature, pupils should come to understand the importance of self-restraint, dignity, respect for themselves and others, including those of a different sexual orientation and the acceptance of responsibility.

They are enabled to recognise the physical, emotional and moral implications and risks of certain types of behaviour and to accept that both sexes must behave responsibly in sexual matters. Staff recognise that many pupils come from backgrounds that don't reflect such values and experiences. Therefore, we recognise that sensitivity is of the utmost importance to avoid causing hurt and offence to these children and their families, and to encourage the development of their sense of worth.

(DFEE Circular No 5/1994 Education Act 1993: Sex Education in schools - Adaptation)

Coláiste Feirste wishes to promote the following key messages throughout the school:

- An appreciation of the value and significance of life from the moment of conception.
- An appreciation of making informed decisions about family life, marriage and permanent relationships based on trust and commitment.
- A recognition that sexual abstinence before marriage is a positive and desirable option which is an achievable reality to which young people can aspire.
- An appreciation that friendships and relationships should be based on self and mutual respect, honesty, trust and commitment.
- An understanding that exploitation in any friendship or relationship is wrong.
- An appreciation that self-discipline, self-restraint and non-exploitation are important values in developing responsible behaviours in sexual matters.

- A recognition of the positive benefits of a permanent committed sexual relationship with one person.
- An appreciation of the responsibilities of parenthood.
- An acknowledgement of singleness and celibacy as a valuable and fulfilling option.
- Compassion, forgiveness, mercy, tolerance and care are essential dispositions to develop in relationships.
- Within relationships there should be recognition that rights, duties and responsibilities are involved.
- The promotion of respect for all individuals regardless of sexual orientation and an appreciation of the need to treat all with dignity and respect.
- The need to respect the right of others to hold different views from oneself without aggression or antagonism.

## **Aims of RSE**

- In line with our school ethos and CCEA guidelines the RSE programme aims to:
- Help our pupils to appreciate their uniqueness and dignity.
- Help our pupils to appreciate their full potential human beings.
- Enable our pupils to appreciate their sexuality.
- Promote an comprehensive vision of sexuality that reflects selfless love respect and commitment.
- Develop a respect for diversity and inclusion.
- Enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of our pupils.
- Help our pupils to develop positive and respectful friendships and relationships.
- Promote responsible behaviour and the ability to make informed decisions.
- Foster an understanding of, and a positive attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral and social framework.
- Help our pupils to value family life marriage and partnerships.
- Appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood.

## **Objectives of RSE**

In Line with CCEA guidelines and our school ethos the RSE curriculum attempts to enable pupils to:

- Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self.
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth.
- Develop within pupils a respect for their own and other people's bodies.
- Develop an awareness of differing family structures.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to explore the moral and ethical issues surrounding sexuality.
- Develop personal skills which help to establish and sustain relationships.
- Become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change and understand that their sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity.
- Develop coping strategies to protect themselves and others from various forms of exploitation and abuse.
- Develop skills to deal with peer pressure and influence others positively.
- Understand human physiology with particular reference to the reproductive cycle, human fertility and sexually transmitted infections and diseases.
- Understand sexual development and identify and explore aspects of sexuality including stereotyping, gender issues and cultural influences on sexuality.
- Enable pupils to understand the influence that messages from their peers and media can have on their own values.
- Prepare pupils to cope with the social, physical and emotional challenges of growing up as a means to prepare them for adult life.
- Acquire and use an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality and development.

## **Terminology / Definitions Related to RSE**

The nature of RSE necessitates a defining of its unique terminology and an understanding of the terms used within the context of RSE teaching:

- Ethics: Are moral principles that a person uses to guide and judge their actions.
- Personal: Morality is about each of us taking responsibility for the choices we make. We endeavour to prepare our pupils to make moral decisions with an 'informed conscience'.
- Sexuality: People are sexual beings. Sexuality is about much more than its biological aspects; it concerns the innermost being of the human person. It is the drive within every person to give and receive love and affection. Our sexuality shapes and permeates all our relationships.
- Values: The attitudes, beliefs, virtues and principles which inform his / her behaviour e.g. respect for self, honesty with self and others.
- Morality: Is essentially linked with behaviour and what we do. It is also connected with experience, personal beliefs, values and decision making.

## **RSE Curriculum**

- The Education Order 2006 requires that all schools offer a curriculum which:
- Promotes the spiritual, moral, emotional, intellectual, physical and cultural development of pupils.
- Prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life by equipping them with appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills.

RSE is a statutory element of the NI curriculum. At All Saints College, RSE is delivered through Religion, LLW, Law, Health, Science and Home Economics.

## **Teaching RSE**

Teachers delivering lessons will deliver them with sensitivity and care. They are empathetic to the personal and emotional circumstances of individual pupils. They take into account pupils knowledge, attitudes and beliefs and their capacity to understand issues. Lessons and resources are used at the appropriate level of maturity of the pupils. Particular attention is paid to pupils with SEN where physical maturity may outstrip emotional maturity to ensure lessons are delivered effectively.

## **The Family**

The school supports and promotes the institutions of marriage, partnerships, parental relationships and family in keeping with our inclusive ethos and value system.

## **Sexual Orientation**

In Coláiste Feirste we believe that all pupils have a right to learn and develop in a safe environment. No-one will be treated unfairly, or isolated in any way on the grounds of their sexual orientation. All members of the school community will be valued and treated with respect and dignity. Coláiste Feirste has a zero tolerance policy towards bullying. Homophobic bullying in any form, including any demonstration of negative attitudes towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender pupils or those who are perceived to be such, will not be tolerated by the school and will be dealt with in line with our Anti Bullying Policy.

### **Answering Pupils' Questions**

If pupils raise or ask questions that are offensive to some or are above the maturity level of the class, the teacher will not answer the question in class. If the teacher feels that the question was a genuine one, they may suggest that the pupil ask their parents. If the question raises child protection issues, this will be referred to the designated teacher for child protection.

Due to the sensitive nature of some of the issues in RSE teachers have the right to state that for personal reasons they do not wish to give a personal opinion on the issue raised.

### **Terminology**

All staff delivering RSE will use the proper biological names for body parts and sexual acts, where appropriate and relevant to the RSE programme. The use of common slang will be avoided. Parents will have an opportunity to view the programmes of study and become familiar with the terminology and language used within it if they wish.

### **Confidentiality and Child Protection**

The pupil's right to privacy will be respected at all times by the pupils and staff. Staff However, can't guarantee confidentiality to pupils around issues relating to child protection. If details are revealed that would lead the teacher to suspect physical or sexual abuse that teacher must follow Child Protection procedures and immediately inform the Designated Teacher for Child Protection. The designated teacher will then consult with Social services or PSNI if necessary. Staff should never take on the role of investigator.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Pastoral Vice Principal is the RSE Co-ordinator in Coláiste Feirste. She is supported by the safeguarding team.

|   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| Principal                                       | Micheal Mac Giolla Ghunna |
| Pastoral Vice Principal                         | Emer Mhic an Fháilí       |
| Designated Teacher for Child Protection:        | Emer Mhic an Fháilí       |
| Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection; | Siobhán Nic Giolla Eáin,  |

- This team are responsible for co-ordinating all issues relating to RSE policy and RSE programme development.
- Ensure the RSE programme is taught effectively and is appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils.
- Liaise with the Principal, Board of Governors, staff, parents, health and educational visitors on RSE matters.
- Attend in-service training and disseminate appropriate information to other staff members.
- Liaise with outside agencies for curriculum purposes.

- Staff training.

In Coláiste Feirste we believe that the responsibility for RSE is shared between teachers and parents and that its effectiveness depends on a collaborative process involving teachers, parents and other educational and health professionals. We recognise that each of the partners have a distinctive contribution to make. The role of the teacher will ideally be additional and complementary to the parents.

#### **Withdrawal from class**

There is no statutory parental right to withdraw a child from classes in RSE. However, the school will try to take account of any parental concerns raised and where as far as possible, make alternative arrangements for those pupils whose parents wish them withdrawn. The pupils' withdrawal will always be at the discretion of the school.

#### ***Resources and Outside Agencies***

All resources must be vetted before use by the Safeguarding Team to ensure they are consistent with the school's policy and ethos.

#### **The Use of Outside Agencies**

We recognise the importance of ensuring that any outside agencies used to support the delivery of RSE in Coláiste Feirste must adhere to the ethos and values of our school. The activities of any agency or individual used must complement the ongoing RSE curriculum. Care is taken to ensure that any visitor has read our RSE policy and is willing to comply with it. A teacher will always be present when any individual from an external agency is presenting to or taking a class.

#### ***Monitoring and Evaluation***

The RSE policy will be reviewed and updated annually by the Safeguarding team. Teachers will evaluate the effectiveness and relevance of the programme on an ongoing basis. Any relevant information gathered from staff pupils and parents will be used to adapt the programme for the future.