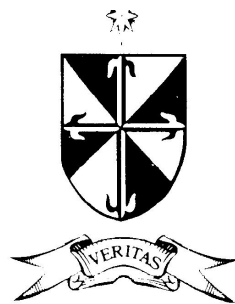


Dominican College
Sion Hill



Relationships and Sexuality
Education Policy
2005

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Section 1 – Our School

Sion Hill is a voluntary Catholic Secondary School under the trusteeship of the Dominican sisters. The Board of Management, which is responsible for managing the school, is composed of two members of the teaching staff, two parents and four representatives of the trustees.

Section 2 - School Philosophy and Mission Statement

Every member of this community - teachers, students, staff, and parents - feels a sense of commitment and belonging.

Our principal objective is to provide for our students a broad and balanced education in all its aspects - intellectual, emotional, physical, spiritual and cultural. This objective is achieved within a controlled but relaxed and happy environment.

Within this broad objective we aim to:

Create an atmosphere of Christian care and concern

Provide an environment, which enables students to grow to maturity

Give due priority to religious education

To enable students to develop a healthy self-esteem

Provide the educational environment and facilities to enable students to reach their full potential

Provide a disciplined atmosphere, which encourages respect for self and others and enables the student to grow in freedom.

The teaching of RSE in Sion Hill will be determined and influenced by its mission statement and characteristic spirit.

Section 3- Scope of Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

The Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy currently applies to students taking Social, Personal and Health Education to Junior Certificate level.

Section 4 - Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy

A. **Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education**

Relationships and Sexuality Education is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. Relationships and sexuality education seeks to provide young people with formal opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality, through processes, which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours, within a moral, spiritual and social framework. Parents, teachers, peers, adults and the media deliver this education consciously, and unconsciously. The school recognizes that parents/guardians are the primary educators and home is the natural environment in which Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) should take place.

B. **Relationship of RSE to Social Personal and Health Education**

The aims of an RSE programme i.e. the provision of opportunities for young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way, can only be done through a full Social, Personal and Health Education programme.

SPHE operates on the basis of primary prevention i.e. prevention of social ills rather than treatment of them. It adds the dimension to education of empowering people to manage their own lives. Principally therefore by providing RSE through an SPHE programme we teach young people personal skills to increase their personal effectiveness, so that, in the context of their own lives they are able to implement informed decisions, in relation to their own sexuality and relationship to others.

C. **Aims of the Sion Hill RSE programme:**

In this school, RSE will be located within the overall framework of Religious Education and SPHE. The specific aims of the RSE programme are:

To help young people understand and develop friendships and relationships

To promote an understanding of sexuality

To promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's relationship with others

To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction

To enable young people to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework.

D. **What the school currently provides:**

Various aspects of SPHE and/or RSE are being addressed cross curricularly and support what is taught in Junior Cycle SPHE. Details of the SPHE programme are included in Appendix 1. Where there are cross-curricular links with SPHE/RSE the school ethos will be respected at all times and inform what is taught.

E. **Guidelines for the management and organisation of RSE in Sion Hill**

The Principal will make arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff.

1. Informing and Involving Parents:

Parents are the primary educators of their children and the school sees their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality as very important. This policy has been designed in consultation with Parents' Association representative and the views expressed by parents will be taken into account when reviewing the policy. A copy of this policy will be made available to any parents on request to the school office. Parents will be kept fully informed through periodic information sessions, circulars, through the Parents' Council and Board of Management of the development and presentation of the RSE programme. While all partners in the school community - teaching staff, parents and management - are agreed on the programme, we recognise, nevertheless, the right of any parent who so wishes to request that his/her daughter should not participate in the programme.

What we do if a parent makes a request for withdrawal from the RSE programme:

It is the right of parents to withdraw their child from the RSE module of the SPHE programme. In September, parents will be made aware of the deadline by which they can exercise their right to withdraw their child. Parents must notify the Principal in advance of their wish to have their child withdrawn from the programme.

We discuss the nature of the concerns with the child's parent and if appropriate attempts to reassure them (initially such discussion takes place at a meeting with the Year Head and RSE teacher, the Principal may become involved if necessary).

2. Timetabling

The RSE programme will follow the general outlines for each year group drawn up by the NCCA. The content will be delivered in six class periods per year as follows:

First, Second and Third Year: RSE will be an integral part of the SPHE programme, which is timetabled for one period per week.

Aspects of RSE may be included in Transition Year.

Fifth and Sixth Year: RSE will be an integral part of the Religious Education Programme.

The Draft Guidelines for RSE (NCCA, June 1995, 1.2) state that Social Personal and Health Education is "spiral, developmental in nature and age appropriate in content and methodology". The RSE programme is designed to follow this principle and pattern.

It is the right of parents to withdraw their child from any part of the programme being taught. In September, parents will be made aware of the deadline by which they can exercise their right to withdraw their child.

The school also recognises the many out of school factors which affect the development of a positive attitude to sexuality during adolescence - the social lives of students, the kinds of relationships they form, their behaviour within these relationships, the peer expectations of relationships, the reading material of students,

their exposure to sexually explicit material on video, television and through music. The RSE programme will attempt to heighten the student's awareness of the influences of these forces on the development of their values and attitudes and empower them to make informed decisions and choices.

3. Offering Advice and Classroom strategy regarding questions, which may arise in class

Issues that may arise in the RSE class will be addressed in a manner that reflects the
Ethos of the school
Department of Education & Science RSE guidelines
Child Protection Guidelines (DES)

5. Confidentiality

At all stages where child protection concerns arise the (DES) schools Child Protection Guidelines will be followed. We cannot guarantee confidentiality but teachers will strive to create a safe learning environment for all students.

The pamphlet "Procedures for Dealing with Allegations or Suspicions of Child Abuse" issued by the Department of Education contains the following in paragraph 4.1:

If a teacher receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a pupil is being abused, the teacher should, in the first instance, report the matter to the principal or in exceptional circumstances directly to the Chairperson of the Board.

Where the matter is reported to the principal and he or she is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation the Chairperson or Manager should be advised.

The Principal Liaison Officer, together with the teacher, should report the matter to the local Director of Community Care/Medical Officer of Health. It is essential that at all times the matter be treated in the strictest confidence and not discussed except among the parties mentioned above."

(Note: In the case of this school, the Principal acts also as Manager in this respect.)

6. Withdrawing pupils from the RSE programme

Relevant sections of this policy are made available to parents in the school publication entitled *Information for Parents* together with details about the parent's right to withdraw their child from RSE – parents will always be provided with a full copy of this policy following a request to do so.

7. Using visiting speakers and others

(a) It is school policy that most of the RSE programme is best discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by the pupils, however, guest speakers can enhance the quality of the provision as long as they are used in addition to, not instead of a planned programme of RSE.

Section 5 - On-going Support, Development

All teachers delivering the RSE take part in the SPHE training programme offered in the East Coast area. They commit themselves to do so in the context of the Catholic ethos of Dominican College and its characteristic spirit and mission.

Teachers involved in delivering the programme will do so in the context of these guidelines. They will be encouraged to avail of suitable in-career development opportunities, which may arise.

Section 6- Review Personnel and Timeframe

Participating teachers will meet at least twice a year to evaluate and review the programme.

There will also be an annual review. The annual review team will comprise the Principal, Deputy Principal and RSE teachers. Parents comments will be considered.

Our Relationships and Sexuality Policy has been written by the school and agreed by staff, PTA and the Board of Management. It will be reviewed annually.

Created by: _____
Date: _____
To be revised: _____
Approved: _____

Appendix 1

Relationship and Sex Education Programme Junior Cycle

First Year

Topics:

1. Me as a unique and different person
2. Friendship
3. Changes at Adolescence
4. The reproductive system
5. Images of male and female
6. Respecting myself and others

Resource Texts:

Resource Book for Relationships and Sexuality Programme: Department of Education & Science
North West Health Board resource books.

On my own two feet.

Time allotted:

Six class periods per year

Second Year

Topics:

1. From conception to birth
2. Recognising and expressing feelings and emotions
3. Peer pressure and other influences
4. Managing relationships
5. Making responsible decisions
6. Health and personal safety

Resource material:

Resource Book for Relationships and Sexuality Programme: Department of Education & Science
North West Health Board resource books.

On my own two feet.

Questionnaire & Evaluation sheets.

Time allotted:

Six class periods per year

Third Year:

Topics:

1. Body image
2. Where am I now
3. Relationships – what’s important
4. The three R’s: respect, rights and responsibilities
5. Conflict

Resource Texts:

Resource Book for Relationships and Sexuality Programme: Department of Education & Science
North West Health Board resource books.

On my own two feet.

Time allotted: Six class periods per year