



St. Mac Dara's Community College

RSE Policy

St. Mac Dara's Community College, through a comprehensive education programme, provides as far as possible, educational opportunities to meet the needs of each individual student. It is a multi-denominational, co-educational college. The following is the Mission Statement of St. Mac Dara's CC.

Mission Statement

"We, the community of this College, through a caring and collective approach, aspire to provide a broad-based education for all, to foster respect and dignity and to promote a safe and just environment by positively encouraging all to realise their potential."

School Ethos

As part of the DDLETB schools we also proudly endorse our school ethos which is underpinned by the core values of Excellence in Education, Care, Respect, Equality and Community. St Mac Dara's is a multi-denominational, co-educational school under the aegis of the Dublin Dun Laoghaire Education Training Board. The college recognises its obligation to all its students and its positive ethos is based on the quality of its relationships, both the professional relationships between teachers, the relationships between teachers and students and the relationships between teachers and parents/ guardian(s). This collaborative approach is reflected in the college's mission statement.

Introduction and Legislative Framework

Through cooperation and mutual respect between the partners in education, the students, teaching staff, parents/guardians and the Board of Management, we strive to ensure that each student achieves his/her full potential. The school reserves the right to adapt or modify this policy in response to emerging patterns of behaviour among students reflective of society.

It is informed by the guidelines and framework provided by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) for post-primary schools. This document underpins the school's approach to RSE in line with our ethos, mission, and commitment to student wellbeing.

This policy was written in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, students, the SPHE team, members from the Parent's Association, and the Board of Management.

This policy relates to the following legislation:

- The Children First Act 2015
- The Children's First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017
- Child Protection Act 2021.

This policy relates to, and should be read in conjunction with, other school policies including:

- Child Protection Policy
- Wellbeing and SPHE policy
- BÍ Cineálta Policy
- Code of Positive Behaviour Policy
- LGBTQIA+ Policy
- Inclusion Policy

This is not an exhaustive list of related policies.

Restorative Practice

Restorative Practice (RP) is about building positive relationships and taking a positive and solution-focused approach. St. Mac Dara's CC have engaged at whole-staff level in an RP professional learning programme, in association with NUIM 2021 – 2024 and new members to the team are supported to develop the skills of RP. At all times the school, as a community endeavours to employ a restorative approach to promote positive behaviour and restore relationships when the need arises. RP is at the core of our school's Code of Positive Behaviour. It creates an ethos of respect and inclusion in line with our core values and presents an opportunity for all involved to be accountable and responsible for their behaviour.

Inclusion of all students

St. Mac Dara's Community College places a high value on respect and on embracing diversity which is central to the practices in the school. Our activities endeavour to meet the diverse needs of all our students.

RSE and SPHE recognise that students may come from diverse family backgrounds and may identify in different ways in relation to gender identity or sexual orientation. The programme promotes respect, equality and dignity for all individuals and challenges bullying, discrimination and stereotypes. Teaching about LGBTQIA+ identities occurs in an age-appropriate manner within SPHE and aligns with equality legislation and the school's LGBTQIA+ and Anti-Bullying Policy.

Aims of RSE

- To promote the personal development, wellbeing, and self-esteem of each student.
- To foster understanding of relationships, respect, consent, and dignity.
- To provide students with age-appropriate, accurate information to support informed decision-making.
- To reflect and promote the school's ethos of respect, equality, and care.

Delivery

RSE at Junior Cycle takes place in one SPHE class 1st Year and two in both 2nd and 3rd Year. (There is an additional IT class in 1st Year that works in conjunction with SPHE). St Mac Dara's complies with the legal requirements as set out under the 2023 specification. The CBA for third year will be in February. Students use a textbook, 'Health and Wellbeing, 2nd Edition', (Edco), supplemented by resources such as Restorative Practice, Fuse (Antibullying DCU), Webwise, including materials available on the NCCA website.

4th Year students are completing modules as outlined by the guidelines on the NCCA website. This year we are piloting the new HSE 'Relationship and Sexuality Education Year 3' textbook. This will be supplemented with previous HSE resources as required.

At Senior Level, 5th Year students are following the 2024 Specification and allow a term for RSE (one 40-minute class). We are currently piloting two resources 'It's Your Wellbeing- 2nd Edition' textbook and student portfolio. We are further using resources from the NCCA toolkit and supplementing from the HSE 'Relationships and Sexuality Education Year 3 Resource'.

Some students have a second SPHE Class and are following the Mindout Programme and will pilot the HSE RSE senior programme (when it becomes available). External agencies, such as Oddballs (testicular cancer) usually provide important information to our students.

Key assignments

Adequate assessment will be provided at the end of the RSE term.

Sixth Year students will receive two 40-minute classes for 6 weeks. Using the above-mentioned resources. They too will complete Key Assignments at the end of their RSE Module. Both years are encouraged to participate in mentoring roles for Awareness Weeks.

St. Mac Dara's addresses these issues by establishing a Class Contract. Students are reminded not to overshare, to pass (if they feel uncomfortable answering or reading etc) and are informed about the DLP and the law (both nationally and internationally). Class usually begins with a reminder of the contract, a reflection of the class before, and an awareness of the Learning Outcome.

Teachers may ask students to write down the Learning Intention and encourage students to acquire help seeking behaviour, by getting them to write down the names of agencies/websites that provide support.

www.sexualwellbeing.ie

www.spunout.ie

www.jigsaw.ie

www.drcc.ie

www.womensaid.ie

Coordination and Implementation

The implementation of RSE at St. Mac Dara's Community College is overseen by the appointed SPHE Coordinator. The coordinator ensures effective planning, delivery, and review of the RSE programme, working in collaboration with staff and the school leadership team. The school recognises and supports ongoing TPL to facilitate highly effective practice and to meet any legal requirement associated with teaching and learning within RSE. Whole school PLD takes place on an ongoing basis, such as the one delivered by Oide 'Child Safeguarding Procedures 2025'. Evidence of CPD is recorded in the SPHE Folder in SharePoint.

SPHE Team

Teacher representatives from each year group (and other interested persons) meet each term (and when needed) to discuss various aspects of the programme.

Planning, policy, pedagogy, and review are some of the topics discussed.

Information gathered is relayed via email/subject meetings, and teachers are free to meet with the coordinator as needed. Records of meetings are recorded and filed in SharePoint.

Curriculum Overview

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

At Junior Cycle, the RSE programme is part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). Circulars M4/95 development (1995) and M20/96 (1996) request schools to commence a process of RSE policy. Arising from the 2018-2019 Review of RSE in Primary and Post Primary schools, changes were made to the curriculum and information about these changes can be found on the NCCA Website, including relevant samples of materials to be used in the age-appropriate Toolkit.

RSE is delivered as an integral part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) across the Junior and Senior Cycles.

Curriculum Content

Junior Cycle

RSE is taught primarily through SPHE within the Junior Cycle Wellbeing Programme. The 2023 Junior Cycle SPHE specification includes four strands:

1. Understanding Myself and Others
2. Making Healthy Choices
3. Relationships and Sexuality
4. Emotional Wellbeing

Topics addressed include:

- friendships and relationships
- communication and respect
- puberty and physical development
- consent and boundaries

- online safety and digital relationships
- gender equality and respect

Teaching approaches are age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate.

Senior Cycle

RSE is delivered through SPHE modules, Guidance classes, and wellbeing initiatives.

The Senior Cycle SPHE specification (2024) emphasises preparation for adult life, supporting students to develop agency and responsibility in areas including relationships, wellbeing and health.

Senior cycle topics may include:

- healthy relationships and consent
- sexual health and wellbeing
- media literacy and body image
- decision making and personal responsibility
- gender and equality
- preparing for adulthood

Cross-Curricular Links

RSE is supported across several subject areas. These include but are not limited to:

Science / Biology

- Human reproduction
- Genetics and human development
- Sexual health

Physical Education

- Body awareness
- Physical health and wellbeing

Religious Education

- Values and ethics
- Respect and relationships
- Moral decision making

CSPE

- Human rights
- Equality and diversity

Guidance

- Personal development
- Identity and life choices

Teaching and Learning Approaches

Teaching is student-centred, participative, and inclusive. Active learning methods may include class discussions, think, pair and share, group work, ice breakers, circle time, post its artwork, role-play, case studies, visitors, exiting and carpark questions, reflection exercises and key assignments. Staff will ensure a safe learning environment that fosters open communication and respects the values and experiences of all students.

Parental Involvement

Parents/guardians are the primary educators of their children. The school will communicate openly with parents about the RSE programme and provide opportunities for input and feedback. Parents retain the right to withdraw their child from specific elements of the RSE programme in line with Department of Education guidelines. It is hoped that a meeting will be taken prior to this, to address concerns.

Monitoring, Review, and Evaluation

The RSE policy will be subject to ongoing review to ensure relevance and effectiveness. The appointed SPHE Coordinator will lead the review process in consultation with the SPHE Team, management, staff, students, and parents. Formal review will take place every two years or as required by changes in national policy or curriculum.

Additional Educational Needs

Students with Additional Educational Needs will receive RSE. The AEN team, parents, the tutor, teachers (biology) will meet with the SPHE teacher/coordinator, and a programme will be developed in line with the ability of each student. Busy Bodies, HSE has been a useful resource for students. Parents are informed and may also avail themselves of resources.

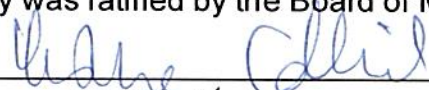
Awareness Days

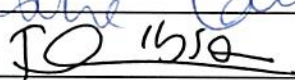
- Bí Cineálta Week
- Internet Safety Week
- Social Inclusion Week
- Wellbeing Week

These days allow a more cross-curricular approach to RSE/SPHE encouraging staff collaboration.

Ratification of the RSE Policy

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on: 10, 09, '26

Signed:  (Chair)

Signed:  (Principal)

Date of Review _____