



Blackwater Community School Policy on Relationships and Sexuality Education (R.S.E.)

Please note: RSE will be part of SPHE policy from September 2026

Introduction

This policy outlines the aims of the RSE programme, the relationship of RSE to SPHE and the management and organisation of RSE within BCS. This policy will apply to all areas of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality in SPHE/RSE classes and any other classes where discussions will take place and is therefore a whole school document.

Background Information on School

Blackwater Community School is a co-educational school, under the joint patronage of Mercy, Presentation (CEIST), CBS and ETB. In the school year 2025-2026, the number of students attending the school is nearing one thousand. Blackwater Community School supports the principles of inclusiveness, equality of access and participation in the school, parental choice in relation to enrolments and respects the diversity of traditions, beliefs, languages and ways of life in society.

Rationale of S.P.H.E.:

Relationships and Sexuality education (RSE) is important for young people at this stage of their lives. They are exposed to a lot of information about relationships and sex from informal sources, the media and online. SPHE provides the context within which young people can learn about important physical, social, emotional and moral issues around relationships, sexual health, sexuality and gender identity, including where to get reliable information from trusted sources.

Relationship to Mission Statement:

Blackwater Community School's Mission Statement is as follows:

“Blackwater Community School is committed to Quality Education”

At present, virtually 100% of parents / guardians from all sectors of the community send their children to the school. This is due to the fact that Blackwater Community School is recognised as a school which contributes considerably to the development of all aspects of its individual students, including the aesthetic, creative, cultural, emotional, intellectual, moral, physical, religious, social and spiritual development.

An important element of our work in the school is the area of personal and social development. Sexuality and relationships are key elements of healthy, social, personal and moral development.

Policy Development Process

A committee representing teachers and school management has been established to monitor the implementation of this policy document. The members of the Committee are:

Mr. Denis Ring, Secretary, Board of Management

Ms. Becky Fennessy, Coordinator, S.P.H.E. Department

Ms. Maria O'Brien, Deputy Principal

Member of the Parents Association

2 5th year students (1 Male/1Female)

It is intended that the finalised document / policy on R.S.E., reflecting the different but complimentary perspectives of the aforementioned partners, will respond to the growing needs of our students in the changing world they find themselves in.

The policy document must be submitted to the school's Board of Management and must be sanctioned before the course is adopted for use in the school. The Board represents the main partners in the school.

Aims and Objectives of School R.S.E. Programme

The Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme of this school is intended to:

- Provide students with education on relationships and sexuality which encourages self-respect and respect for others;
- Provide students with the information required to make informed decisions regarding their own behaviour as adolescents and, later, as adults. During the R.S.E. programme, our students will be given the opportunity to:
- Gather information on all kinds of relationships, child to parent, parent to parent, teacher to student, adult to child, friend to friend, boyfriend to girlfriend, husband to wife, etc.
- Learn the skills that will enable them to critically reflect on and evaluate the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values they may encounter in today's world.
- Develop their self-esteem and social confidence so that they can deal maturely with the questions, pressures, opportunities and responsibilities presented by life itself.
- Develop both morally and spiritually and to cultivate a respect and tolerance for the beliefs and values of others.

The overall aim of R.S.E. is to contribute to the full development of the human person, a life-long process in itself. We hope through this programme to enrich all students' lives by helping

them to put a meaningful balance on all aspects of the human person, the biological, psychological, social, cultural, spiritual and moral dimensions

The formal Relationships and Sexuality Programme, therefore, will build on the education given to students in the home by their parents / guardians, the “Primary Educators”.

Organisation / Implementing the R.S.E. Programme

Who will be taught R.S.E.?

All classes in the school will be taught Relationships and Sexuality Education. A parent / guardian who has concerns about any aspect of R.S.E. should discuss the matter with the relevant teacher, year head, Deputy-principal or Principal. If the parent / guardian wishes to withdraw his / her son / daughter from the programme, those wishes will be respected and accommodated.

Will the classes be separated on gender lines or mixed?

As Blackwater Community School is a co-educational school, the R.S.E. programme will be taught to mixed classes.

What will be taught in R.S.E.?

The R.S.E. programme will, in general, be drawn up by the teachers of R.S.E. and will be in line with the NCCA curriculum and guidelines and our school’s R.S.E. policy. The general topics covered in this programme can be seen in Appendix 1(working document) of this document. The specific topics taught to each class will depend on the age and maturity of the students involved and will be carefully decided upon by the subject teacher. Once drawn up, a copy of these programmes will be available in the school for parents / guardians who wish to see them.

Who will teach R.S.E. to the class? When?

As R.S.E. is a specialised subject, a small group of specially trained teachers, who are both competent and willing to teach it, will take responsibility for the programme.

Formal Relationships and Sexuality Education classes will normally take place in the November – December period, but the values underlying this programme, such as openness, honesty, respect, concern, love, etc. will be developed throughout the school’s Pastoral Care system.

How will R.S.E. be taught?

The R.S.E. programme will be taught using a wide variety of methods such as brainstorming, case studies, experiential learning, group work, role play, group / class discussion, debates, project work, video and occasionally, visiting speakers.

Monitoring / Evaluating the Programme

Teachers

As with all teachers in this school, those teaching R.S.E. will continuously evaluate their methods and performance individually, departmentally and with the school management.

Parents / Guardians:

Parents / Guardians should feel free to individually approach the subject teacher, year head, deputy principal or principal, by appointment at a mutually agreed time, to raise any aspect of R.S.E. they wish to discuss. The Parents' Council will be invited to, on an ongoing basis, discuss the provision of Relationships and Sexuality Education and bring its reflections to the attention of the school management.

R.S.E. Policy Committee:

An R.S.E. Policy Committee, representing parents, teachers and the Board of Management will meet once a year. The meeting will deal with the topics to be covered and methods used in the formal R.S.E. classes and it will reflect on and critically evaluate the taught programme and, if necessary, suggest amendments.

Board of Management:

The Board of Management will first decide the school's R.S.E. policy. The Board will review the school's Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy and Programme at least once every four years.

It may also review the policy at the request of the teaching staff and / or the Parents' Council and / or the Students' Council at any time.

Related Policy Documents: Guidance, SPHE, RE & Wellbeing

Adopted by Board of Management:

Policy Review Date: