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

Introduction

This policy outlines the aims of the Relationships and Sexuality Education (R.S.E.) programme, its relationship to Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), and the organisation and delivery of R.S.E. within Blackwater Community School (BCS).

This policy applies to all teaching and learning relating to relationships and sexuality, whether in SPHE/R.S.E. classes or any other context where such issues may arise. It is therefore a whole-school policy.

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, enrolment is approaching one thousand students.

The school supports:

- Inclusiveness and equality of access and participation
- Parental choice in enrolment
- Respect for diversity, including beliefs, cultures, languages, gender identities, sexual orientations and ways of life

Rationale for SPHE and R.S.E.

Relationships and Sexuality Education is a key component of SPHE and is essential for young people at this stage of their development.

Students are exposed to a wide range of information about relationships and sexuality through media, online platforms, and peer interaction. R.S.E. provides a structured, safe and supportive environment where students can:

- Develop knowledge and understanding of relationships, sexuality, and sexual health
- Explore values, attitudes, and beliefs in a respectful manner
- Learn skills for making informed, responsible decisions
- Identify and access reliable sources of information

The programme reflects the principles and guidelines of the **National Council for Curriculum and Assessment**, including a spiral curriculum, age-appropriate content, and student-centred learning.

Relationship to Mission Statement

Blackwater Community School's mission:

"Blackwater Community School is committed to Quality Education"

The school is committed to the holistic development of each student, including:

- Aesthetic and creative
- Cultural and intellectual
- Emotional and social
- Moral, spiritual and physical development

R.S.E. contributes significantly to students' personal and social development. It supports them in building healthy relationships and developing a strong sense of identity, responsibility, respect and wellbeing.

Policy Development Process

A committee representing teachers, management, parents and students oversees the development and review of this policy.

Committee Members:

- Mr. Denis Ring – Secretary, Board of Management
- Ms. Becky Fennessy – SPHE Coordinator
- Ms. Maria O'Brien – Deputy Principal
- Ms. Tracey Motherway/Eleanor Keane– Parents' Association
- Two 5th Year Students (one male, one female)

The policy reflects the collaborative input of all partners and responds to the evolving needs of students in a changing society.

The policy must be approved by the Board of Management prior to implementation.

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

The programme aims to:

- Promote self-respect and respect for others
- Foster responsible decision-making
- Support students in developing healthy, respectful relationships
- Provide accurate, age-appropriate information about sexuality and sexual health

Students will have opportunities to:

- Explore a wide range of relationships
- Develop critical thinking skills regarding media and societal messages
- Build self-esteem and communication skills
- Understand consent, personal boundaries, and respectful behaviour
- Appreciate diversity, including sexual orientation and gender identity
- Develop moral and ethical awareness in line with school ethos

The overall aim is to support the **holistic development of the person**, encompassing biological, emotional, social, cultural, spiritual and moral dimensions.

R.S.E. complements the role of parents/guardians as the primary educators.

Organisation and Implementation of the R.S.E. Programme

Who will be taught R.S.E.?

All students will participate in R.S.E.

Parents/guardians with concerns are encouraged to contact the relevant teacher, Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal.

Parents/guardians have the right to withdraw their child from R.S.E. classes. Alternative supervised arrangements will be made.

Class Structure

R.S.E. will generally be delivered in mixed-gender settings, reflecting the co-educational nature of the school. Provision may be made for single-gender groupings where appropriate.

Curriculum Content

The programme is developed in line with:

- SPHE curriculum
- NCCA guidelines
- Department of Education circulars
- School ethos and policy

Content is:

- Age-appropriate
- Developmentally appropriate
- Inclusive of diverse identities and experiences

Topics may include:

- Relationships and communication
- Emotional wellbeing
- Puberty and development
- Sexual health and reproduction
- Consent and personal safety
- Online safety and media literacy

Detailed schemes of work are available to parents/guardians on request.

Teaching Personnel and Timing

R.S.E. will be delivered by trained and willing teachers.

Formal R.S.E. modules typically take place during November–December, with core values reinforced throughout the year via the school's pastoral care system.

Teaching Methodologies

A variety of student-centred methodologies will be used, including:

- Group discussion
- Role play
- Case studies
- Project work
- Multimedia resources
- Visiting speakers (where appropriate and vetted)

All teaching will take place in a respectful, inclusive and safe environment.

Confidentiality and Child Protection

Teachers will respect students' privacy; however:

- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where there is a concern for a student's safety or wellbeing
- Any disclosures will be managed in accordance with the school's Child Protection Policy and national guidelines

Monitoring and Evaluation

Teachers

Teachers will evaluate the programme on an ongoing basis individually and collaboratively.

Parents/Guardians

Parents are encouraged to engage with the school and provide feedback through:

- Direct contact with staff
- Parents' Association

R.S.E. Policy Committee

The committee will meet annually to:

- Review content and methodologies
- Evaluate effectiveness
- Recommend updates

Board of Management

The Board will:

- Approve the policy
- Review it at least every four years (or sooner if required)

Related Policies

- SPHE Policy
- Wellbeing Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Statement
- Guidance Plan
- Anti-Bullying Policy

Adoption and Review

This policy is available to our school community on the school's website and in hard copy on request. A student friendly version of this policy is displayed in the school and is also available on our website and in hard copy on request.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every 2 school years. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: **Colette Power** (Chairperson of Board of Management)

Colette Power

Signed: **Denis Ring** (Principal)

Denis Ring

Date: _____22/09/2026_____