



**TEMPLE  
CARRIG**  

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**SCHOOL**

## **Social Personal and Health Education and Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy**

## **1. Introduction**

Temple Carrig Secondary School, under Church of Ireland patronage is faith-based and Christian in ethos, in the Anglican tradition. The School has a lived Christian ethos which includes;

- a. Being a community that is kind, compassionate and respectful of each other, welcoming and tolerant of different views and perspectives.
- b. Encouraging inquiring and questioning minds – so that students moral, spiritual and character formation is founded on thoughtful reflection and curiosity inspired by our Christian ethos.
- c. Encouraging values within our school community to recognise and address injustice, inequality, discrimination and fear.
- d. Being a kind and compassionate school for all our students.

These objectives inform all elements of school life and underpins the school's commitment to the promotion of wellbeing within the whole school community. In an inclusive and friendly environment, Temple Carrig School hopes to foster a love of learning which will enable each student to develop their own unique potential.

Temple Carrig School also aims to promote an awareness of cultural diversity and to generate respect for and recognition of the value of difference. In a community of mutual respect, ideals of good citizenship prepare our students to leave the school, not only as confident and mature people in their own right, but also as those able and willing to make a contribution to their local community and society in general.

## **2. Scope and Rationale**

The following policy will apply to school staff, students, Board of Management, parents/guardians, visiting speakers and external facilitators and will be freely available to all personnel via our school website.

This RSE policy was developed in accordance with:

- The school vision, values and Mission Statement
- Department of Education and Skills (DES) guidelines as set out in Circular M4/95, M20/96, C23/10, Social and Personal Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education Best Practice Guidelines for Post Primary School, C37/10 and The Education Act 1998, National Health Strategy for Ireland 2015-2020
- Guidance from the Pastoral Care Team
- Board of Management
- The Parents Association
- The Student Council

This policy applies to all aspects of teaching and learning about relationships and sexuality in Temple Carrig School. Discussion about relationships also takes place in classes other than SPHE/RSE; it is therefore important, that all teachers are familiar with the Relationship and Sexuality Education Programme policy (RSE)

### 3. Aims and Objectives

Taking into consideration the DES guidelines for Developing an RSE Policy (1997), RSE is defined as: *‘a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. This education is delivered consciously and unconsciously by parents, peers, adults and the media’*

In addition, RSE is a developmental learning process which provides students the unique opportunity to develop skills and competence to learn and care about themselves, and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development. This is in line with the National Sexual Health Strategy for Ireland 2015 – 2020, which sets out to ensure that all students receive *‘comprehensive and age-appropriate sexual health education’* The RSE programme aims to provide opportunities for young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them to think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way. Students are encouraged to develop a sense of self-esteem and a healthy respectful attitude towards themselves and others along with the ability to evaluate information and make informed decisions and develop skills which will enable them to make responsible choices particularly around relationships and sexuality. Further, part of the Mission of Temple Carrig School endeavours to educate the whole person and the NCCA recognises. *‘It (RSE education) should be carried out as part of the holistic education which seeks to form as well as inform young people on preparation for adult life’* (NCCA, 2019) TCG endeavours to provide students with information and skills to critically evaluate the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values offered today, and so make positive, responsible choices about themselves and the way they live their lives. In Temple Carrig School, RSE will provide structured opportunities for students to acquire a knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework.

As a key element of the school’s SPHE programme, RSE:

- Ensures that Temple Carrig School meets its obligations under the Education Act in promoting the social and personal developments of students and providing 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
- Addresses a wide variety of messages about relationships and sexuality, that young people are exposed to
- Provides young people with accurate knowledge about relationships and sex, and helps them to develop the necessary skills to enable them to make informed choices

In the teaching of the programme, the school considers both the Anti-Bullying Policy and Code of Conduct Policy making every effort to ensure that all students are free to enjoy their schooling, free from intimidation or unpleasantness on the part of others. It also appreciates the formation of character and encourage values that promote good citizenship with the code being operated in a fair and transparent manner.

While it is acknowledged that teachers have a professional responsibility to impart the SPHE course content, the personal, social and emotional needs of our students are responded to in a caring and supportive manner. Where it is appropriate, the teacher may refer students to other supportive links within the school. The Pastoral Care Support Programme is available in a supportive capacity to meet the needs of student welfare where required.

### **3.1 The Aims of our SPHE and RSE Programme**

Learning in SPHE aims to support students to:

- build self-awareness and positive self-worth
- develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, dispositions and values that will support them to lead fulfilling and healthy lives
- feel empowered to create, nurture and maintain respectful and loving relationships with self and others
- enhance their capacity to contribute positively to society
- Support students in making choices for health and wellbeing
- develop self-awareness through opportunities to reflect on thoughts, values, attitudes and feelings
- enhance students' knowledge and understanding of essential health concepts and the wider influences on health and wellbeing to enable informed decision making
- develop students' self-efficacy; the confidence to think and behave independently especially in the face of social pressure
- strengthen students' capacity to empathise with another person's situation, feelings and motives to enhance relationships with other people
- develop coping strategies for adolescence and adult life in support of greater resilience
- develop students' health literacy skills, including the ability to obtain, critically evaluate and act on health information in support of health and wellbeing
- develop a willingness to participate in the creation and maintenance of healthy communities and environments.

Learning in RSE which is located within the overall framework of SPHE aims to support students to:

- To help students develop healthy friendships and to promote a positive sense of self-awareness.
- To promote a healthy attitude to sexuality and relationships.
- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the student.
- To foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- To enable students to acquire an understanding of, and respect for, human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction.
- To promote an understanding of sexuality
- To promote a positive attitude towards one's sexuality and in one's relationship with others
- To provide opportunities for pupils to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way
- Explore personal thoughts, values, attitudes and feelings about relationships
- Develop an understanding of the different types of relationships, what is important in them and the skills to enhance relationships
- Promote empathy with others who have different cultural values, attitudes and beliefs about family, relationships, sex and sexuality
- Develop students' knowledge, understanding and skills in support of sexual and reproductive health
- Develop students' understanding of sexuality and sexual orientation and the importance of an inclusive environment

- Develop personal and interpersonal skills which support beginning, maintaining and ending relationships
- Develop skills for coping with peer pressure, conflict, and threats to personal safety

It is acknowledged that in a course of limited duration these aims are aspirational

#### **4. Implementing the teaching of RSE in Temple Carrig School:**

In Temple Carrig School SPHE/RSE is available to all students through both formal and informal activities.

Formal/Structured Activities:

- The Guidance/Tutor system facilitates each class having one designated teacher for the purposes of general pupil welfare and the teaching of linked areas to the SPHE course.
- Temple Carrig School's themed weeks that make specific reference to aspects of the RSE course may include Wellbeing Week, Bullying Awareness Week, Stand Up Week, Men's Mental Health Month, International Women's Week. Specific issues will be addressed in Assembly and through theme week activities.
- Guided by the Department of Education and Skills Circular 0037/2010, RSE is taught at both Junior and Senior Cycles:
- The arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff are made by the principal. SPHE is mandatory and is timetabled as follows:
  - One hundred hours of timetabled SPHE is included for Junior Cycle as part of the Wellbeing Programme (Years 1-3) which focuses on the teaching of the "Four Strands of SPHE" – Understanding Myself and Others, Making Healthy Choices, Relationships and Sexuality, and Emotional Wellbeing. Regarding the specific topic of Gender Identity, the Department of Education Learning Objective 3.6 of the new SPHE curriculum states that "students should be able to appreciate the breadth of what constitutes human sexuality, and how sexual orientation and gender identity are experienced and expressed in diverse ways". The NCCA requires students to be given an appreciation of Gender Identity as one of the many factors and influences that shape young people's self-identity, (others include family, peers, sexual orientation, race/ethnic background, disabilities, religious beliefs and world views).
  - One period of timetabled SPHE is also included in Transition Year which focuses on many areas of SPHE, including RSE. Other SPHE related TY activities will be timetabled from time to time.
  - Senior Cycle students in 5th and 6th Year are allocated one period of SPHE. The Senior Cycle RSE Programme is taught on a modular basis and follows on from the Junior Cycle, with the same emphasis placed on respect, tolerance, and positive relationships with others.
- In the classroom, all elements of the curriculum are handled in a sensitive, compassionate and respectful manner. Specifically, in addressing gender identity in a classroom setting, as one of the range of factors shaping self-identity, the topic is approached by providing information on gender identity only and does not name or advocate any particular ideology. In this regard the experience of being transgender is acknowledged as one of the ways gender identity is experienced by some. The SPHE curriculum and the programme does not address gender dysphoria, how it should be treated or any other associated medical issues or

approaches. Teachers are not medical experts, and these topics are not deemed appropriate for the age and stage of Junior Cycle students.

- Aspects of the RSE programme are taught in other timetabled activities including: School Assembly, Science, Physical Education (PE) and Home Economics (HE). This cross-curricular approach ensures a whole-school involvement in the formation of the moral, spiritual and behavioural values of our students.
- Relationships and Sexuality Education is also taught informally to students through a caring and supportive school atmosphere, that includes input from:
  - Teaching and Sports Staff
  - Class Tutors and Year Heads
  - Career Guidance Counsellors and Pastoral Care Team

## **5. Provision of Training and Staff Development**

To enable teachers to acquire the necessary knowledge, understanding and skills to deliver the RSE programme, teachers are encouraged and supported to undertake ongoing professional development in SPHE, RSE and Wellbeing.

## **6. Participation**

Temple Carrig Secondary School, in delivering the new SPHE curriculum is complying with the obligations set out by the Department of Education to achieve set Learning Objectives. This curriculum is set by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), an independent State Agency. Teaching and learning within the new curriculum is designed to be appropriate for the age and stage of development of students, whether in first year, second year or third year. This is based on research and the extensive public consultation led by the NCCA in 2022. Responsibility for the curriculum is a matter for the NCCA and the Department of Education.

While the School actively encourages full participation in all school activities by any student, as the constitutionally recognised primary educator of their child, Temple Carrig Secondary School recognises that each parent/guardian has the right to withdraw their child from lessons addressing topics they wish to cover at home with them instead. Parents have a right to request that their child opt out of any learning that contravenes their conscience or beliefs including SPHE and the school respects this choice. In the event of a request for withdrawal from the SPHE programme being made by a parent/guardian, the School will endeavour to discuss the nature of the concerns with the child's parent/guardian in an appropriate attempt to reassure them. For organisational purposes, parents/guardians wishing to withdraw their child from SPHE must inform the Year Head in writing of their decision in a timely manner. For the welfare of the child at these times, parent/guardian electing to withdraw a student from SPHE class must collect the student from the School at the beginning of the lesson in question and provide off-site supervision of the student until they return to their next academic class. Where students are withdrawn from class the school cannot take responsibility for any versions of class content passed on to them by others.

## **7. Management of information and Confidentiality**

Across the Education system, SPHE teachers, as well as teachers of various other subjects, frequently request that students agree to a Classroom Contract. A long-established practice of the various childcare, youth and education sectors, this contract functions as a collaboratively established framework for setting behavioural expectations within the classroom. By committing to engage in respectful conversations and maintain confidentiality about classroom discussions, students are provided a secure environment where they can participate openly, with the assurance that what is shared in the classroom remains confidential. Students are also strongly encouraged to engage in discussions with their parents regarding any topics raised during SPHE lessons.

In the teaching of SPHE, teachers should inform students of the age of consent which, following the passage of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences Act) in 2017, is 17 years for both males and females, and for homosexual and heterosexual sex. If a teacher becomes aware that a student is sexually active under the age of consent the teacher must inform the schools DLP. Confidentiality should also be respected unless the teacher becomes aware that a child is at risk as defined in Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children. It is important that students are made aware of the limits of confidentiality at the beginning of the year. It is best practice to remind them of this at the beginning of classes that may lend themselves to more personal disclosures, and where possible before potentially making disclosures of a personal or sensitive nature.

If a disclosure is made by the child, or a teacher ascertains that a child is at risk, the appropriate action will be taken, following the child protection procedures and guidelines for post primary schools.

It is school policy that if a teacher receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a pupil is at risk the teacher should, in the first instance, report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP). The DLP will decide whether to inform the parents/guardians and /or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling. Although there is no legal duty on a teacher, or DLP, to inform the parents/guardians of matters which a child has confided in them:

- Teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality.
- Students must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the DLP and possibly to parents/guardians if the DLP decides that it is in the best interests of the student to notify parents.
- Teachers must indicate clearly to students when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential – the student can then decide whether to proceed or not.

Where the matter is reported to the DLP and s/he is satisfied on advice that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation, a report should be made to TUSLA as per the school's Child Protection Policy, in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education and Skills' Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary. The DLP will report to the Board of Management as per section 4.3 of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary. It is essential that all times the matter be treated in the strictest confidence and not discussed except among the parties mentioned above.

## **8. Visiting Speakers**

Visiting speakers can play a valuable role in supplementing, complementing and supporting the SPHE/RSE programme. Outside speakers are invited to speak at Temple Carrig School and will be directed to the school's website for the school's RSE policy. All visitors require advance preparation by the SPHE/RSE teacher ahead of their visit. The engagement of the outside speakers by staff should take the ethos and values of the school into consideration when inviting such speakers to address students. Students must be addressed appropriately and relative to the age and life experience of the students. While visitors to the classroom can be immensely valuable as part of the SPHE programme, the delivery of the programme remains the responsibility of the teacher. Considering this, where visitors/outside agencies are used to support SPHE, the SPHE/RSE teacher must remain with the class group during the visit.

Approved by the Board of Management following a consultation process with the Student Council, PTA Committee and Teaching Staff.

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