# Belvedere College SJ

RSE Policy

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## A. Mission Statement of Belvedere College S.J.

The College is a Catholic school under the trusteeship of the Society of Jesus. Set in the centre of Dublin city, it continues today a tradition of over 160 years in the Jesuit approach to education.

The school is fee-paying but provides a scholarship scheme, independently funded, out of a desire to be socially just.

The family as the primary educator, through its commitment to the values of the school, shares with us the responsibility for the students' education.

Belvedere has dedicated teachers who are committed to high academic standards. We provide a rich and diverse curriculum catering for the needs of each individual student. We strive for excellence also in the areas of sport and culture, social concern and spiritual values, wherein students are encouraged and challenged to realise their full potential as human beings.

Our mission as the Belvedere Community - Jesuits, Board, staff, parents, present students and past pupils - is to ensure that graduates of the College by their relationship with Jesus Christ and through living Gospel values, shall be persons for others in leadership and example in pursuit of a just world.

## B. Definition of RSE

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is 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, teachers, peers, adults and the media. (Department of Education website, www.education.ie). RSE is a developmental process using learning that is experiential in which students participate to help foster a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, especially in the area of sexuality and relationships.

## C. School Philosophy on RSE

Belvedere being a Jesuit College, strives for excellence in the provision of intellectual, physical, social and moral education. Relationships and Sexuality Education in Belvedere College is grounded in the values espoused by the school in its mission statement and carried out in its day to day living. We provide a rich and diverse curricular and co-curricular program in order to cater for the needs of each individual student. We hope that our graduates will, by their relationship with Jesus Christ and through living the Gospel value, be persons for others in leadership and example in their pursuit of a just world.

Given the rapidly changing cultural context within which young people grow and mature today, the fostering and development of Christian values and behaviour in our

students has never been more important. The moral and spiritual formation offered at this college demands that Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) be seen as a central aspect of both curricular and co-curricular activity.

We wish our students to be people who freely choose to espouse and live by the Catholic values that we hold dear. The values that we propose are counter-cultural. On the one hand the media seem to give complete license to all sexual expression while on the other hand the Church is seen by many young people as disapproving and dismissive. Our young people will need strong conviction to stand against the tide in making the positive responsible choices that we would wish them to make. They will need the self-confidence which flows from a healthy self-image. Such confidence is fostered by the experience of being valued for who they are, by those around them, both adults and peers. We cannot impose these values. If we wish the young people of this college to behave as responsible individuals we must provide them with the knowledge, skills and freedom necessary for good-decision making. We are convinced that both the provision of information, skills and the exploration of attitudes and values, are essential to bring about changes in behaviour. Neither is sufficient in itself to bring about the movement from head to heart to action which is required in the promotion of values and personality morality.

The formal introduction of RSE as part of Social, Personal and Health Education syllabus has taken place, Relationship and Sexuality Education is not a new subject to Belvedere; it has always been part of what the college provided both in the Junior and the Senior Houses. Whether in special events such as the 'Preparation for Adolescence' or "Relationship" courses in poetry or Rhetoric; in many co-curricular activities and events such as retreats, Justice activities, College Operas, Exchange tours and sports; as in formal lessons in Religion, Science and Physical Education; the college provides, and has always provided, Relationship and sexuality education. Indeed these traditional activities will remain essential, fostering as they do the healthy development of social skills, secure friendships, identity and self-esteem.

RSE is primarily the right and duty of parents and guardians and therefore the role of the school, as in the whole educational project, is one of support.

## D. Aims of RSE

The aim of the RSE program in Ireland is, according to the policy guidelines (Department of Education 1997: 4), to help children 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.*
At post-primary level, RSE aims to build on the primary program and provide young people with information and skills to evaluate critically the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values offered today, in order that they will make positive,

responsible choices about themselves and the way they live their lives.(From 'Going Forward Together' Document)

i. To help students understand and develop friendships and relationships
ii. To promote an understanding of sexuality
iii. To promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's relationship with others
iv. To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction
v. To enable students to develop attitudes and values toward their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework in keeping with the policy of the school
vi. To provide opportunities for students to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that helps them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

## E. Objectives

RSE should enable students to:

i. Acquire the understanding and skills necessary to form healthy friendships and relationships
ii. Develop a positive sense of self awareness, and the skills for building and maintaining self-esteem
iii. Become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change especially during adolescence and to develop respect for difference between individuals
iv. Understand human physiology with particular reference to the reproductive cycle, human fertility and sexually transmitted diseases
v. Understand sexual development and identity and explore aspects of sexuality including sex roles, stereotyping, gender issues and cultural influences on sexuality
vi. Value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood
vii. Develop strategies for decisions and actions consistent with personal moral integrity and respectful of the rights and dignity of others
viii. Develop skills for coping with peer pressure, conflict and threats to personal safety

## F. Relationships and Sexuality Education within Social Personal and Health Education

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". RSE is taught as part of the wider subject Social, Personal and

Health Education. The RSE program is designed to follow this principle and pattern. Apart from the specific lessons of RSE, SPHE covers other areas which would be pertinent to the development of a healthy attitude to sexuality in oneself and one's relationship with others. SPHE deals with many issues such as self-esteem, assertiveness, communication and decision making skills - all of which can contribute to the effectiveness of the RSE program.

## G. Delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education at Belvedere

The RSE course will, through its provision of a formal curriculum, enhance rather than replace what we have traditionally offered in this area. Our RSE program is based on respect for self and respect for others. Where needs be suitable guest speakers will be invited to address specific topics. From Elements to Grammar RSE takes place in SPHE Classes. In Syntax and Poetry, RSE takes place in Religious Education classes. In Rhetoric, RSE takes place in Life Choices and Religious Education.

The RSE Program itself (see below for headings and schemes of work in common SPHE resource area and on the SPHE link of common teacher server) is based on therecommendations of the Department of Education in the NCCA report "Relationships and Sexuality Education an aspect of Social, Personal and Health Education" (1996) RSE and SPHE will provide dedicated and specialized lessons which will be supplemented by the Science and Religion programs

***Elements: Program (See SPHE scheme of work on common server for elements RSE Scheme of work)***

**Relationships and sexuality**

i. Me as unique and different
ii. Friendship
iii. Changes at adolescence
iv. The reproductive system
v. Images of male and female
vi. Respecting myself and others

***Rudiments: Program (See SPHE scheme of work on common server for Rudiments Scheme of work)***

i. From conception to birth
ii. Recognizing and expressing feelings and emotions
iii. Peer pressure and other influences
iv. Managing relationships
v. Making responsible decisions
vi. Health and personal safety

### *Grammar: Program (See SPHE scheme of work on common server for Grammar Scheme of work)*

i. Body image
ii. Where am I now?
iii. Relationships - what's important
iv. The three R's: respect, rights, and responsibilities
v. Conflict

### *Syntax: Program (See scheme of work on common server)*

**Human Sexuality**

i. To develop an understanding of what we mean by sex and gender and what it is to be male and female
ii. Consideration of male and female roles in relationships and society

**Human Growth and Development**

i. Understand the different stages of Sexual Development including Puberty and the changes that occur during adolescence
ii. The male and female reproductive Systems
iii. Hygiene and puberty
iv. Pupils develop an understanding of pregnancy and the development of the foetus
v. Pupils develop an awareness and understanding of fertility and Conception
vi. Family Planning
vii. Safe Sexual Practices

### *Poetry: Program (see scheme of work on common server)*

Relationships and Education

**Human Relationships**

i. Understand the nature of Peer Pressure
ii. Family and Parents
iii. Skills necessary for resolving conflict

**Human Sexuality**

i. Awareness and understanding of Sexual Orientation
ii. Equality and difference
iii. Sexual Harassment
iv. Building Health Literacy

### *Rhetoric Program*

All Rhetoric students participate in a Life Choices course which is facilitated by the Religious Education Department. This course involves presentations and small group discussions on areas such as substance use, mental health, relationships and sexuality, social responsibility and social justice. The small group discussions are facilitated by Religious Education teachers and by peer facilitators who are supported by the Religious Education teachers.

## H. Guidelines For The Management And Organisation Of RSE In Our School

***Teaching the program:***

i. Arrangements regarding the teaching of the program and the deployment of staff will be made by the Principal.
ii. The Parents Association and the Parents' Committees have an important part to play in providing information, support and encouragement to parents and guardians in undertaking their responsibilities in this area.
iii. Recognizing the rights of parents as the primary educators of their children, the school undertakes to provide them with the opportunity to;
    a. Acquaint themselves with the program
    b. View the resource materials
    c. Withdraw their sons from class for the duration of the formal program if they so wish. Written notification of such should be sent to the coordinator of SPHE prior to the beginning of the school year
iv. This policy has been designed in consultation with Parent Teacher Association/Board of Management 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 parent on request to the School Office

## I. Confidentiality

In circumstances where a student is considered at some risk of any type of abuse (e.g. moral or physical) or in breach of the law, the teacher must refer this immediately to the Principal or the Guidance Counsellor. The Principal will decide whether to inform the parents and/or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling. Although there is no legal duty on a teacher, or a Principal, to inform parents of matters which a child has confided to them:

i. teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality;
ii. students must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the Principal and possibly to parents if the Principal decides that it is in the best interests of the student to notify parents;
iii. teachers must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard the information;

iv. 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.

Department of Education booklet "Procedures for Dealing with Allegations or Suspicions of Child Abuse" 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 Chairperson or Principal, 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.

## J. Using visiting speakers and others

i. The RSE programme is best discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by the students. However visiting speakers can further develop the RSE provision as long as they supplement the RSE Programme and not replace it.

ii. The SPHE Co-ordinator will provide the visitor, well in advance of the visit, with a copy of this RSE policy.

iii.After gaining approval from the Principal for the visit the organiser makes the visitor familiar with the ethos of the school and the manner of delivery of the RSE programme.

iv. Both the teacher organising the speaker and the speaker/s themselves need to consider the following Issues:

a) will the visitor be alone with the group or accompanied by teaching staff?
b) the content and presentation needs to be age appropriate
c) will the staff take an active role in the visitor's activities?
d) how will the visitor be prepared for the visit?
e) how will the visit fit into the scheme of work.

v. Visitors should be given advance information on the of the composition of the class

vi. The principal/vice-principal should be informed of the date and name of the visitor.

vii. The visitor should be welcomed at the main door and be provided with visitor identification
viii.At the end of the session a vote of thanks should be given by a student

ix. A written acknowledgement of their contribution should be sent to the visitor

## K. On-going support, development and review Training:

i. Teachers involved do not necessarily have to all the answers on the issues concerned. However, they do require an ability to deal with questions honestly and a preparedness to refer to more expert advice if necessary. Teachers that have training in counselling, health, relationships and sexuality education will be encouraged to train other teachers.
ii. The school will allow teachers to gain necessary training in the Relationships and Sexuality Education field with as little disturbance as possible.

## L. Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the RSE programme:

i. To have continued success of RSE at Belvedere it will be required to have opportunities provided for the on-going and regular review and evaluation of the program by the Board, the Staff, the Parent body and the Students

ii. There are RSE resources provided in the Common SPHE resource area. All SPHE teachers will be provided with necessary resources and links that will aid in the effective delivery of the RSE program.
iii. Schemes of Work for RSE are available on the Common Teacher On-server
iv. Parents have access via the school website to modules covered in RSE at Belvedere.

## M. Summary

At Belvedere we believe that Relationships and Sexuality Education

i. Is primarily the responsibility and duty of the parents;
ii. Must include both formal (curricular) and informal (co-curricular) school activities;
iii. Is counter-cultural and proposes Catholic values;
iv. Must provide comprehensive age-appropriate information and skills;
v. Must encourage deep questioning of values and attitudes;
vi. Must prepare students for free and responsible decision-making
vii. Should result in high moral behaviour