



# Stratford College

*Co-educational Secondary School*

## Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

April 2009

### Stratford College Mission Statement

Stratford College is a teaching and learning community committed to quality and excellence in education.

We are dedicated to:

- Providing a nurturing environment where each individual can develop self-esteem and a sense of their place in, and responsibility to, society.
- Instructing Jewish students in their religion while fostering mutual respect for all traditions.
- Promoting personal achievement and academic success.
- Respecting the unique potential of every student and encouraging each to maximise it.

### Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Relationships and Sexuality is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. Stratford College aims to provide young people with information and skills to evaluate 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.

The RSE programme also provides opportunities for young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

## Relationship of RSE to Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)

The Department of Education and Science has approved the recommended syllabus for SPHE at junior cycle. SPHE, which is a lifeskills programme, aims:

- to enable students to develop personal and social skills
- to promote self esteem and self confidence
- to enable students to develop a framework for responsible decision making
- to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion
- to promote physical, mental and emotional health and well being.

The RSE programme forms part of the SPHE programme. The content of the school's SPHE programme includes a wide range of topics such as healthy eating, safety, as well as RSE.

## What the School Currently Provides

SPHE was introduced into the school in 2000-1 to each year group. Each year group is split in two and takes SPHE as a half year module. RSE comprises part of the content of each module. The methodology includes discussion, group work, music, games, artwork and written work. All students are encouraged to obey the ground rules which include co-operation, respect and confidentiality. The approach to topics is developmental and the content will be age appropriate.

## Aims of the RSE Programme of Stratford College

Our RSE programme aims:

1. To help our students to develop healthy friendships and relationships;
2. To promote an understanding of sexuality;
3. To promote a healthy attitude to sexuality and to relationships;
4. To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction;
5. To enable young people to develop healthy attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework.

## Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in Stratford College

SPHE incorporating RSE is a Department of Education and Science approved course. All recognised schools are obliged to introduce the course, initially to junior cycle and, by extension, throughout the school. In doing so, such schools are obliged to follow the Department of Education guidelines and syllabus and the ethos of the school in question.

A consultation group, representing members of the school community: management, teachers and parents, will be called together by the Principal. Its purpose will be to formulate a school policy for the implementation of RSE in Stratford College. The Principal is also responsible for the arrangement of the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff.

Stratford College acknowledges the right and duty of parents to provide for the religious, moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children. Stratford College will play a supportive and complementary role to the home in this task in its provision of SPHE. In doing so, our school will be mindful of conscientious or moral objections to the inclusion of elements of this programme and, while striving to be sensitive to all, recognises the right of parents, in consultation with the Principal, to act in accordance with their stated beliefs. Sensitive issues will be dealt with appropriately and may be discussed by the policy committee in order to seek clarification of such issues in the light of the ethos of Stratford College.

Mindful of our responsibility for the moral and spiritual education of Jewish students, 1 of the 6 classes required for RSE will be taken by the school Rabbi.

Stratford College, being mindful of the complementary role that it plays in this matter will seek to involve all parents in the formulation of its policy by circulating this document and allowing for a review of RSE in the school by the RSE committee.

### Provide for Ongoing Support, Development and Review

Stratford College recognises the importance of having committed, trained staff in the implementation of its SPHE programme. It will encourage and facilitate participation in in-career development opportunities whenever possible. It also aims to provide relevant RSE school resources.

The role of parents in imparting SPHE is the primary one and Stratford College will seek to support the efforts of parents to provide educational opportunities for other parents through the Stratford College Parents' Association.

Finally, this policy statement will be reviewed by representatives of the school community on an annual basis and will be amended as necessary. Amended statements will be brought to the attention of all parents.

Ratified: Mr. Michael Gilbert, School Manager

Date: April 2009