



Beaufort College

Relationships & Sexuality Policy

School Ethos

Our school ethos is embedded in the motto *Ready, Respectful, and Responsible*, which inspires students to approach learning with preparedness, treat others with dignity, and take ownership of their actions. As an ETB school, we uphold the core values of Excellence in Education, Care, Equality, Community, and Respect. These values shape a welcoming and inclusive environment where students of all backgrounds thrive academically and personally. By fostering a culture of mutual respect and shared responsibility, we empower our students to contribute positively to their school community and beyond, embodying the principles that guide our collective purpose.

Relationship of this policy to the school ethos

Beaufort College is committed to quality education. It seeks to enrich students' lives and empower them for life's challenges. This is done in a caring atmosphere of good order and discipline and in partnership with others.

The Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) module of Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE) closely aligns with the school ethos of *Ready, Respectful, and Responsible*. It prepares students to make informed and thoughtful decisions about their relationships and personal well-being, fostering readiness to navigate life's challenges. By emphasising respect for oneself and others, the RSE module encourages understanding and empathy, key elements of our inclusive and caring school community. Furthermore, it instils responsibility, promoting safe, ethical, and considerate behaviours. These principles resonate with the ETB core values of Care, Equality, and Respect, ensuring the holistic development of every student in an environment grounded in mutual understanding and support.

Aims of the SPHE programme

The SPHE programme aims to enhance students' understanding of themselves and foster a positive sense of self-worth. It aims to equip students with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values to lead enriching and healthy lives. The programme empowers students to establish, foster, and sustain respectful and loving relationships with themselves and others. Additionally, it seeks to strengthen their ability to contribute constructively to society.

Objectives of this policy

This policy will ensure clarity and consensus on how SPHE and RSE is taught in Beaufort College.

- It will articulate the relationship of RSE to SPHE.
- It will articulate the rationale of the RSE programme.
- It will clarify the rights, roles, and responsibilities of all members of the school community (school staff, students, parents/guardians¹, and the Board of Management/patron) in relation to the RSE programme.
- It will ensure that teachers, parents/guardians, and students understand how the teaching of RSE is linked to the school ethos.
- It will provide information on the practicalities of delivering the programme.

Scope & application of the policy

This RSE policy was developed under:

- Guidelines as set out in Circular M4/95, M20/96, C23/10, C37/2010 and best practice guidance from the NCCA and Department of Education.
- The Education Act 1998, it requires that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.
- Section 4 of the Rules and Programme for secondary schools which requires schools to have an agreed policy for RSE and a suitable RSE programme in place for all students at both the junior and senior cycles.
- The school ethos and vision
- Guidance from the SPHE Department and SPHE Co-Ordinator
- Consultation with the Board of Management of Beaufort College, the Principal, Deputy Principals, teachers, students, and parents.

This policy document is designed to clearly articulate the methods and principles guiding the teaching of SPHE at Beaufort College. The primary aim is to ensure that LMETB, the Board of Management of Beaufort College, teachers, parents, and students are fully informed of the dedicated approach and the procedures to deliver a comprehensive SPHE curriculum in the school.

Beyond the specifics of the SPHE programme, this document serves a broader purpose common to educational policies: to establish a transparent, consistent framework within which the school operates. Such policies are essential for setting clear expectations, providing guidelines for behaviour and procedures, and ensuring that the educational journey of every student is enriched and supported. By articulating these details, Beaufort College aims to build a strong partnership between the school, its students, and their families, ensuring that collective efforts lead to a meaningful and impactful educational experience.

Relevant Legislation

The provision of Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in post-primary schools in Ireland is underpinned by the following key legislation:

- **Education Act 1998:** This act requires schools to promote the social and personal development of students and ensure a holistic education. It also mandates the provision of a comprehensive curriculum that includes SPHE and RSE.
- **Education (Welfare) Act 2000:** This act emphasises the role of education in supporting students' well-being, including their social and personal development.

¹ The term Parent(s) is used throughout the remainder of this policy to mean both Parent(s) and Guardian(s).

- **Equal Status Act 2000:** This legislation supports inclusive education and ensures that all students, regardless of their background, have access to SPHE and RSE.
- **Children First Act 2015:** This act underscores the importance of safeguarding children, including the provision of education on personal safety and relationships through SPHE and RSE.

Relationship of this policy to school policies²

The school's Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) policy is closely interconnected with several other school policies, ensuring a cohesive and comprehensive approach to student development and well-being. These relationships include:

- **Child Protection Policy:** The RSE policy aligns with child safeguarding guidelines, emphasising students' safety and addressing sensitive topics responsibly, in accordance with *Children First* legislation.
- **Anti-Bullying Policy:** RSE promotes respect, inclusion, and understanding, which are foundational to preventing bullying and fostering a positive school climate.
- **Code of Behaviour:** The principles of respect and responsibility emphasised in RSE reinforce the expectations set out in the school's behaviour policy, guiding students in their interactions with others.
- **Inclusion Policy:** RSE supports the school's commitment to equality and inclusion by addressing diverse perspectives and fostering respect for all individuals, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, or cultural background.
- **Substance Misuse Policy:** The RSE policy supports the Substance Misuse Policy by promoting informed decision-making, personal responsibility, and awareness of how substance use can impact health and relationships.

All members of the school community understand that students choosing to enroll in the school will accept and fully comply with the policies and procedures of the school.

SPHE and Wellbeing

The Junior Cycle SPHE Short Course (2023) highlights that SPHE, including Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), is integral to student well-being by fostering personal growth, resilience, and social skills. Through SPHE and RSE, students develop self-awareness, learn to build and maintain respectful relationships and gain critical knowledge to make informed, safe decisions about their health and personal lives. This aligns with the Wellbeing³ Framework, supporting the physical, emotional, and social dimensions of well-being, empowering students to navigate life's challenges confidently while contributing positively to their communities.

² See Appendix A: List of School Policies

³ <https://ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/wellbeing>

Junior Cycle SPHE Course Overview

The Junior Cycle SPHE⁴ course is designed to support students in developing a positive sense of self and the ability to care for themselves and others. It is structured around four interconnected strands, each addressing essential aspects of personal and social development:

1. **Understanding Myself and Others:** This strand focuses on building self-awareness and self-esteem while cultivating vital skills for healthy relationships, such as empathy, communication, respect for differences, and self-regulation.
2. **Making Healthy Choices:** Students explore what it means to live healthily, identify challenges and supports for making healthy decisions, and develop critical skills to navigate influences like family, peers, media, and societal pressures.
3. **Relationships and Sexuality:** Adopting a positive, inclusive, and rights-based approach, this strand examines the cognitive, physical, emotional, and social dimensions of relationships, focusing on family, friendships, and potential romantic or sexual relationships.
4. **Emotional Wellbeing:** This strand emphasizes nurturing mental health by teaching problem-solving, coping strategies, and ways to seek and offer support during life's challenges.

These strands are supported by three cross-cutting elements: **Awareness**, fostering self-understanding and mindfulness; **Dialogue**, promoting open and respectful communication; and **Reflection and Action**, encouraging thoughtful learning and practical application. Together, these components provide a comprehensive framework for students' personal growth and well-being.

Learning Outcomes of Strand 3: Relationships & Sexuality

Students should be able to:

1. reflect on the values, behaviours and skills that help to make, sustain and end relationships respectfully with friends, family and romantic/intimate relationships.
2. examine benefits and difficulties experienced by young people in a range of relationships - friendships, family relationships, and romantic/intimate relationships.
3. identify signs of healthy, unhealthy and abusive relationships.
4. appreciate the importance of setting healthy boundaries in relationships and consider how to show respect for the boundaries of others.
5. consider the importance of taking care of their reproductive health.
6. appreciate the breadth of what constitutes human sexuality, and how sexual orientation and gender identity are experienced and expressed in diverse ways.
7. explore the pressures to become sexually intimate and discuss ways to show respect for people's choices.
8. appreciate the importance of seeking, giving and receiving consent in sexual relationships, from the perspective of building caring relationships and from a legal perspective.
9. explain the importance of safer sexual activity with reference to methods of contraception and protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
10. discuss the influence of popular culture and the online world, in particular, the influence of pornography, on young people's understanding, expectations and social norms in relation to sexual expression.
11. demonstrate how to access and appraise appropriate and trustworthy advice, support and services related to relationships and sexual health.

⁴ <https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/2780c6c6-993c-46fb-8ba6-b647188337c9/JC-SPHE-Short-Course-2023-EV-FINAL.pdf>

Senior Cycle SPHE Course Overview

The Senior Cycle SPHE⁵ course is a comprehensive program designed to support students' development in the final two years of their secondary education. Over a minimum of 60 hours, the course is organised into four interconnected strands: **Health and Wellbeing, Relationships and Sexuality, Into Adulthood**, and **Exercising Rights, Responsibilities, and Inclusivity**. These strands focus on preparing students for the challenges of adulthood by fostering knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions that promote informed decision-making and responsible actions.

The course is underpinned by three cross-cutting elements:

1. **Thinking Critically and Empathetically:** Encourages students to critically evaluate societal norms, values, and influences on health and relationships, while fostering empathy for diverse perspectives.
2. **Exercising Rights, Responsibilities, and Inclusivity:** Promotes a rights-based, inclusive approach, encouraging recognition of personal and societal responsibilities and affirming diverse identities and experiences.
3. **Being Health Literate:** Focuses on equipping students with the knowledge, confidence, and skills to access, understand, and act on health-related information, preparing them to navigate adulthood with informed choices and self-advocacy.

Learning Outcomes of Strand 2: Relationships & Sexuality

Within this strand, students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships. Note: Each of the learning outcomes below will be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

Students learn about	Students should be able to
Healthy relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating effectively, navigating difficult conversations, preventing and managing conflict and dealing with break-ups.○ reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity, and those of others, can influence the dynamics of families, friendships and romantic relationships.○ discuss the need for consent and the importance of care, respect, empathy, trust and mutual pleasure within a sexual relationship.

⁵ <https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/759a3a1d-9736-40d4-9f57-234443d2a344/SC-SPHE-Spec-JULY-24-p9.pdf>

Gender, culture and social norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ examine how both positive and harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online, and in society and discuss strategies for challenging and changing harmful attitudes and narratives.
Abusive and violent relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control.○ explore the root causes and consequences of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence (DSGBV), and outline the supports and services available, and protections under the law.○ investigate the possible influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations and what supports are available for those impacted by pornography.○ discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape, and what to do and how to seek support if they or someone they know has experienced any of these.
Sexual health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ understand the components of sexual health including fertility across the life-cycle, reproductive choices, sexual functioning, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health information and services.

Provision of Training and Staff Development

The principal of Beaufort College oversees the deployment of staff for teaching SPHE and RSE ensuring that preference for teachers who have a genuine interest in these areas. While teachers are not required to be experts in all aspects of SPHE/RSE, they will be sensitive to students' needs, answer questions openly and honestly, and seek expert advice when necessary. To support teachers, a core team is established to enhance their confidence and expertise in delivering the SPHE curriculum, with ongoing training provided. The college is committed to offering access to expert training and professional development opportunities, ensuring that teachers have the necessary resources to deliver high-quality teaching and learning in SPHE and RSE.

Inclusion of Parents/Guardians

Parents/guardians are the primary educators of their children and their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality education is seen by Beaufort College as most important. The policy was designed in consultation with the parents' representatives and the views expressed by parents will be considered when the policy is being reviewed.

A copy of this policy will be made available to any parent/guardian on request to the general office and available on the school website.

Participation and Parents Request for Withdrawal

RSE is a mandatory element of the SPHE programme, and schools are obligated to offer RSE lessons at both the Junior and Senior Cycles.

The Education Act 1998, Section 30 (2) (e) states that a student is not required to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parents. This also applies to students who are 18 or older, where the decision rests with the student themselves.

Each parent therefore has the right to withdraw their child from some or all RSE classes. In such cases, it is recommended that parents offer alternative relationships and sexuality education at home to ensure their children still receive the necessary support for their personal growth and development.

Procedure for Withdrawal of a Student from RSE:

- The proposed dates for the provision of RSE education is circulated through important dates in the school calendar. Parents must note these dates carefully to ensure their wishes are complied with.
- The parent must communicate their decision to the school by completing and returning the parental permission form⁶ from the Student Learning Journal at the beginning of the academic year.
- The principal will circulate an RSE Provision Information Letter⁷ to all parents before the commencement of the RSE module as a reminder to parents.
- Parents wishing to withdraw their children must follow the advice contained in the letter.

Ethical/Moral Considerations

- **Answering Questions:** While it is important to create an environment in SPHE/RSE in which students can discuss issues openly, teachers may not be able to answer all questions asked by students and can set appropriate limits. Teachers will use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, the RSE curriculum and the RSE policy for the school to answer questions about issues which arise during the class.
- **Confidentiality:** Students will not be encouraged to disclose personal or private information in SPHE/RSE classes; however, there may be times when they do talk about their own lives. Confidentiality will be respected unless a teacher becomes aware that a child is at risk, in which case the appropriate action should be taken as set down in the Child Protection Procedures for Post-Primary Schools⁸ or the school's Substance Misuse Policy⁹, etc. Students will be made aware of the limits of confidentiality and that teachers do not give unconditional guarantees of confidentiality.

Curriculum and Class Organisation

- **Junior Cycle:** Each student is allocated one SPHE class per week. RSE forms an integral part of the SPHE curriculum, while aspects are incorporated throughout the curriculum it is explicitly taught over a 6-week period during the school year.
- **Senior Cycle:** RSE is taught on a modular basis to Transition Year, 5th-year and 6th-year LCE¹⁰ students. RSE is taught as part of Social Education/Wellbeing to 5th and 6th-year LCA¹¹ students.

Ratification & Communication

- When the finalised draft policy is ratified by the board of management, it will become the school's agreed RSE Policy. It will be circulated within the school community.
- Parents/guardians will be informed of the RSE Policy from the time of enrolment of the student.

⁶ See Appendix B -Parental Permission Form (Student Learning Journal)

⁷ See Appendix C - RSE Provision Information Letter

⁸ <https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/d7be05-child-protection/>

⁹ https://www.beaufortcollege.ie/images/Substance_Misuse_Policy_Final.pdf

¹⁰ LCE – Leaving Cert Established

¹¹ LCA – Leaving Cert Applied

Appendix A – List of School Policies & Procedures¹²

- Admissions Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy*¹³
- Assessment Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Code of Behaviour*
- Code of Dress*
- Communication with Parents
- Complaints Procedure
- Critical Incident Management Plan
- Data Protection
- DEIS Plan 2022-25
- Dignity at Work
- Educational Tours & Field Trips
- Health & Safety Statement
- Healthy Eating Policy
- Home School Community Liaison Policy
- Homework Policy
- ICT Acceptable Use Policy
- Inclusion Policy
- LMETB Suspension & Expulsion Policy & Procedures
- Long-Term Absence Protocol
- Mobile Devices Policy*
- RSE Policy
- Statement of Strategy for Attendance*
- Substance Misuse Policy
- Teaching, Learning & Assessment Policy
- Wellbeing Policy

¹² All school policies are published on the school website and are available from the school office on request.

¹³ All policies marked with an asterisk * are published partially/wholly in the student learning journal

Appendix B – Parental Permission From (Student Learning Journal)

Parental Permission Form

Each year the school requests parental permission for students to participate in certain activities. In order to reduce paperwork and simplify record-keeping during the year, a number of permission requests have been combined in the section below. Please read each item carefully and tick the relevant box. Not all items may be relevant to each student in a given year. If you have any queries/concerns, please contact the school.

	Yes	No
Photography / School Events	On occasions such as Open Day, Graduation and other school events, local press photographers take group and individual photos of students and in some instances identify the students by name. I agree to the school using my child's name/image in this way. (Please note that removing a student from a photo of the rest of the group can be quite upsetting for that student).	
	I agree to the school using my child's name in relation to publicising school events and activities on the school website and in school publications.	
	Images of my child and their work or images of them partaking in school activities may appear on the school's website/Facebook page, in the school newsletter or in the public media. These images may be individuals or groups. I agree to the use of my child's image in these way.	
RSE	The school teaches the RSE (Relationships & Sexual Education) Programme which is vetted and is a mandatory requirement by the Department of Education and Skills. Lessons are developed using suitable content and appropriate language for each year group. I agree that my child may participate in these lessons.	
Medical Emergency	In an emergency, it may be necessary to take a student to doctor/hospital and inform parents/guardians afterwards. I give permission for my child to be taken immediately to a doctor or hospital in case of serious illness/accident. (in a non-emergency situation, it is the school's policy to inform parents/guardians if their child has had an accident in school which may require them to collect their child and take them home or to doctor/hospital).	
Guidance Counselling	I give permission for my child to avail of the support provided by the Guidance Counselling Service when needed.	
	I give permission for my child to complete any of the educational standardised tests that are used throughout the school year for educational purposes.	
	The school administers Diagnostic Tests (See Whole School Assessment Policy) which are used to ascertain and monitor the educational progress of students. I agree to the use of this process and that the school may contact me should any concerns arise.	

Student's Name _____ Year _____ Class _____

Parent/Guardian Name _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix C – Sample RSE Provision Information Letter

Coláiste Beaufort
Bóthar Bhaile Átha Troim
An Uaimh
Contae na Mí
C15 PY53
Oifig: 046 902 8915
www: beaufortcollege.ie



Beaufort College
Trim Road
Navan
County Meath
C15 PY53
Office: 046 902 8915
email: beaufortcollege@lmetb.ie

Re: RSE Module within SPHE Specification

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am writing to inform you about the Social, Personal and Health Education Programme which is a core part of the national school curriculum. S.P.H.E. provides a unique and exciting opportunity for students to develop skills and competence, to learn about themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development.

Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) is one module within the S.P.H.E. specification. It is a developmental process through which pupils participate in order to cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships. One timetabled period per week is allocated to S.P.H.E. and within this, a minimum of six timetabled periods are assigned to Relationships and Sexuality Education. The RSE module will be taught to all year groups, first to sixth year, from the week beginning the [INSERT DATES] for a block of six weeks.

As the primary educators of your children, it is important that parents are aware of the SPHE and RSE content. The following two links <https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/> and <https://b4udecide.ie/> will provide you with many resources and information. Equally, as per our Relationship and Sexuality Policy, we recognise the right of any parent/guardian who so wishes to request that his/her son/daughter should not participate in the programme. The school will respect this choice. Where students are withdrawn from RSE, the school cannot take responsibility for any class content passed on to them by other students.

Any Parent/Guardian who wishes to withdraw his/her son/daughter must contact the Deputy Principal, Ms. Karen Tobin at ktobin.bft@lmetb.ie or through the school office before Monday [INSERT DATE] to discuss alternative supervision arrangements.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Ken Flynn
Principal



Ken Flynn
Principal
ktobin.bft@lmetb.ie



Karen Tobin
Deputy Principal
ktobin.bft@lmetb.ie

Suzanne Markey
Deputy Principal
smarkey.bft@lmetb.ie

Dominic Phillips
Deputy Principal
dphillips.bft@lmetb.ie



Policy for Resolution/Ratification by LMETB Board

School	Beaufort College
Policy Title	RSE Policy
Date of School Board of Management Meeting	17/06/2025
Please confirm if a quorum was present at the meeting (4)	Yes
Please confirm if the completed Policy Consultation Record was presented at the meeting	Yes
Policy Proposed By	Frank Skully
Policy Seconded By	Sean Hughes
Signed	 Chairperson of Board of Management
Date	17/06/25
Signed	 Principal
Date	17/06/25