

# Our Lady and St Patrick's College, Knock



## Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

### Policy Details

Legal Status	Adopted	Version Date	Last Review	Next Review	Responsible
Statutory	5 <sup>th</sup> June 2024	May 2024	October 2022	May 2027	Miss Lavery

### Related Documents and Location

1. College's Mission Statement and Aims
2. Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy
3. Anti-Bullying Policy
4. Positive Behaviour Policy
5. eSafety and Digital Technology Policy
6. Special Educational Needs Policy
7. School Development Plan

All policies are available on the College Website and Private Folders.

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## **1. Introduction and Rationale**

All young people have the right to high quality Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) that is relevant to their lives. RSE is a statutory element of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. Our Lady and St Patrick's College, Knock is committed to providing an education which prepares students effectively for adult life and RSE plays an essential role in achieving this. The College's RSE programme seeks to provide young people with formal opportunities to gain knowledge and understanding of relationships and sexuality and develop morals and values that reflect our Catholic ethos.

"Amoris Laetitia" (The Joy of Love) is the post-synodal apostolic exhortation by Pope Francis released on 8 April 2016. It follows the Synods on the Family held in 2014 and 2015. The ground-breaking document asks the church to meet people where they are, to consider the complexities of people's lives and to respect people's consciences when it comes to moral decisions. The apostolic exhortation is mainly a document that reflects on family life and encourages families. It is also the Pope's reminder that the church should avoid simply judging people and imposing rules on them without considering their struggles. He urges the church to appreciate the context of people's lives when helping them make good decisions. The goal is to help families, in fact everyone, experience God's love and know that they are welcome members of the church. All this may require what the Pope calls "new pastoral methods" (paragraph 199).

Relationships and sexuality present various issues and challenges for young people, such as early sexual intercourse, teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, sexual identity and orientation, sexually explicit images, cyber-bullying and mental health. In addition, many students struggle to talk to their parents/guardians about growing up and about sexual matters. Thus, RSE is essential if young people are to make responsible, moral and well-informed decisions about their lives.

This RSE Policy is written in accordance with guidance issued by the Department of Education (DE), the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and the Catholic Schools' Trustee Service. This includes the guidance issued by the DE on 'The RSE (NI) (Amendment) Regulations 2023' and 'The Curriculum (Circumstances in which a Pupil may be Excused from Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Education) Regulations (NI) 2023'. This policy also reflects the guidance issued by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland on eliminating sexual orientation discrimination in schools and takes into account the rights of students and parents as outlined in the 'United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child' (UNCRC). A full list of documents considered in the writing of this policy can be found in Appendix 1 on Page 11.

Students, parents and staff were consulted in the drafting of this policy.

## **2. College Mission Statement and Catholic Ethos**

### **Mission Statement:**

*"Our Lady and St Patrick's College, Knock cares for young people in a way that encourages them to develop to their full potential within a supportive Christian community. We seek to prepare our students to play an active and responsible role in society, and to use their talents for the service of others."*

This Mission Statement guides us in the task of enabling our students to realise "their full potential within a supportive Christian community". It stresses the importance of responsibility in relationships. Students are to be encouraged to "use their talents for the benefit of others". The RSE Programme aims to care for young people by nurturing their self-worth, dignity and confidence within a supportive, inclusive and sensitive learning environment.

## **The Aims of the College are to:**

- develop the ‘whole person’ as a follower of Christ;
- promote the philosophy and values of Catholic Education;
- develop positive attitudes in an atmosphere of cooperation, justice and mutual respect;
- prepare young people to be confident and creative contributors to society;
- enable students to realise their full academic potential and to develop all their gifts and talents;
- prepare students for adulthood by enabling them to acquire the relevant knowledge and skills;
- engage positively with the local and wider community.

In accordance with the Aims of the College, the RSE Programme will endeavour to further Catholic values and develop the ‘whole person’ as a follower of Christ through its curriculum in partnership between teachers and students. We are guided by the College Aims in preparing our students for adulthood and seek to foster positive attitudes towards sexuality and relationships with others.

### **3. Morals and Values Framework**

Much of “Amoris Laetitia” consists of reflections on the Gospels and church teaching on love, the family and children. It also includes a great deal of practical advice from the Pope, sometimes gleaned from exhortations and homilies regarding the family.

“Amoris Laetitia” reminds us that children must be educated in sex and sexuality. In a culture that often commodifies and cheapens sexual expression, children need to understand sex within the “broader framework of an education for love and mutual self-giving” (paragraph 280). Sadly, the body is often seen as simply “an object to be used” (paragraph 153).

RSE ‘must not be value-free’ (DE Circular 2001/15) and it should ‘be taught in harmony with the ethos of the school and reflect the moral and religious principles held by parents and school management authorities’ (DE Circular 2013/16). Regarding ‘The RSE (NI) (Amendment) Regulations 2023’, it should be noted that ‘the legislation does not prevent teachers and pupils discussing and considering moral, ethical and spiritual issues alongside the age-appropriate, comprehensive and scientifically accurate teaching and associated resources’ (DE Circular 2024/1).

The College’s RSE Programme reflects the beliefs and ethos of our Catholic school. It seeks to develop the ‘whole person as a follower of Christ’ and nurture the faith and personal development of each student so that they are capable of making responsible, moral and informed decisions. The programme, therefore, aims to present facts in an objective, balanced and sensitive way, set within the framework of Catholic values and an awareness of the law on sexual behaviour. The following key messages will be promoted through RSE within a framework that encourages:

- An appreciation of the value of family life, marriage and permanent loving relationships;
- An appreciation of the responsibilities of parenthood and a recognition that children are a gift from God;
- A recognition that sexual abstinence outside of marriage, and fidelity within it, are positive, realistic and healthy ideals to which young people should aspire;
- A recognition that both genders, male and female, are to be appreciated, respected and valued and seen as equal, different and complementary;
- An appreciation that friendships and relationships should be based on self and mutual respect, empathy, non-exploitation, honesty, truth and commitment;
- Compassion, forgiveness, mercy, tolerance, loyalty, self-restraint and care as essential qualities and skills to develop in relationships;
- A recognition that sexuality and relationships involve rights, duties and responsibilities;
- A recognition that all life is valuable and sacred from the moment of conception.

These key messages will influence the teaching of all topics in the RSE Programme, including issues such as casual sex, contraception and abortion. Although these key messages are to be promoted, teachers should acknowledge that many students come from backgrounds that may not reflect all these values and experiences. Teachers must approach these issues with sensitivity and aim to avoid causing hurt and offence to students and their families. The development of a student's self-worth and confidence is essential. RSE teachers must be empathetic to the personal and emotional circumstances of individual students.

#### **4. Aims of RSE**

In line with our College aims and ethos, and CCEA guidelines, RSE within the College aims to:

- Promote the philosophy and values of Catholic Education;
- Develop age-appropriate, comprehensive and scientifically accurate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, covering prevention of early pregnancy and access to abortion;
- Select teachers who are sensitive to the ideals and aims of the Catholic Church;
- Develop the 'whole person' as a follower of Christ;
- Develop individuals committed to the Christian way of life;
- Develop respect for diversity and inclusion;
- Develop students' appreciation of their uniqueness and sexuality as God-given gifts;
- Promote responsible behaviour and the ability to make informed decisions;
- Enhance personal development, self-esteem, well-being and resilience;
- Help students develop healthy and respectful friendships and personal relationships;
- Help students understand and express sexuality in a morally, socially and spiritually responsible manner;
- Facilitate communication about personal and sexual matters;
- Increase understanding, and respect for, human love, marriage and family life;
- Promote an appreciation of the sacredness and value of all human life from the moment of conception;
- Enhance understanding of the responsibilities of parenthood;
- Value the concept and qualities of consent in relationships and understand the law in relation to consent;
- Encourage students to witness to human dignity at all times online;
- Break the stigma surrounding periods and promote respect, understanding and open discussions about what people may experience when menstruating.

#### **5. Objectives of RSE**

In line with our College aims and ethos, and CCEA guidelines, RSE within the College seeks to enable students to:

- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth;
- Establish strategies to manage stress and anxiety;
- Establish strategies to cope with difficult situations and protect themselves from exploitation and abuse;
- Be aware of and show respect for different family structures;
- Identify and avoid risk-taking behaviour;
- Establish and maintain healthy, equal and mutually respectful, non-exploitative and non-violent personal relationships;
- Explore moral and ethical issues regarding relationships and sexuality;
- Defer sexual activity until marriage;
- Be aware of the variety of ways in which individuals change or grow and develop strategies to cope with the challenges of growing up;
- Demonstrate understanding of reproductive systems, human fertility and sexually transmitted infections;
- Recognise and understand the emotional, moral and social implications of sexual maturation including sexual health, conception, contraception, teenage pregnancy and childbirth within the framework of Catholic values;

- Develop an awareness of issues relating to personal health;
- Identify and understand issues relating to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender roles and stereotyping;
- Establish strategies to cope with conflict, peer pressure and media influences;
- Critically evaluate information about relationships and sexuality from peers, the media and pornography;
- Recognise the need for online safety;
- Interpret the implications of legislation relating to sexually explicit images, sexting and sexual activity;
- Demonstrate understanding of the nature of consent and decision-making in relationships;
- Acquire and develop an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality and development;
- Know about the menstrual cycle, periods and menstrual well-being;
- Challenge negative attitudes, stereotypes and gender inequalities surrounding periods.

## **6. Curriculum Provision**

The RSE Coordinator works in conjunction with the Vice Principal (Pastoral Care). RSE lessons are incorporated within the Pastoral Care Programme in the College. Each year is timetabled differently:

Year 8	Students have one period per week for six weeks, twice a year. This is alternated with the Personal Development Programme.
Year 9	Students have one period per week for six weeks, twice a year. This is alternated with the Personal Development Programme.
Year 10	Students have one period per week for six weeks, twice a year. This is alternated with the Personal Development Programme.
Year 11	The whole year group attends a presentation delivered by an external agency.
Year 12	Aspects of RSE are delivered through GCSE Learning for Life and Work (LLW), Science and Religious Studies in consultation with the RSE Coordinator.
Year 13	Students have one period per week for ten weeks.
Year 14	Students have one period per week for six weeks. The whole year group also attends a presentation delivered by an external agency.

## **7. Teaching and Delivery of RSE**

Each tutor group is divided between two teachers of RSE, timetabled simultaneously. The groups are mixed, boys and girls, with the option, on occasions, of one large mixed group or single sex groups depending on the needs of the group at the time.

All Year 8, 9, 10, 13 and 14 classes have RSE lessons. A range of topics are covered throughout the different years, each having a set programme, though variation is possible depending on the needs of the group or if the teacher feels it is appropriate to cover a topic not on the programme. Any deviation from the programme must be discussed in advance with the RSE Coordinator. The smaller group setting should lead to a more informal type of class where the students feel at ease to discuss the topics covered.

Teaching and learning is based on a wide range of strategies including discussion, brainstorming, questionnaires, quizzes, audio-visual materials, scenario based case-studies, group work, role-play and debate. Teacher interaction is key to the success of the RSE Programme and an enquiry-based approach should be adopted by teachers.

All RSE teachers and outside agencies are required to promote the teaching of the Catholic Church on matters of sexuality and human development. Information on Catholic Church teaching will be provided for RSE teachers within teacher booklets.

## **8. Role of the RSE Coordinator**

The RSE Coordinator's role includes:

- Actively supporting and promoting the College's Catholic ethos and strategic vision.
- Leading an effective team and ensuring high quality teaching and learning, pastoral care, administration and continuing professional development in RSE.
- Taking responsibility for the development and implementation of the College's RSE Policy and Period Dignity Policy in accordance with Diocesan/DE/CCEA guidance and associated legislation.
- Overseeing staff induction and professional development in Year 8-14 RSE.
- Leading meetings which relate to the curriculum, administration or organisation of RSE in the College,).
- Planning, monitoring and reviewing Year 8-14 RSE programmes of study, including Schemes of Work, teacher lesson plans and the Departmental Handbook.
- Reviewing and evaluating the RSE and Period Dignity programmes with students, parents and staff on a regular basis and updating accordingly to reflect best practice.
- Liaising with outside agencies (e.g. Love for Life, Nexus NI, BHSCT - Sexual Health Team, etc.) to organise workshops.
- Promoting Period Dignity in the College in liaison with the College First-Aider.

## **9. Specific Issues**

### **A) Terminology**

All staff teaching RSE will use the biological names for body parts and sexual acts, where appropriate and relevant to the RSE Programme. The use of common slang words will be avoided where possible. RSE teachers should use gender/sexuality neutral language where possible.

### **B) Provision for Students with Special Educational Needs**

The RSE department works in line with the College's Special Educational Needs Policy, the procedures for dealing with Special Educational Needs and the Pastoral Care Programme.

Each class teacher has access to information at the beginning of each academic year relating to special educational needs and medical conditions. If required, teachers seek out further information from the Tutor, Head of Year, Learning Support Coordinator, from student records in the Students' Office or from SIMS. Staff work closely with the College First-Aider who manages all medical conditions.

Due to the informal nature of RSE classes and the personal and sensitive nature of the topics covered, we aim to make all students feel comfortable within the classroom environment. We try to ensure that all students are fully integrated with their peers. Teachers are sympathetic to the personal and emotional circumstances of each individual student. We are aware of, and take into account, the variety of existing student knowledge and differing attitudes or beliefs of students that may impact their capacity to understand the issues explored. This is particularly important in relation to special educational needs where physical development may outstrip emotional maturity. We follow the Stepwise Approach to Behaviour Management to ensure that the needs of students with behavioural and social difficulties are met.

### **C) Inclusive Learning and LGBTQI+**

The RSE Policy aims to meet the needs of all students and be a positive experience for all participants. The RSE Programmes of the College should provide warm, welcoming and inclusive environments. They should foster respect for difference, challenge prejudiced attitudes and promote equality for all students. The RSE Programme should be sensitive to changing family life in today's society. "The ideals of respect and dignity for every person regardless of their race, creed or sexual orientation are to be recognised" (Accord 2002).

Following the guidance provided by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, the RSE Policy and RSE Programme aim to raise the self-esteem of all young people regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. We seek to develop learners who value and respect difference and engage positively with it. Bullying, exclusion or offensive language relating to LGBTQI+ students will not be tolerated in RSE lessons or in the College. The RSE Programme will handle this issue in a sensitive, non-confrontational and reassuring way that reflects the ethos of the College.

### **D) Personal Backgrounds and Cultural Practices**

RSE teachers must be sensitive to the personal circumstances and cultural backgrounds of their students. In Northern Ireland, civil and criminal legislation on female genital mutilation (FGM) is contained in the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003. FGM is illegal and is a form of child abuse and violence against women. In addition, The Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007 makes forced marriage illegal in Northern Ireland. Forced marriage is a violation of human rights and a form of child/adult/domestic abuse.

The College's RSE Programme will encourage students to explore cultural issues by providing information and raising awareness of female genital mutilation and forced marriage. Following the guidance of The Department of Finance and Personnel (2012 and 2014), students will be made aware of sources of support and will be encouraged to access appropriate advice and support if they are at risk. Issues relating to culture will be dealt with sensitively to ensure that cultures are not viewed negatively due to their practices. Any concerns about FGM/forced marriage will be referred to the Designated Teacher or Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection and Social Services (section 11 of the policy).

### **E) Sexting and the Digital World**

The RSE Programme will teach students how to safely navigate the digital world. Technology plays an integral role in the lives of our students, which poses both opportunities and risks. The RSE Programme will raise awareness of potential threats or dangers posed by the Internet such as sexting, cyber-bullying, pornography, abuse and exploitation. Students will explore the implications of the law, the strategies they can use to protect themselves and where they can access advice and support if they are at risk. All students, parents and staff have access to the 'Safer Schools NI' app which provides information, guidance and support on these issues.

### **F) Confidentiality and Disclosures**

It is not necessary or advisable to encourage students or staff to discuss personal relationships or experiences. Ground rules should be negotiated beforehand and should include this advice. Group discussion and media clips allow exploration of the issues without personal disclosure. Staff cannot give any guarantees of confidentiality to students. If staff feel that a student is about to make a personal disclosure, which may compromise him/her, the student should be advised of the possible implications.

If certain disclosures are made, then the College's Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy must be adhered to. In line with the College's Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy, if a disclosure is made to a member of staff of underage sexual activity, parents will be informed and a referral made to Social Services (section 32 of the policy). In the event of such a disclosure, a member of staff must always report the matter immediately to the Designated Teacher or a Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection.



## **G) Dealing with Sensitive Issues and Responding to Students' Questions**

If students raise issues that are offensive to some or beyond the maturity level of the majority of the students, RSE teachers will not answer in class. The teacher may ask the student to wait until the end of the lesson and answer the question in a sensitive matter. If the question raises child protection issues, this will be referred to the Designated Teacher or a Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection.

## **10. The Period Dignity Scheme**

*'Period dignity refers to the accessibility and availability of essential care needed to support a period, in conjunction with the removal/breaking of stigma and taboo around periods. Education is a key factor in breaking the stigma surrounding periods and promoting respect, understanding and open discussions about what people may experience when menstruating.'* (CCEA 2021)

Early consultation on the Period Dignity Scheme began in 2021 through the Student Council and this work is ongoing. Parents are informed about the Period Dignity Scheme at the Year 8 Induction interview.

Free period products are available in student, staff and visitor bathrooms. In addition, bags of free period products (including holiday supplies), tights and underwear can be obtained by students from the College First-Aider in the Medical Room. Further details can be found in Appendix 3 'Statement on Arrangements for the Provision of Free Period Products' where we address all other aspects of the Period Dignity Scheme.

The College takes a whole-school approach to Period Dignity and Menstrual Wellbeing Education. The RSE Programme aims to:

- Ensure that students understand the term 'period dignity';
- Complement free period product provision by promoting the availability of free period products;
- Ensure that students understand the impact of periods on the emotional, mental, social and educational well-being of young people;
- Reduce stigma in relation to periods by providing both male and female students with relevant, age-appropriate information on periods;
- Enable students to understand how to deal with period issues, hygiene and disposal of period products;
- Have a positive impact on students' confidence, well-being, attendance and attainment.

In addition, the College uses Assembly, 'Focus of the Week' and posters to raise awareness of period dignity issues and inform students of the availability of free period products and where/how to access them.

The College's Period Dignity key contacts are the Vice Principal (Pastoral Care) and the RSE Coordinator. Students can also approach the College First-Aider or a Period Dignity Student Ambassador to seek support.

## **11. Outside Agencies and Resources**

All resources will be vetted by the RSE Coordinator and approved by the Vice Principal (Pastoral Care) before use to ensure they are consistent with College policies and ethos. Resources will be age-appropriate, sensitive and inclusive of all students' needs and experiences. They will contain factually accurate and up-to-date information.

When education and/or health professionals from statutory or voluntary organisations are invited into the College, the activities that are undertaken will complement the ongoing RSE Programme. The following procedures will be followed when using outside agencies:

- Copies of the RSE Policy, Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy, Mission Statement and Aims of the College will be given to the agency which will be asked to adhere to them;
- The agency will comply with both the College's policies and ethos;
- The agency will be made aware of, and will follow, procedures relating to issues of confidentiality and disclosures as outlined in the College's Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy;
- A teacher will always be present;
- Parents/guardians will be informed.

## **12. Staff Training and Development**

Training will be organised by the RSE Coordinator and Vice Principal (Pastoral Care). Where appropriate, the Education Authority, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and other agencies will be involved. Staff also benefit from the sharing of best practice at RSE meetings.

## **13. Parental Involvement**

RSE is a lifelong process which begins informally with parents and guardians. It is the primary duty and right of parents to be the principal educators in this area. Many parents/guardians are keen that their children are well prepared to handle situations around relationships and sexuality. Whilst the RSE Programme has a significant role to play, this role should ideally be additional and complementary to the role of parents/guardians. RSE is a shared responsibility between teachers and parents/guardians and we recognise the importance of collaborating with parents in reviewing and developing our policy and programme.

At the Year 8 induction interview, parents are informed that students will follow the RSE Programme. A letter is sent to parents before presentations or workshops are delivered by external agencies. Opportunity is provided for any questions or queries from parents.

In line with DE guidance (DE Circular 2024/1), at the request of a parent, students may be excused from RSE classes in the following circumstances:

'For pupils in Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 the circumstances are, where a parent makes a request for a pupil to be excused from Article 5(1A) education or specified elements of it by confirming which elements of the education, the pupil should be excused.

For pupils of Year 12 the circumstances are, where a parent makes a request for a pupil to be excused from Article 5(1A) education or specified elements of it by confirming which elements of the education the pupil should be excused from and confirms that the pupil does not object to being excused.

The request should be made in writing and addressed to the Principal of the grant-aided school at which the pupil is registered and identify the pupil to whom the request relates. The request should specify whether the request relates to all of Article 5(1A) education or specified elements of that education and confirm which element or elements are contrary to their wishes. They are not required to provide a reason to the school. Where the circumstances prescribed in the Regulations are met, the pupil will be excused from Article 5(1A) education. However, the exception would be a pupil from Year 12 where they object to being excused.'

A template letter for use by parents can be found in Appendix 2 of this policy.

If a parent/guardian chooses to withdraw a child from all or parts of RSE, they must discuss the potentially detrimental effect that this can have with the Vice Principal (Pastoral Care). Parents and guardians must consider the social and emotional effects of being excluded, as well as the likelihood that the student will hear their peers' version of what happened or what was said in RSE classes, rather than the safe and reliable source of the teacher. The College will consider parental concerns and try to deal with problematic areas in order to reach a mutually acceptable resolution.

#### **14. Links across the Curriculum**

RSE is one of the three concepts explored in Personal Development and is a statutory element of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. The Personal Development Programme is delivered by Tutors and RSE teachers. Other subjects contribute to the teaching of RSE: Religious Education, Learning for Life and Work, Science and Home Economics. All subject teachers are required to promote the teaching of the Catholic Church on matters of sexuality and human development. Elements of RSE are also addressed through College Assembly and 'Focus of the Week' during Registration.

#### **15. Review**

It is intended that this policy is a flexible working document. The RSE Coordinator will review the RSE Policy every three years and will review the RSE Programme at the end of each academic year. Students are encouraged to become involved in the development and review of the RSE Programme. Students in each year group are asked to complete an evaluation questionnaire at the end of their RSE Programme. In addition, the Student Council will be used as a platform to evaluate and review the policy and programme. Teachers are also asked to complete a short evaluation on each lesson taught in the RSE Programme. This information will be forwarded to the RSE Coordinator who will correlate the findings which will be taken into account in the review.

#### **16. How to Raise a Concern or Make a Complaint about the Administration of this Policy**

If you have a concern or complaint about the administration of this policy, please contact Ms McCarthy, Vice Principal, in the first instance. If necessary, you may then access and follow the College's Complaints Procedure which is available on the College website at [www.knock.co.uk](http://www.knock.co.uk). Should you remain dissatisfied with the College's response after completing the internal complaints procedure, you can bring your complaint to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman within six months. Contact details for the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman are provided on Page 11 of the Complaints Procedure.

**Signed:** Mr Leo O'Reilly  
(Chairperson of Board of Governors)

**Date:** 5<sup>th</sup> June 2024

**Signed:** Miss Deborah McLaughlin  
(Principal)

**Date:** 5<sup>th</sup> June 2024

### Related Documents

Our Lady and St Patrick's College, Knock - Mission Statement and Aims

DE Circular 2024/1 (01/01/24) - 'Guidance on Amendments to the RSE Curriculum Content'

CCEA (2023) 'Period Dignity Policy and Guidance for Schools' (Update April 2023)

DE Draft Guidance to 'Specified Public Service Bodies' on the Period Products (Free Provision) Act (NI) 2022

DE Circular 2022/02 (22/02/22) - 'Children Who Display Harmful Sexualised Behaviour'

Catholic Schools' Trustee Service (2021) 'Relationships and Sexuality Education - Guidance Document for Post Primary Schools: Northern Ireland'

CCEA (2021) 'Period Dignity Policy/Guidance'

Pope Francis (2018) 'Guadete et Exsultate: On the Call to Holiness in Today's World'

DE Circular 2017/04 (Updated 02/09/19) - 'Safeguarding and Child Protection: A Guide for Schools'

DE Circular 2017/04 (24/04/17) - 'Safeguarding and Child Protection: A Guide for Schools'

Pope Francis (April 2016) 'Amoris Laetitia: The Joy of Love'

PSHE Association (April 2016) 'Key Principals of Effective Preventative Education' (Internet Safety)

DE Circular 2015/22 (26/08/15) - 'Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance'

CCEA (2015) 'Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance: An Update for Post-Primary Schools'

CCEA (2015) 'Teaching Controversial Issues at Key Stage 3'

Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (2015) 'Sexting and the Law' (A Basic Guide to Help Professionals and the Public Deal with Incidents of 'Sexting')

Department of Finance and Personnel (2014) 'Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines: Female Genital Mutilation'

DE Circular 2013/16 (25/06/13) - 'Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy in Schools'

Department of Finance and Personnel (2012) 'The Right to Choose: Statutory Guidance for Dealing with Forced Marriage'

ETI (2011) 'Report of an Evaluation of RSE in Post-Primary Schools'

DE (2011) 'Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education Policy'

DE Circular 2010/01 (13/01/10) - 'Guidance on Relationships and Sexuality Education'

CCEA (2009) 'Revised GCSE Scheme of Work: Learning for Life and Work'

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (March 2009) 'Eliminating Sexual Orientation Discrimination in Northern Ireland, Short Guide - Education'

CCEA (2007) 'The Big Picture of the Curriculum at Key Stage 3'

CCEA (2007) 'The Big Picture of the Curriculum at Key Stage 4'

CCEA (2007) 'Personal Development Guidance for Key Stage 4'

CCEA (2007) 'Key Stage 3 Non-Statutory Guidance for Personal Development'

The Education Order (NI) 2006

ACCORD (2002) 'Love Rejoices in the Truth' (Relationships and Sexuality Education)

DE Circular 2001/15 (24/08/01) - 'Relationships and Sexuality Education'

CCEA (2001) 'Guidance for Post-Primary Schools: Relationships and Sexuality Education'

Pope John Paul II (1995) 'Evangelium Vitae' (The Gospel of Life)

United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child (1989) Articles 12, 18, 19, 28 and 29

**Proposed Template for Use by a Parent Requesting that a Pupil be Excused**  
**from Article 5(1A) Education of a Specified Element of It**

**For Students in Year 8, 9, 10 and 11**

Dear Miss McLaughlin,

I am writing to request that my son/daughter, [Full Name], who is a student in Year X at Our Lady and St Patrick's College, Knock be excused from age-appropriate, comprehensive or scientifically accurate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, covering prevention of early pregnancy and access to abortion or the specified element or elements of it as ticked in the table below. I can confirm that this education is contrary to my wishes.

Please tick as appropriate:

- Prevention of early pregnancy

- Access to abortion

Yours sincerely

Name of parent

Date

**For Students in Year 12**

Dear Miss McLaughlin,

I am writing to request that my son/daughter, [Full Name], who is a student in Year 12 at Our Lady and St Patrick's College, Knock be excused from age-appropriate, comprehensive or scientifically accurate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, covering prevention of early pregnancy and access to abortion or the specified element or elements of it as ticked in the table below. I can confirm that this education is contrary to my wishes. I can confirm that [Student Name] has not objected to being excused.

Please tick as appropriate:

- Prevention of early pregnancy

- Access to abortion

Yours sincerely

Name of parent

Date



## Our Lady and St Patrick's College, Knock

### Statement of Arrangements for the Provision of

### Free Period Products

#### Details of Specified Public Service Body

<b>Name of Specified Public Service Body</b>	Our Lady and St Patrick's College, Knock
<b>Main Address of Specified Public Service Body</b>	120 Gilnahirk Road, Belfast, BT5 7DL
<b>Location of sites where free period products are available</b>	All female, unisex and accessible toilet facilities within the College premises.

#### Publication Details

<b>Date of first publication, Dates of subsequent publication</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> May 2024
<b>Where will this statement be published?</b>	The Statement on Arrangements will be published on the College website, in the RSE Policy and also be accessible to staff internally on Private Folder 1. It will also be displayed on general notice boards positioned throughout the College.

#### Details of Consultation Carried Out

<b>WHEN was the consultation carried out?</b>	The consultation process ran from 1 <sup>st</sup> May until 31 <sup>st</sup> May 2024.
<b>WHO was consulted?</b>	Staff, Students and Visitors were invited to participate in the consultation process.

#### HOW did the consultation process establish:

<b>1. the ways in which products users ought to be able to obtain free period products?</b>	All participants were asked, via a survey, if they are aware if the College currently provides period products, where period products should be kept and which products they would like to see available. Participants were also provided with the opportunity to offer any other suggestions and comments.
<b>2. the locations in the SPSBs premises in which period products ought to be obtainable free of charge?</b>	All participants were asked, via a survey, where they think period products should be kept. Participants were also provided the opportunity to offer any other suggestions and comments.
<b>3. the types of period products which ought to be available?</b>	All participants were asked, via a survey, what period products they would like to see stocked. They were provided with 7 options (including reusable products). Participants were also provided the opportunity to offer any other suggestions and comments. Consultations were also held with Student Council and Student Voice Representatives on availability and types of products.

## HOW did the consultation have regard to:

<b>1. the dignity, privacy and confidentiality of product users?</b>	The survey was voluntary and confidential and was completed online to allow ease of access and privacy.
<b>2. articles which are reusable?</b>	All participants were asked, via a survey, what period products they would like to see stocked. They were provided with 7 options (including reusable products). Participants were also provided the opportunity to offer any other suggestions and comments.

## The Arrangements

The College carried out a consultation process relating to the provision of free period products as detailed in the Period Products (Free Provision) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022. The results from the consultation process have been used to develop arrangements for the provision of free period products at the College. The consultation process sought to establish how a suitable range of free period products could be made easily obtainable in such a way as to respect the dignity, privacy and confidentiality of staff, students and visitors. Eco factors were also part of the consultation process. Consultation surveys did not record or request any identifying information beyond whether the participant was a student, staff member or visitor.

The College has had an ongoing free period products scheme for students for many years as launched by the Government in 2020. This provision currently includes the supply of four different product types (Pads, Tampons, Spare Underwear, Tights), in a variety of sizes, located in female and unisex student toilets.

The consultation process sought views from participants on both the range/type of products currently supplied as well as the range/type of products that they would like to see available. Participants were provided with a list of 7 options including reusable products and were also asked if there were any other period products, they wanted to suggest that should be made available. The consultation process also sought views on the locations that the products should be kept. Participants were provided with a list of 7 locations but were also provided the opportunity to offer any other suggestions or comments.

In terms of responses received 88% of staff replied that Pads should be made available whilst 64% indicated Tampons should be available. 63% of students replied that Pads should be made available and 63% also replied that Tampons should be available. Visitor responses were 85% and 75% respectively. These two product types were the most popular selections during the consultation process.

42% of staff, 48% of students and 50% of visitors also indicated a preference for Panty Liners whilst only 3% of staff, 15% of students and 10% of visitors expressed a preference for reusable products. 56% of staff and students and 50% of visitors replied that feminine wipes and spare underwear/tights should also be available. Only 3% of staff wanted availability of a menstrual cup, with 19% of students and 20% of visitors choosing this option.

As a result of the consultation and in conjunction with Departmental guidance the College will continue to offer the aforementioned 4 product types to students but will also extend these products to staff and visitors as well as the addition of Panty Liners and Feminine Wipes to ensure a suitable range of products and absorbencies are available. Products will be available in all female, unisex and accessible toilet facilities within the College premises. Free period products will be available at all times when the building is in use.

Products will be available in their original outer packaging located in the above-mentioned toilet facilities. Stock levels of each product type will be checked on a regular basis by cleaning staff in consultation with the College First-Aider. Information on toxic shock syndrome will be made available in each dispensing location.

In line with Departmental guidance the availability and locations of free period products within the College will be advertised at the entrance lobby of the College and on notice boards in order to respect the dignity, privacy and confidentiality of individuals. This Statement of Arrangements document detailing the provision of free period products within the College will be published on the College website, in the RSE Policy and also be accessible to staff internally on Private Folder 1. It will also be displayed on general notice boards positioned throughout the College.

## **The Arrangements – other details**

Free period products, supplied within the College will be procured through current financial and administrative procedures with funding received from the Period Dignity scheme.

## **Publicising the Arrangements**

### **How will the SPSB publicise the availability of free products-**

Information posters detailing the availability and location of free period products will be created and displayed on noticeboards throughout the College. This information will also be publicised through Assemblies and 'Focus of the Week' presentations. All relevant literature will highlight both the availability of products and also that the provision is free to users.