

Relationship and Sex Education Policy

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Context

This policy is informed by *Amoris Laetitia* (Pope Francis 2016), guidance from The Catholic Bishop's Conference (*Learning to Love* March 2017) and the Diocese of East Anglia statement of Principles and Guidance issued (January 2018).

Mission Statement

Our school mission statement and the teaching of the Catholic Church underpins all teaching and learning within our school. Any teaching about love, chastity and sexual relationships in a Catholic school must be rooted in Catholic Church teaching about what it is to be truly human in Christ, what it means to live well in relationship with others and be presented within a positive framework of Christian virtue. For this reason we use the term Relationship and Sex Education (RSE), since this emphasises the importance of healthy relationships to human well-being.

Rationale

- We recognise that parents/guardians are the primary educators. We collaborate with them in preparing their children for adult life.
- We believe that it is our duty to provide opportunities for our students to prepare for the challenges of growing up with an understanding of individual freedoms and responsibilities for and with others.
- We believe that young people fare better academically when more emotionally literate and better informed.
- We believe our students should be able to understand the teachings of the Catholic Church, within the Christian community and have an understanding of the moral debates on these issues.
- We believe that young people have a right to learn why the Christian community sees the sacrament of marriage as an ideal way to establish relationships of trust and mutual fulfilment.
- We believe that effective education about sexuality takes place in the wider context of education about how relationships work.
- We believe that students should get opportunities to discuss and reflect on the challenges of growing up, to grow in self-confidence and acquire strategies to help them resist unwelcome pressures.
- We believe that it is essential that the teacher and students provide a safe environment for approaching sensitive issues by agreeing ground rules for discussion and tolerance.

Statutory Framework

The statutory framework that surrounds Relationship and Sex Education largely falls within four key areas.

- The National Curriculum
- 'Sex and relationship Education Guidance' (2000) DfE
- The Children's act (2004)
- The Equalities Act (2010)

In line with legislation all Catholic Secondary Schools are required to make provision for sex education for all students registered at the school. This must include education about HIV/AIDS (Human immunodeficiency virus infection/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Relevant government documents include:

- 1993 Education Act
- 2000 (updated 2014) Sex and Relationships Education Guidance

Parents and carers have the primary responsibility for their children's education in relationships to prepare them for the challenges and responsibilities which maturity brings. This includes information relating to their physical, emotional and sexual development.

The teaching offered by our school aims to be complementary to, and supportive of the role of parents. We are committed to the holistic approach to sex education, in the conviction that education about sexuality cannot be reduced simply to biological facts. Teaching is structured within a planned, continuous and cross curricula programme, based on values and morality in accordance with the teaching of the Catholic Church.

The biological aspects of puberty and human reproduction will be covered in Science, Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHEE) and Religious Education (RE) lessons. Teachers of RE and PHSEE explore self-esteem and the dynamics of relationships. There is complementary work in English lessons through lyrical poetry analysis and an exploration of relationships between fictional characters. PE (Physical Education) teachers also contribute by teaching respect for the human body in the context of health education. In Drama students investigate and role play a variety of relationship situations. RE, in particular, analyses various approaches to these moral issues and creates opportunities to draw several of the themes together. PSHEE will analyse the impact on individuals and communities.

While acknowledging that RSE will be reflected in many parts of the curriculum, each aspect should be informed by the other. Each discipline must speak with consistency about the meaning of human love in the Church's teaching.

Inclusion

We understand that young people mature in different ways. Our teaching is respectful of each child's starting point and lessons are framed by this understanding. With this in mind the teaching around human reproduction and sexuality in Year 7 should be left until, at least, the summer term. This ensures there is an opportunity for pupils to settle into their new school and develop trusting relationships with their peer group and members of staff.

Young people are encouraged to respect difference and develop an approach of dialogue. RSE must be delivered sensitively, especially with regard to diverse faith and cultural backgrounds and sexual orientation. All points of view must be respected and bullying of any kind will always be treated very seriously. For example, the Catholic Church's teaching on heterosexual marriage as the only environment in which sexual intercourse should take place must not be used as an opportunity to encourage homophobic attitudes and behaviours. The school offers support to all students when there is a request for counselling on issues relating to personal relationships and sex education. Pupils requiring or requesting additional support will be offered support through our pastoral system, work with our chaplain and through seeking appropriate help from other specialist agencies (see CES Protocol for visitors and external speakers).

The Role of the Headteacher and Governors

It is the responsibility of the headteacher to ensure that both staff and parents are informed about the RSE policy and that the policy is implemented effectively. It is also the headteacher's responsibility to ensure that members of staff are given sufficient training, so that they can teach about relationships effectively and handle any difficult issues with sensitivity, in accordance with Catholic teaching. The governing body has wide obligations under the Equalities Act 2010 and will work to ensure that we endeavour to do our best for all pupils, irrespective of ability (physical and mental), race, ethnicity, nationality, sex, gender identity or orientation. (further information, please see our equality policy and our safeguarding policy).

Choosing and using resources

Relationship and sex education must be in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church. It is the responsibility of the Governing Body, working with the headteacher and senior Leadership Team, to ensure that this is achieved through careful monitoring of the teaching resources used. In considering the resources which will be used for RSE, governors should take into account:

- The need to support parents and carers by providing education which is faithful to the teaching of the Church and appropriate for the ages and stages of development of the pupils
- The extent to which specific materials can be used to illustrate the beauty of the human being created by God (Theology of the Body, Humanae Vitae, Deus Caritas Est)
- The values implied by specific resources and the way in which they may be used to enhance pupils' understanding of human development and catholic teaching
- The accuracy and clarity of material presented

The Diocese expects all schools to work in partnership with parents and to inform them about the school's RSE policy and practice. Parents should have the opportunity to view materials and ask questions. It is important that any external visitor to the school is also clear about their role and responsibility while they are in school (please see CES Protocol on visitors and external speakers).

This policy will be reviewed on a 2 year cycle, led by the Head of RE, PSHEE and Science in consultation with governors, staff and parents. If the policy appears to need modification, then the RE, Science and PHSE subject leaders will report its findings and recommendations to the full governing body. Any changes will then be referred to the Diocese for ratification.



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