

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). As well as guidance from the Department for Education (*Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Statutory Guidance*).

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 it must 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.

Defining Relationship and Sex Education

The DfE guidance states that "children and young people need to know how to be safe and healthy, and how to manage their academic, personal and social lives in a positive way."¹ As part of this, students need to develop their knowledge and understanding of themselves, consider what it means to be fully human, look at what it takes to live in right relationships with self and others, and be informed enough to make moral decisions in conscience.

In Secondary schools RSE should "give young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, not just intimate relationships. It should enable them to know what a healthy relationship looks like, and what makes a good friend, a good colleague, and a successful marriage or other type of committed relationship. It should also cover contraception, developing intimate relationships and resisting pressure to have sex (and not applying pressure)."²

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 effective education about sexuality takes place in the wider context of education about how relationships work.
- 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 fare better academically when more emotionally literate and better informed.

¹ Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers Page 4

² Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers Page 25

- We believe that it is essential that these topics are approached with care and sensitivity, with teachers creating a safe environment for learning to happen and where students show respect to others.

Objectives

To develop the following attitudes and virtues amongst students:

- Reverence for the gift of human sexuality and fertility;
- Respect for the dignity of every human being – in their own person and in the person of others;
- Responsibility for their own actions and a recognition of the impact of these on others;
- Recognising and valuing their own sexual identity and that of others;
- Celebrating the gift of life-long, self-giving love;
- Recognising the importance of marriage and family life;
- Fidelity in relationships.

To develop the following personal and social skills:

- Making sound judgements and good choices which have integrity, and which are respectful of the individual's commitments;
- Loving and being loved, and the ability to form friendships and loving, stable relationships free from exploitation, abuse and bullying;
- Managing emotions within relationships, and when relationships break down, with confidence, sensitivity and dignity;
- Managing conflict positively, recognising the value of difference;
- Cultivating humility, mercy and compassion, learning to forgive and be forgiven;
- Developing self-esteem and confidence, demonstrating self-respect and empathy for others;
- Building resilience and the ability to resist unwanted pressures, recognising the influence and impact of the media, internet and peer groups and so developing the ability to assess pressures and respond appropriately;
- Being patient, delaying gratification and learning to recognise the appropriate stages in the development of relationships, and how to love chastely;
- Assessing risks and managing behaviours in order to minimise the risk to health and personal integrity.

To know and understand:

- The Church's teaching on relationships and the nature and meaning of sexual love;
- The Church's teaching on marriage and the importance of marriage and family life;
- The matter of sexuality and gender identity.
- The centrality and importance of virtue in guiding human living and loving;
- The physical and psychological changes that accompany puberty;
- The facts about human reproduction, how love is expressed sexually and how sexual love plays an essential and sacred role in procreation;

- How to manage fertility in a way which is compatible with their stage of life, their own values and commitments, including an understanding of the difference between natural family planning and artificial contraception;
- How to keep themselves safe from sexually transmitted infections and how to avoid unintended pregnancy, including where to go for advice.

Whilst promoting Catholic values and virtues and teaching in accordance with Church teaching, we will ensure that pupils are offered a balanced programme which offers a range of viewpoints on issues. Pupils will receive clear scientific information as well as covering the aspects of the law pertaining to RSE (for example forced-marriage, female genital mutilation, abortion, the age of consent and legislation relating to equality). Knowing about facts and enabling young people to explore differing viewpoints is not the same as promoting behaviour and is not incompatible with our school's promotion of Catholic teaching. We will ensure that pupils have access to the learning they need to stay safe, healthy and understand their rights as individuals.

Statutory Framework

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

- The National Curriculum
- 'Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education' (2019) DfE.
- The Children's Act (2004)
- The Equality Act (2010)
- Keeping Children Safe In Education (2023)
- The Education Act (1993)

In line with legislation all Catholic Secondary Schools are required to make provision for Relationships and Sex Education for all students registered at the school.

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, health and sexual development. The teaching offered by our school aims to be complementary to, and supportive of, the role of parents and carers.

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.

RSE is reflected in different parts of the curriculum, depending on its nature and relevance. The majority of its teaching will be in Religious Education (RE) lessons and Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE). Science assists, for example, in that the biological aspects of puberty and human reproduction are in the National Curriculum. Key themes are also found in other subjects such as in Physical Education (PE) whereby teachers promote respect for the human body; and in English and Drama, students study the relationships between characters in texts, poems and plays.

While acknowledging that RSE will be reflected in many parts of the curriculum, each aspect should be informed by, and complementary to, 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 majority of the Relationships and Sex Education in Year Seven is left until, the summer term before starting. 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 not be tolerated. 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 on issues relating to personal relationships and sex education for example through our pastoral system, work with our chaplain, and through seeking appropriate help from other specialist agencies.

RSE Education must be accessible for all pupils. It is therefore planned with all in mind. High quality teaching must be delivered which is differentiated and personalised. Pupils with Special Educational Needs, or those who are more vulnerable to exploitation, bullying, and other issues due to the nature of their SEND, may need additional support to help ensure understanding for example through additional small group intervention work. Some students may receive content and teaching tailored to meet their specific needs if at different developmental stages. As with all RSE teaching this will be delivered in a sensitive, age-appropriate, developmentally appropriate way and in consultation with the school's SEND Co-ordinator and student's parents.

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 it does its best for all pupils, irrespective of ability (physical and mental), race, ethnicity, nationality, sex, gender identity or orientation. (For 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

As is expected by the Diocese and the Department for Education, the school will work in partnership with parents and inform them about the school's RSE policy and practice. Information about the resources used and the content covered will be made available on the school website. An annual letter will be sent home to parents informing them about the RSE teaching their child will receive. Parents will therefore have the opportunity to know about the materials being delivered 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).

The school's RSE lead will monitor the provision of the programme by examining schemes of work, being present in lessons and looking at samples of pupils work. Student and staff feedback will also be gathered and if necessary, changes made to the RSE provision.

The Right to Withdraw

Parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE.

Should parents wish to withdraw their child, they are asked to notify the school by contacting the RSE lead who will liaise with the Headteacher. The school will then discuss this request with parents to ensure that their wishes are understood and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum. The benefits of receiving this important education and any detrimental effects that withdrawal might have on the child should also be raised, for example, the likelihood of the child hearing their peers' version of what was said in the classes, rather than what was directly said by the teacher.

Statutory guidance says the parents' request to withdraw the child can be respected, up to and until three terms before the child turns 16. After that point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, the school should make arrangements to provide the child with sex education during one of those terms.

The process is the same for pupils with SEND although there may be exceptional circumstances where a pupil's specific SEND needs may be taken into account when making this decision.

If a pupil is excused from sex education, it is the school's responsibility to ensure that the pupil receives appropriate, purposeful education during the period of withdrawal.

Parents cannot withdraw their child from sex education in Science as part of the National Curriculum. There is also no right to withdraw from Relationships or Health Education.

Review

The policy will be reviewed on a two year cycle, led by the school's RSE lead. Consultation will happen between the Head of RE, PSHE Co-ordinator and other relevant staff and governors. In line with statutory guidance, parents will also be consulted. If the policy appears to need modification, then the PSHE lead will report the recommendations to the full governing body. Any changes will then be referred to the Diocese for ratification. A copy of this policy will be published on the school's website.



St Benedict's
Catholic School
The Catholic Secondary School for West Suffolk

Relationship and Sex Education Policy

Owned by: Sarah Cobbold

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