

THE SACRED HEART LANGUAGE COLLEGE



RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION POLICY

“Confident in God’s love for us,
we commit ourselves to His service”

May 2020

‘I HAVE COME THAT YOU MIGHT HAVE LIFE AND HAVE IT TO THE FULL’ (Jn.10.10)

Rationale

The belief in the unique dignity of the human person made in the image and likeness of God underpins the approach to all education in a Catholic school. We are involved in relationships and sex education (RSE) precisely because of our Christian beliefs about God and about the human person. The Sacred Heart Language College’s approach to RSE therefore is rooted in the Catholic Church’s teaching of the human person and presented in a positive framework of Christian ideals.

At the heart of the Christian life is the Trinity; Father, Son and Spirit in communion, united in loving relationship and embracing all people and all creation. As a consequence of the Christian belief that we are made in the image and likeness of God, gender and sexuality are seen as God’s gift, reflect God’s beauty, and share in the divine creativity. Relationship and sex education, therefore, will be placed firmly within the context of relationship as it is there that sexuality grows and develops.

Following the guidance of the Bishops of England and Wales and as advocated by the Department for Education, relationship and sex education will be firmly embedded in the PSHE framework as it is concerned with nurturing human wholeness and integral to the physical, spiritual, emotional, moral, social and intellectual development of pupils. It is centred on Christ’s vision of being human as good news and will be positive and prudent, showing the potential for development, while enabling the dangers and risks involved to be understood and appreciated.

All relationship and sex education will be in accordance with the Church’s moral teaching. It will emphasise the central importance of marriage and the family whilst acknowledging that all pupils have a fundamental right to have their life respected whatever household they come from. It will also prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.

Our programme enshrines Catholic values relating to the importance of stable relationships, marriage and family life. It also promotes those virtues which are essential in responding to God’s call to love others with a proper respect for their dignity and the dignity of the human body. The following virtues will be explicitly explored and promoted: faithfulness, fruitfulness, chastity, integrity, prudence, mercy and compassion.

Mission Statement

“Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God, Therefore honour God with your body.” (St Paul: 1 Corinthians 6:19,20).

The whole educational process in a Catholic school is more than just the acquisition of knowledge and academic success. Our Mission Statement commits us to the education of the whole child (spiritual, physical, intellectual, moral, social, cultural, emotional) and The Sacred Heart believe that relationship and sex education is an integral part of this education. Furthermore, our school aims state that we will endeavour to raise pupils’ self-esteem, help them to grow in knowledge and understanding, recognise the value of all persons and develop caring and sensitive attitudes. It is in this context that we commit ourselves: In partnership with parents, to provide children and young people with a “positive and prudent sexual education” (*Gravissimum Educationis* 1) which is compatible with their physical, cognitive, psychological, and spiritual maturity, and rooted in a Catholic vision of education and the human person leading to the development of the individual into a full human being.

Theological and Ethical guidance for the policy:

“Children and young people should be helped to develop harmoniously their physical, moral and intellectual qualities they should receive as positive and prudent education in matters relating to sex And young people have the right to be stimulated to make sound moral judgements based on well-informed conscience and to put them into practice with a sense of personal commitment.” (Gravissimum Educationis’ para 3)

“Some children are more sexually aware than in the past and they need to be imbued with sound Christian principles on which to base their relationships. It is all the more urgent that we answer their questions with sensitivity and frankness. They have the right to know the consequences of their actions and true basis on which to form their judgement.” (Bishops’ Low Week Letter 1987)

Objectives

We aim to provide, appropriate to age and ability, an accurate knowledge and understanding about sexuality and relationships. To enable students to develop personal and social skills: to be confident in right relationships, to keep them safe from harm and to protect them from exploitation. This will work to develop well informed and well-adjusted students, prepared for their adult roles. We will enable our students to develop a mature set of values about personal relationships, together with an appreciation of sexual relationships, within marriage in accordance with the teaching of the Church.

The Relationship and Sex Education programme will help the students develop an understanding of the pressures of personal relationships and family life and to support the development, growth and journey of the whole person towards becoming ‘fully human, fully alive’ as a unique creation made in God’s image.

A key aim of Relationship and Sex Education is to develop positive self-esteem. It will complement and support the education that is already being undertaken by home and family.

The programme will empower our students to make free lifestyle choices providing a counter culture to the portrayal of sex in the media and society and offer our students a Catholic Christian framework to help them make informed decisions.

Within the teaching of Relationship and Sex Education the students will gain an understanding of where they are in relation to their own knowledge, values and attitudes so that Education for Personal Relationships is both supportive and challenging. The teaching will provide a forum where students can share their concerns and offer a climate of support where they know they will be listened to sensitively.

The effective delivery of the programmes will correct misinformation and ensure students recognize the importance of the choices they make (in conscience) and the ways in which these choices mature through knowledge, understanding and Christian belief.

The students will be encouraged to reflect on their own attitudes and values and understand that these will affect the way they view themselves and others. It will encourage growth in self-respect and self-worth recognising that each of us is created in the image and likeness of God and enable students to understand that love is central and the basis of meaningful relationships epitomized through marriage and family life.

An essential part of Relationship and Sex Education will enable students to think about their relationships and to recognise the qualities that help relationships grow and develop positively. It will focus on helping students to recognise the importance of the choices they make and that they are responsible for the decisions they take and resist negative peer, social and media pressure.

The content of the curriculum will help students gain a better understanding of themselves, their own bodies, their emotional development as they grow and change and their relationships with others. It will explain the process of human procreation. Consider carefully responsible parenthood and family planning and give careful consideration of the issue of homosexuality.

Students will develop knowledge and understanding of HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STI’s) and gain an insight into the legal framework relating to sexual activity.

Balanced Curriculum

Whilst promoting Catholic values and virtues and teaching in accordance with Church teaching, we will ensure that pupils are offered a balanced programme by providing an RSE programme that offers a range of viewpoints on issues.

Pupils will also receive clear scientific information as well as covering the aspects of the law pertaining to RSE (in secondary schools/academies relating to 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.

Programme

Appendices to this policy provide further information about the programme and resources for suggested use.

Role of Parents/Carers

We recognise that parents (and other carers who stand in their place) are the primary educators of their children. As a Catholic school, we provide the principal means by which the Church assists parents and carers in educating their children. "Parents are the key figures in helping their children to cope with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up and in preparing them for the challenges and responsibilities which sexual maturity brings. The teaching offered by schools should be complementary and supportive to the role of parents". (*Circular 11/87 from the Department for Education, Introduction, par.2*).

Parents will be consulted and informed of the school's programme, including being given the opportunity to view teaching material. Our aim is that, at the end of the consultation process, every parent and carer will have full confidence in the school's RSE programme to meet their child's needs. Finally, parents/carers will also be informed by letter when the more sensitive aspects of relationship and sex education will be covered in order that they can be prepared to talk and answer questions about their children's learning.

Parental Right of Withdrawal

Parents/Carers have a right to withdraw their children from RSE lessons, although not those elements that are in the National Curriculum Orders for Science, or any other part of the National Curriculum. If a parent/carer wishes to withdraw a child from Relationship and Sex Education lessons, we ask that they discuss it with the Head teacher. We will make alternative arrangements if a child is withdrawn from the lessons.

We believe that the controlled environment of the classroom is the safest place for this curriculum to be followed. Please refer to the Department of Education guidance Page 17 for further details on the right to be excused from sex education (commonly referred to as the right to withdraw).

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

There will always be sensitive or controversial issues in the field of Relationships and Sex Education. These may be matters of maturity, of personal involvement or experience of children, of disagreement with the official teaching of the Church, of illegal activity or other doubtful, dubious or harmful activity.

It is the school's aim to offer support to pupils whilst being mindful of their safety. The teaching staff within the school are employed as professionals and are trusted to use their professional judgement and deal with situations appropriately. They cannot guarantee pupils absolute confidentiality. If the person concerned believes a pupil to be at risk or in danger, they will consult the Child Protection Officer before any decision is made. A teacher will explain to the child that confidentiality is being breached and why this is essential and will support the child throughout the process.

The governors believe that children are best educated, protected from harm and exploitation by discussing such issues openly within the context of the Relationships and Sex Education programme. The use of ground rules, negotiated between teachers and pupils, will help to create a supportive climate for discussion.

Safeguarding

All staff are familiar with the school's Child Protection Policy and receive training every two years. If a teacher receives information suggesting a child protection issue, they should refer the matter to the Headteacher or the Child Protection Officer immediately. Written records must be taken, but staff should not ask questions beyond what is necessary to determine whether there is an issue.

Responsibility for Teaching the Programme

1. The Head teacher takes overall delegated responsibility for the implementation of this policy and for liaison with the Governing Body, parents, the Diocesan Schools' Service and the Local Education Authority, also appropriate agencies.
2. The Senior Leadership Team take an overview of the Relationships and Sex Education programme offered at The Sacred Heart Language College. The Assistant head teacher who oversees the Catholic Life of the School has this responsibility in particular and takes an overview of the whole programme.
3. The Directors of Study, a Religious Education Teacher and a Science Teacher have the shared responsibility for the planning and delivery of the Relationship and Sex Education programme. This is completed in consultation with the Assistant head teacher for Catholic life of the school and the pastoral curriculum, Head of RE and Head of Science.
4. The RE and Science staff will deliver, as appropriate, different parts of the programme. Form Tutors also deliver aspects of the programme in Tutor time.
5. The specific programme for each year group will be taught in the Pastoral Curriculum (Tutor time), RE and Science. Further to this year 8 and 9 have a day off timetable for relationship and sex education led jointly by the Religious Education Department and Science Department.
6. The effectiveness of the programme will be reviewed annually in the late summer term by the Assistant Head teacher and Head of RE, Pastoral Curriculum, Head of Science and any other appropriate staff as necessary. Pupil voice will also be consulted.

Policy Ratified by Governors: Autumn 2020

Signature:



Mr J. Coyle (Chair of Governors)

Review Date: TBD

To develop the following attitudes and virtues:

- 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;
- joy in the goodness of the created world and their own bodily natures;
- 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 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.

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