

St Bede's Catholic College



Policy for Relationships and Sex Education

POLICY FOR RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION

College Mission Statement

In this policy the Governors and teachers, in partnership with pupils and their parents, set out their intentions about relationships and sex education (RSE). We set out our rationale for and approach to relationships and sex education in the College.

Consultation that has already taken place includes:

- pupil focus groups / school council
- review of RSE curriculum content with staff and students
- consultation with wider school community including the school nurse
- consultation with school governors

Defining Relationship and Sex Education

The DfE guidance defines RSE as “lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development. It is about the understanding of the importance of marriage and family life, stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality and sexual health”¹. It is about the development of the pupil's knowledge and understanding of life as a sexual being, about what it means to be human, called to live in relationships with self and others and being enabled to make moral decisions in conscience. The DfE identifies three main elements: “attitudes and values, personal and social skills, and knowledge and understanding”². It is envisaged that effective school RSE programmes help learners to develop the skills and knowledge appropriate to their age, understanding and development to enable them to make responsible decisions about their relationships, sexual health and well-being.

Statutory curriculum Requirements

We are legally required to teach those aspects of RSE which are statutory parts of National Curriculum Science. There is also a separate requirement for maintained secondary schools to teach about HIV, AIDS and sexually transmitted infections. Although this does not apply to academies, we would be putting our young people at a disadvantage if we failed to teach them about these matters. However, the reasons for our inclusion of RSE go further.

¹ Sex and Relationship Education Guidance, DfEE, 2000

² ibid

Rationale

'I have come that you may have life to the full' (John 10:10)

We are involved in relationships and sex education precisely because of our Christian beliefs about God and about the human person. 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. Our 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. RSE, 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 DfE, RSE 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 RSE 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 and support will be provided to help pupils deal with different sets of values.

Values and Virtues

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.

Aim of RSE and the Mission Statement

Our Mission Statement commits us to the education of the whole child (spiritual, physical, intellectual, moral, social, cultural, emotional) and we believe that RSE is an integral part of this education. Furthermore, our College aims state that we will endeavour to develop students' self-esteem and confidence, provide learning opportunities which prepare students for their future, promote Catholic values and secure and celebrate achievement. It is in this context that we commit ourselves to help students grow in knowledge and understanding, recognise the value of all persons and develop caring and sensitive attitudes.

In partnership with parents, we will endeavor to provide children and young people with a 'positive and prudent sexual education'³ which is compatible with their physical, cognitive, psychological, and spiritual maturity, and rooted in a Catholic vision of education and the human person.

Objectives

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.

Outcomes

Inclusion and Differentiated Learning

We will ensure RSE is sensitive to the different needs of individual pupils in respect to students' different abilities, levels of maturity and personal circumstances; for example, their own sexual orientation, faith or culture and is taught in a way that does not subject students to discrimination. Lessons will also help children to realise the nature and consequences of discrimination, teasing, bullying and aggressive behaviours (including cyber-bullying), use of prejudice-based language and how to respond and ask for help. There is a direct link between these important questions and the College's Inclusion Policy.

Equalities Obligations

The Governing Body have wider responsibilities under the Equalities Act 2010 and will ensure that the College strives to do the best for all of the students, irrespective of disability, educational needs, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, pregnancy, maternity, sex, gender identity, religion or sexual orientation or whether they are looked after children.

Broad Content of RSE

Three aspects of RSE - attitudes and values, knowledge and understanding, and personal and social skills will be provided in three inter-related ways: the whole school / ethos dimension; a cross-curricular dimension and a specific relationships and sex curriculum.

Our programme will include:

At Key Stage 3

Exploring the Christian understanding of the nature and purpose of the Sacrament of Marriage, the procreative, loving and life affirming purpose of human sexuality and explores the place of God with in the marriage union.

In Year 7 students study a unit entitled 'Creation' in Term 3 which sits alongside the Sex and Relationships Education lessons in Science. Students reflect on the wonder of God's creation, particularly the wonder of human creation as a part of God's plan, Students are encouraged to recognise the dignity of life and the respect due to each person as a child of God.

Year 8 includes a study of right and wrong which aims to further develop an informed conscience. The unit helps students to understand the struggle involved in relationships with others.

Year 9 includes a study on 'Relationships' where love is seen as the basis for all human relationships and the different forms and expressions of love are explored.

At Key Stage 4

Students explore the different priorities of couples within marriage and presents students with the opportunity to discuss issues such as how to live responsibly, how to live in partnership with others and how to live for the future. The aim is to give students the knowledge of what the Church teaches about human relationships and sexuality and importantly why the Church holds and teaches these beliefs.

In Years 10 and 11 the GCSE course incorporates units on marriage, marital breakdown, divorce, gender prejudice and contraception. Students also look at wider aspects of relationships through the study of prejudice and discrimination and our responsibility to those in the developing world. These areas of study take as their starting point the teaching of the catholic church.

At Key Stage 5

Students will also take the RSE programme relative to their age. The lessons and range of teaching strategies used will offer scope for discussion and debate. It will encourage independent thinking and provide a platform for further exploration. These lessons will take place during the timetables Theology lessons in Years 12 and 13 respectively.

Programme and Resources

The supplementary document to this policy provides further information about the programme and resources for suggested use.

Teaching strategies will include:

- establishing ground rules
- distancing techniques
- discussion
- project learning
- reflection
- experiential
- active
- mind maps
- film & video
- group work
- role-play
- trigger drawings
- values clarification

Parents and Carers

We recognise that parents and other carers who stand in their place are the primary educators of their children. As a Catholic College, we provide the principal means by which the Church assists parents and carers in educating their children. Therefore, the College will support parents and carers by providing material to be shared with their children at home and workshops to help parents/carers to find out more. Parents/carers will be informed when the more sensitive aspects of RSE will be covered in order that they can be prepared to talk and answer questions about their children's learning.

Parents will be consulted before this policy is finally ratified by the Governors. They will be consulted in the development of the RSE programme, as well as during the process of monitoring, review and evaluation. They will be able to view the resources used by the College in the RSE programme. Our aim is that, at the end of the consultation process, every parent and carer will have full confidence in the College's RSE programme to meet their child's needs.

Parents have **the right to withdraw** their children from RSE except in those elements which are required by the National Curriculum Science orders and the topics covered by relationships education. Should parents wish to withdraw their children they are asked to notify the College by contacting the Principal in writing. The College will provide support by providing material for parents to help the children with their learning.

We believe that the controlled environment of the classroom is the safest place for this curriculum to be followed.

Balanced Curriculum

In promoting Catholic values and virtues, and accordance with the teaching of the Church, we will remain faithful to the Church's vision of human wholeness whilst recognizing the contemporary context in which we live today by considering other viewpoints on a range of issues. Students will also receive clear scientific information as well as covering the aspects of the law pertaining to RSE including issues 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 College's promotion of Catholic teaching.

We will ensure that students have access to the learning they need to stay safe, healthy and understand their rights as individuals.

Responsibility for Teaching the Programme

Responsibility for the specific relationships and sex education programme lays with the relevant curriculum staff - this will normally include Science, Religious Formation, Physical Education, RSE and PSHE.

However, all staff will be involved in developing the attitudes and values aspect of the RSE programme. They will be role models for students of good, healthy, wholesome relationships as between staff, other adults and students. They will also be contributing to the development of students' personal and social skills.

External Visitors

The College may call upon help and guidance from outside agencies and health specialists to deliver aspects of RSE. Such visits will always complement the current programme and never substitute or replace teacher led sessions. The delivery will also be in line with the Church's teaching. It is important that any external visitor is clear about their role and responsibility whilst they are in College delivering a session. Any visitor must adhere to our code of practice developed in line with CES guidance 'Protocol for Visitors to Catholic Schools'⁴.

Health professionals should follow the College's policies, minimising the potential for disclosures or inappropriate comments using negotiated ground rules and distancing techniques as other teachers would. They will ensure that all teaching is rooted in Catholic principles and practice.

Other Roles and Responsibilities Regarding RSE

Governors

- Draw up the RSE policy, in consultation with parents and teachers;
- Ensure that the policy is available to parents;
- Ensure that the policy is in accordance with other whole school policies, e.g., SEN, the ethos of the College and our Christian beliefs;
- Ensure that parents know of their right to withdraw their children;
- Establish a link governor to share in the monitoring and evaluation of the programme, including resources used;
- Ensure that the policy provides proper and adequate coverage of relevant National Curriculum Science topics and the setting of RSE within PSHCE.

Principal

The Principal 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.

PSHE/RSE Co-ordinator

The Co-ordinator in conjunction with Principal has a general responsibility for supporting other members of staff in the implementation of this policy and will provide a lead in the dissemination of the information relating to RSE and the provision of in-service training. Staff may also be supported by the Vice Principal responsible for curriculum and the Vice Principal with responsibility for Safeguarding.

All Staff

RSE is a whole school issue. All teachers have a responsibility of care; as well as fostering academic progress they should actively contribute to the guardianship and guidance of the physical, moral and spiritual well-being of their pupils. Teachers will be expected to teach RSE in accordance with the Catholic Ethos of the school. Appropriate training will be made available for all staff teaching RSE. All staff have been included in the development of this policy and all staff should be aware of the policy and how it relates to them.

Relationship with other Policies and Curriculum Subjects

This RSE policy is to be delivered as part of the PSHE framework. It includes guidelines about student safety and is compatible with the College's other policy documents including Bullying Policy, Safeguarding Policy, and Equalities Policy.

Students with particular difficulties whether of a physical or intellectual nature will receive appropriately differentiated support in order to enable them to achieve mature knowledge, understanding and skills. Teaching methods will be adapted to meet the varying needs of this group of pupils.

Learning about RSE in PSHE classes will link to/complement learning in those areas identified in the RSE audit.

Children's Questions

The Governors want to promote a healthy, positive atmosphere in which RSE can take place. They want to ensure that students can ask questions freely, be confident that their questions will be answered, and be sure that they will be free from bullying or harassment from other children and young people.

Controversial or Sensitive issues

There will always be sensitive or controversial issues in the field of RSE. These may be a matter 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. The Governors believe that children are best educated, protected from harm and exploitation by discussing such issues openly within the context of the RSE programme. The use of ground rules, negotiated between teachers and students, will help to create a supportive climate for discussion. (See also Sex and Relationship Guidance, 4.5 'Dealing with questions' 0116/2000, Department for Education and Employment, July 2000 for more detail)

Some questions may raise issues which it would not be appropriate for teachers to answer during ordinary class time, e.g., where a child or young person's questions hints at abuse, is deliberately tendentious or is of a personal nature.

Supporting Children and Young People Who Are at Risk

Children will also need to feel safe and secure in the environment in which RSE takes place. Effective RSE will provide opportunities for discussion of what is and is not appropriate in relationships. Such discussion may well lead to disclosure of a safeguarding issue. Teachers will need to be aware of the needs of their students and not let any fears and worries go unnoticed. Where a teacher suspects that a child or young person is a victim of or is at risk of abuse they are required to follow the College's safeguarding policy and immediately inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead responsible.

Confidentiality and Advice

All governors, all teachers, all support staff, all parents and all students must be made aware of this policy, particularly as it relates to issues of advice and confidentiality.

All lessons, especially those in the RSE programme, will have the best interests of students at heart, enabling them to grow in knowledge and understanding of relationships and sex, developing appropriate personal and social skills and becoming appreciative of the values and attitudes which underpin the Christian understanding of what it means to be fully human.

Students will be encouraged to talk to their parents/carers about the issues which are discussed in the programme. Teachers will always help students facing personal difficulties, in line with the College's pastoral care policy. Teachers should explain to students that they cannot offer unconditional confidentiality, in matters which are illegal or abusive for instance. Teachers will explain that in such circumstance they would have to inform others, e.g., parents or the Principal, but that the students would always be informed first that such action was going to be taken.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The RSE coordinator will monitor the provision of the various dimensions of the programme by examining plans, schemes of work and samples of students' work at regular intervals. After the first year the programme will be evaluated biannually by means of questionnaires / response sheets/needs assessment given to students, and / or by discussion with students, staff and parents. The results of the evaluation should be reported to these groups of interested parties and their suggestions sought for improvements. Governors will consider all such evaluations and suggestions before amending the policy. Governors remain ultimately responsible for the policy.

Agreed with Governors September 2020

To be reviewed September 2022