



## St Mary's Catholic School

### Sex and Relationship Education policy

Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) provides an understanding that positive, caring environments are essential for the development of a good self-image. This education should help students to be physically, socially, and emotionally healthy and to develop into responsible and informed members of society. Effective SRE is important if young people are to make responsible and well-informed decisions about their lives. At St Mary's Catholic School SRE is to be experienced within the teachings established by the Catholic Church, in a sensitive and open manner.

#### **Sex and Relationship Education in the curriculum**

SRE at St Mary's Catholic School is taught in a cross-curricular way through Biology, Religious Studies and Personal, Social and Health Education. The diverse staffing and the variety of experience contained within this teaching body is seen as a valuable resource for the delivery of sex and relationship education. The provision of SRE is seen as progressive in terms of language, concepts and content which increases in depth and complexity as students progress through the School.

Throughout the course of teaching a variety of sensitive issues will inevitably be explored. It is recognised that an individual's sexuality is a highly personal matter. The teaching of SRE will place stress upon the need for understanding and awareness of relationships and a loving environment.

The school is concerned to offer an education for the whole person, body, mind and spirit. Part of the make-up of all humans is that they are sexual beings. It would be irresponsible of the school to ignore this. The SRE programme aims to be a sensitive and responsible one which is set in a moral and social framework. It also aims to meet the statutory provision which has been outlined in various DfE documents.

The prime responsibility for bringing up children rests with parents. Schools recognise that parents are key figures in helping their children cope with the emotional and physical aspects of growing up and in preparing them for the challenges and responsibilities which sexual maturity brings. The teaching offered by schools should be seen as complementary and supportive to the role of parents. In an attempt to achieve this, the 1988 Education Reform Act (Section 1) states that all students should be offered the opportunity of receiving a comprehensive, well-planned programme of sex and relationship education during their school careers through a curriculum which:

*"promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of students at school and of society; and prepares such students for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life."*

It is recognised that sex and relationship education is a difficult issue which will place demands on schools and teachers. However, the purpose of SRE should be to provide knowledge about loving relationships, the nature of sexuality and the processes of human reproduction. At the same time it should lead to the acquisition of understanding and attitudes which prepare students to view their relationships in a responsible and healthy manner.

The SRE delivered should be tailored not only to the age, but also to the understanding of students. At St Mary's Catholic School, with its Christian value-system, it will not be value-free, although it will aim to present facts in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner. It will be set within a clear framework of values and an awareness of the law regarding sexual behaviour. Students will be encouraged to appreciate the value of a stable family life, marriage and the responsibilities of parenthood. Such matters will be treated with sensitivity and great care will be taken to encourage all children to feel a sense of worth. Particular care will be taken when issues such as marital breakdown and divorce are dealt with.

#### **The Parental Right to Withdraw their Son or Daughter from Sex Education Lessons:**

Section 241 of the Education Act 1993 gives parents the right to withdraw their children from any or all parts of the school's programme of sex and relationship education, other than those elements which are required by the National

Curriculum Science Order. It is realised that, under exceptional circumstances, a very small number of parents may wish to exclude their children from this programme. In this case, such parents should write to the Headteacher, stating their objections.

**Role and responsibilities of teachers:**

It is understood that it is important to distinguish between the School's function of providing education generally about sexual matters and the giving of advice to individual students on these issues. Good teachers have always taken a pastoral interest in the welfare and well-being of their students. It is also understood that this function should never trespass on the proper exercise of parental rights and responsibilities.

Where the circumstances are such as to lead a teacher to believe that the student has embarked upon, or is contemplating, a course of conduct which is likely to place him or her at moral or physical risk or in breach of the law, the teacher has the responsibility to ensure that the student is aware of the implications and is urged to seek advice.

The teacher should also bring this to the attention of the Designated Safeguarding Officers, who will take this matter forward in line with the school's Safeguarding Policy. Any potential safeguarding issue that arises from SRE will be treated in accordance with our safeguarding policy.

**Additional support for students:**

Access to help and advice around issues that may result from SRE is available to all students at St Mary's Catholic School via the School Nurse and the confidential drop-in service.

| <b>Policy review date</b> | <b>By whom</b>         | <b>Approved (insert date)</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| December 2015             | FGB- Academy Directors | 10/12/15                      |
| September 2019            | FGB- Academy Directors | 20/09/19                      |