



St Mary's Catholic School Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policy

Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) 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 RSE is important if young people are to make responsible and well-informed decisions about their lives. At St Mary's Catholic School RSE is to be experienced within the teachings established by the Catholic Church, in a sensitive and open manner.

School 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 school. Consultation on this policy has taken place in the following way:

- Pupil focus groups
- Parent focus groups
- Review of RSE curriculum content with staff and pupils
- Consultation with Local Governing Committee

Please also refer to the Safeguarding Policy.

Implementation and Review of Policy

Implementation of the policy will take place after consultation with the Governors in July 2021.

This policy will be reviewed at least every 2 years by the Head teacher, RSE Co-ordinator, the Governing Body and Staff.

Dissemination

The policy will be shared with all members of the Governing Body, and all teaching and non-teaching members of staff. Copies of the document will be available to all parents through the school's website and copies are available in school.

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 It is about the development of the pupil's knowledge and understanding of her or him as a sexual being, about what it means to be fully human, called to live in right relationships with self and others and being enabled 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

Statutory curriculum requirements

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

We are legally required to teach RSE in line with DFE 'Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education' September 2021.

1. RATIONALE AND AIMS

It is recognised that sex and relationship education is a difficult issue which will place demands on schools and teachers. However, the purpose of RSE 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.

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 RSE 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 RSE 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 RSE 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 moral 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.

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. RSE will be taught in accordance with the Church's moral teaching and will emphasise the central importance of marriage and the family, whilst acknowledging that all pupils have a fundamental right to be respected irrespective of their own background or beliefs. RSE at St Mary's will prepare pupils for life in modern Britain and provide them with information about how to manage risks.

Values and virtues

Our RSE programme teaches students the Catholic values relating to the importance of stable relationships, marriage and family life. It also promotes those virtues which are essential in responding to the 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. Many of these virtues are universal and therefore presented in a way which is accessible for all students.

Mission Statement

Our Mission Statement commits us to the education of the whole child (spiritual, physical, intellectual, moral, social, cultural and emotional) and we believe that RSE 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.

In partnership with parents, we aim 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. RSE will present students with a Catholic vision of education and the human person.

Aims

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

³ Gravissimum Educationis 1

- artificial contraception;
- how to keep themselves safe from sexually transmitted infections and how to avoid unintended pregnancy, including where to go for advice.

2. OUTCOMES

Inclusion and differentiated learning

We will ensure RSE is sensitive to the different needs of individual pupils in respect to pupils' 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 pupils 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. . The Assistant Headteacher SEND, in partnership with the Personal Development Leader, will provide a bespoke programme for individual students where it is deemed appropriate

Equalities obligation

The governing body have wider responsibilities under the Equalities Act 2010 and will ensure that our school strives to do the best for all of the pupils, 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. These are known as protected characteristics.

3. OVERVIEW OF RSE

RSE at St Mary's Catholic School is taught in a cross-curricular way through Biology, Religious Studies and the Personal Development Programme. All students in Year 7 to 13 study a 'Relationships and Sex Education' module as part of the Personal Development Programme. 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 RSE is seen as progressive and age appropriate in terms of language, concepts and content which increases in depth and complexity as students progress through the School.

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.

The RSE aspect of our Personal Development programme will cover:

- **Families** – types, marriage, legal rights, roles and responsibilities of parents
- **Friendships**- healthy friendships
- **Online relationships** – risks of sending/receiving images, expectations of behaviour online, sharing information online, risks of viewing harmful content, staying safe online
- **Mental Wellbeing** – emotions, benefits of time outdoors
- **Staying safe offline and online**- alcohol and drugs
- **Physical and health fitness** – activity and wellbeing
- **Respectful relationships**- respect, self-respect, bullying, stereotypes
- **Being safe** – laws relating to sexual consent, fertility, contraception, FGM, exploitation
- **Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health** – STI's, contraception, managing sexual pressure, consent and boundaries, reproductive health, pregnancy, adolescent body changes
- **Health and prevention** – personal hygiene, self-examination

- **Sexual Harassment and abuse**
- **LGBTQ+**

Programme/Resources

Teaching strategies will include:

- establishing ground rules
- discussion
- project learning
- reflection
- experiential
- active
- brainstorming
- film & video
- group work
- role-play

How pupils' learning will be assessed:

- Classwork
- Class discussion
- Learning Walks of lessons
- Book Reviews
- Centrally planned lessons with review activities

4. PARENTS AND CARERS

We recognise that parents/carers are the primary educators of their children and the prime responsibility for bringing up children rests with them. 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.

Therefore the school 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 by letter 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 must be consulted before this policy is ratified by the governors. They will be consulted at every stage of 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 school 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 school's RSE programme to meet their child's needs.

Parents continue to have the right to withdraw their children from Sex Education except in those elements which are required by the National Curriculum science orders. Should parents wish to withdraw their children they are asked to notify the school by contacting the Assistant Headteacher Pastoral. The school 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.

Please refer to the DfE guidance Page 17 for further details on the right to be excused from sex education (commonly referred to as the right to withdraw).

5. 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.

Responsibility for teaching the programme

Responsibility for the specific relationships and sex education programme lays with the Personal Development Leader, the Pastoral Leaders, the RE Department, the Science Department and Form Tutors.

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

External Visitors

Our school will sometimes 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.

It is important that any external visitor is clear about their role and responsibility whilst they are in school delivering a session.

6. 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., SEND, the ethos of the school 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 the Personal Development Programme.

Head teacher

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.

Personal Development Leader/RSE Co-Ordinator

The co-ordinator with the Head teacher 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. (They may be supported by the member of staff with responsibility for child protection).

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 to other policies and curriculum subjects

This RSE policy is to be delivered as part of the Personal Development Programme framework. It includes guidelines about pupil safety and is compatible with the school's other policy documents (for example, Bullying policy, Safeguarding Policy etc.)

Pupils 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 Personal Development Programme classes will link to/complement learning in those areas identified in the RSE audit.

Other subjects which cover elements of RSE are:

RE

- **Year 9** – Half Term 2 – Relationships Unit which looks at Marriage, divorce, contraception, equality and gender
- **Year 10** – Half Term 6 – Marriage and Family Life, Contraception and Natural Family Planning, sexual relationships, different types of family

Science

- **Year 7** (Half Term 6) 'Human Reproduction' and covers the following topics: Human Reproductive System, Changes in Puberty, the Menstrual Cycle, Pregnancy (including the act of sex/conception) and Dangers to Pregnancy.
- **Year 10** (Half Term 5) 'Homeostasis and Response' and covers the following topics: Hormones in Puberty/Menstrual Cycle, Contraception Methods, and the Use of Hormones to Treat Infertility.

7. STUDENT'S QUESTIONS

The governors want to promote a healthy, positive atmosphere in which RSE can take place. They want to ensure that pupils 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 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 pupils, will help to create a supportive climate for discussion.

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.

8. 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 pupils 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 school's safeguarding policy and immediately inform the designated senior member of staff responsible.

Confidentiality and advice

All governors, all teachers, all support staff, all parents and all pupils 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 pupils 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.

Pupils will be encouraged to talk to their parents/carers about the issues which are discussed in the programme.

Teachers will always help pupils facing personal difficulties, in line with the school's pastoral care policy. Teachers should explain to pupils that they cannot offer unconditional confidentiality, in matters which are illegal or abusive for instance. Teachers will explain that in such circumstances they would have to inform others, e.g., parents, head teacher, but that the pupils would always be informed first that such action was going to be taken

9. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The RSE Co-ordinator will monitor the provision of the various dimensions of the programme by examining plans, schemes of work and samples of pupils work at regular intervals. The programme will be evaluated biannually by means of questionnaires / response sheets / needs assessment given to pupils, and / or by discussion with pupils, 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.

Policy review date	By whom	Approved (<i>insert date</i>)
September 2025	Local Governing Committee	10 th October 2025